

WHEN THE WORLD IS ON FIRE

And Other Evangelistic Messages

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CHAPTER FOUR

Come to CHRIST for Peace

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

In these words we find the precious legacy of our Lord and Saviour to His disciples. For it is in the light of a legacy that we are to view them. In this His last will and testament He bequeaths to them not the things of this world, as riches, honor, and greatness, but peace. Matthew Henry beautifully says: "When CHRIST left the world, He made His will. His soul He bequeathed to His Father, and His body to Joseph, to be decently interred. His clothes fell to the soldiers, and His mother He left to the care of John. But what should He leave to His poor disciples, who had left all for Him? Silver and gold He had none; but He left them what was infinitely better, HIS PEACE, as a dying father leaves portions to his children. And it is a worthy portion."

It is not only a worthy, but also a NEEDFUL PORTION. All men need the peace which CHRIST here promises to give. Human life needs some element to tranquilize it.

WHAT THE MASTER HAS PROMISED

"My peace I give unto you." IT IS HIS PEACE. There are other kinds of peace in the world. The Lord indicates this fact by designating the promised peace as **"My peace."**

There is a peace that springs from the uninformed conscience, of one who thinks that no matter how he lives or what he does, if he will only go through the performance of certain religious ceremonies, he will win Heaven.

There is the peace of an unawakened conscience, of one still sleeping securely in his sins. Here the strong man, armed, keeps his palace and his goods in peace.

It is a peace of religious indifference, more dangerous than war and not worthy to be called peace. GOD declares, **"There is no peace... to the wicked."** Dying in this state, the sinner is lost. In his false security he does not realize this dreadful danger. He is not yet consciously unhappy, though he as yet knows nothing of peace in its true sense.

There is the peace of the self-righteous man, of one who is at peace with himself on the ground of his moral integrity, his respectability of character, of the righteousness with which he is credited among his fellowmen.

CHRIST has drawn a picture of him in the Pharisee in the temple at his prayers. Every word of that prayer breathes, on the one hand, self-complacency, self-adulation, and self-satisfaction; on the other hand, an uncharitable reflection on others. There can be no doubt that he enjoyed some degree of serenity of mind in his self-delusion. Such men, however, **"weave the spider's web... their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works."** I would not decry or depreciate the value of character, integrity, and good reputation, but they can never avail to justify man before GOD and secure for him real peace.

There is the peace of the worldly man, a peace like that of the rich farmer whose ground brought forth plentifully. Not having sufficient storage room for the abundant harvest, he decided to pull down the old barns and build greater ones, and stowaway in them the product of his rich harvest. Then he would say to his soul, **"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."** But that very night by GOD's command death snatched him away from the abundance of his earthly possessions.

Thus it is that man today, as in the days of Jeremiah, cries, **"Peace, peace; when there is no peace."** Ever since Eve believed the words of the tempter, **"Ye shall not surely die,"** men have flattered themselves that they can have peace though they disobey GOD. Of this false peace someone has truly said: "It is the friendship of Joab, concealing his murderous dagger. It is the slumber of Samson in the lap of Delilah, softly depriving him of his locks. It is a sleep obtained by opium. It is the loss of feeling, the presage of death. It is the calm of the Dead Sea, the consequence and evidence of a curse. Thus we have observed that before a fall of exceedingly heavy rain, the wind has been unusually still. Thus travelers inform us that before an earthquake the air is uncommonly serene."

Man Cannot Earn or Merit Genuine Peace. Some time ago there appeared a letter written by an octogenarian, a man highly respected in his church. Among other things the letter contained this statement, "I am enjoying the happy remembrance of having lived, not to self or sin, but to do good and to lead others to JESUS." About the same time the editor of a Presbyterian journal said: "We can insure full happiness only by living no one day whose memory will make us ashamed, or give us pain, as we sit in the eventide shadows and recall it. An unholy life yields a harvest of wretchedness and misery in old age. A life of obedience to GOD, of personal purity, will make old age like a garden of fruits and flowers."

Are these two statements true, viewed in the light of GOD's Word? Do the Scriptures teach that a blameless, spotless life is the true source of peace and happiness in old age, or at any other time in man's life? If peace only springs from conscious rectitude, is there any need or any room for the Gospel? If peace can only be secured by a life of purity and good works, where is the man that can honestly claim it? Is there no peace for those who are conscious that they have not always been good, that they are not good now? If these statements are true, then there is neither peace nor happiness possible for all who realize the sorrowful fact that they have for years led a sinful life.

It is not good news to sinful men to hear the words: **"Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him."** There is no comfort or encouragement for the awakened sinner to be told that only a life of purity can afford peace, or fruit and flowers in old age. That is certainly not the Gospel; it is

rather the law. It is the stern message of the Old Testament and not the good news of the New Testament. A peace wrested from the contemplation of right living and personal purity lacks stability. It is built on a foundation of sand. For where is there a person who is not conscious of a wrong step, a wrong desire, a wrong word, a wrong thought somewhere in his history? No, man cannot earn or merit true peace.

True peace is the gift of CHRIST. How the New Testament writers ring out this truth! "**For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us**" (Ephesians 2:14).

To the Roman Christians Paul wrote, "**Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**" (Romans 5:1). And again, "**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus**" (Romans 8:1).

JESUS procured this peace for us when He suffered and died to atone for our sins. "**The chastisement of our peace was upon him**" (Isaiah 53:5). He gives this peace to us when we, through His intercession, become reconciled to GOD and are granted a full and free remission of sins. It is a peace founded on an act of divine amnesty.

The peace of our Saviour is a PRECIOUS GIFT. This peace is to the soul what health is to the body. It is not as easy as we may think to define health. When all the organs of our body perform their functions and all the limbs move without causing us any pain; when there is no disarrangement in any part of our complex physical organism to cause disorder or disturbance; when there is no racking pain, no burning fever; when there is a harmonious play of all the functions, which permits a man to be all that his proper nature implies - then we say that we are well or in health.

A man who has the peace of GOD indwelling in his heart or conscience is one who enjoys spiritual health and can say, "It is well with my soul."

This peace does not come, as some false peace does, from ignorance of impending danger. It is not a sleep in deceptive security; it is not produced by closing the eyes against the facts of sin, guilt, and condemnation. It grows out of a well-grounded consciousness of salvation and security in JESUS. He who enjoys this peace knows well what sin is and how its guilt condemns. But he also has the firm assurance that JESUS CHRIST has atoned for his guilt, forgiven his sins, and saved him from condemnation. He sees the storm coming in all its fury, but he has found a safe refuge in CHRIST and feels perfectly secure. He knows the flood that will deluge the whole earth is coming, but he is in the ark, and he rejoices with a grateful heart in his safety.

The peace of our Saviour is a GREAT GIFT. It is a blessing which can only be found in the treasury of Heaven. There is but one such blessing in the whole world. This peace is greater than all other treasures.

Philosophy cannot bestow it, for philosophy cannot cleanse from sin. Good works cannot secure it, for they cannot save. This peace rules in the heart and is enthroned on the brow. It dwells in the palace of conscience and stands on guard in the hall of the senses. It is an assurance of victory, even in view of all that the devil, or the world, or death and judgment can do to alarm

the Christian. In short, so great and glorious is this peace that there is but one Being in the universe who can bestow it. JESUS CHRIST claims this exclusive prerogative when He says, **"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."**

HOW THE MASTER GIVES

"Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The world gives what costs little or nothing. Its gifts and presents are at their best cheap goods. It gives in vain wishes and empty salutations. Its gifts cost no self-sacrifice, no life and blood. But the peace which JESUS gives cost Him the greatest imaginable self-sacrifice, as seen in His incarnation, His life of poverty and self-abnegation, His death by crucifixion. He purchased this peace for us, not with silver and gold, but with His own precious Blood. You can receive this gift today, this very hour, without money and without price.

To obtain this peace you have no hard conditions to meet. You are not compelled to wrest it out of GOD's hand by self-castigation, and tears, and toil, and agonizing prayer. It is yours on one condition and that is that you accept it by faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Paul says, **"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

But remember that on CHRIST's part this peace was purchased at a cost of unspeakable toil, conflict, and sufferings. It costs us nothing. Nevertheless it is a costly gift, for it was purchased by the toil and sufferings, the Blood and life of Him who fought, bled, and died to obtain it. Aye, this peace was secured by JESUS, our blessed Redeemer, at an inestimable price; and yet, at the touch of faith it is yours. If you receive JESUS in His saving grace and power into your heart, you get His peace.

The world gives what does not satisfy the soul. It caters to the body, to the outward and transient in man, to his passions and animal propensities. JESUS supplies the inner and eternal needs of the soul, and satisfies its spiritual yearnings and immortal aspirations.

"The world only supplies music for the physical ear and sceneries for the physical eye; CHRIST supplies music for the soul and spiritual sceneries of unspeakable beauty to the eye of faith."

In the fourth chapter of John's Gospel we have one of the most remarkable and impressive incidents in the Bible.

It is the interesting and instructive conversation of our Lord with the woman of Samaria. Speaking of Jacob's well, He said to the woman, **"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."**

In these words the Lord illustrates the difference between the world's giving and His own. There is no peace, no satisfaction that will meet the demands of the soul in the possession of wealth, of honor, of dignity, of rank, of learning. There is peace for the restless soul and repose for the weary spirit only in the trusting, loving fellowship with the Saviour, the blessed JESUS.

The world gives what does not comfort or quiet in trouble. All the favors of the world cannot calm a troubled heart. **"In the world ye shall have tribulation,"** our Lord said. In the world man finds losses, crosses, sickness, bereavements, disappointments, and vexations; but none of its pleasures, honor, riches, or any other gifts can comfort, calm, and support him in these troubles and afflictions. But like a rock in the midst of life's storm and surging sea, unmoved by all this turmoil, stands our Lord and Saviour in heavenly majesty and whispers to His troubled disciples, **"My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."**

To the Christian the world does not cease to be troublesome. Sickness will not keep aloof from you any more than the worldly man. Death will bereave you of your loved ones the same as other people. In this respect the outward world will be to you the same as to the people who are not Christians. But having GOD's grace and CHRIST's peace in your heart, it will not be troubled, neither will it be afraid.

Calmly and triumphantly you can sing your song of victory: **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"** (Romans 8:35, 37).

The world gives what is only transient. Earthly things soon vanish and the pleasures connected with them are fleeting and momentary. The things which so many eagerly desire and pursue, the pleasures and riches, the honors and vain shows of the world, are passing away like the dreams of the night. Shall we set our hearts upon such fleeting things as the world gives? Death will sever all connections with the world and its gifts and favors. They can give us neither help nor hope in the dying hour.

In a battle an officer was mortally wounded. When surrounded by his brother officers, he, full of anguish and dismay, cried out: "Oh! I would give ten thousand worlds, if I had them, if I possessed that peace which gladdened the heart of a dying soldier whom I saw lying under a tree, for he declared that he possessed the peace of GOD which passeth all understanding. I know nothing of that peace! I die miserable, for I die in despair!"

Dear friend, accept CHRIST's gift of peace. Remember, you may search everywhere for peace, but you will find it nowhere until you come to JESUS. He will give you rest.

Brother Christian, Sister Christian, you need that peace. If you have lost it, if some shadow has come between you and the Saviour, go back to your prayer closet. Humbly, penitently, confess your sins. Dedicate your life afresh and anew to the Son of GOD. Joy like a river will over you flow.

Then you, unsaved dear one, man, woman, child! There is no peace in this world except in CHRIST! There is no peace in the world to come except in CHRIST. Gladly, freely, fully He offers it to you, the pardon for every sin, the power for every circumstance.

Receive JESUS CHRIST as your personal Saviour. Let Him into your heart. The flood-tides of

peace will bring you blessings untold. Confess and keep on confessing the Son of GOD before men. Let this day be your natal day in the Lord. Heaven and earth, GOD, angels, and men will rejoice in a sinner who has come home. Amen.

~ end of chapter 4 ~
