

My Thoughts for Sunday, 22 November 2015

That Illusive, Ever-Present, Peace of Jesus

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

Jesus was reassuring His disciples that even though He was going away, He was leaving them with a peace that was to sustain them; the peace that was to give them the strength and courage to do His will in His absence. This peace was to extend to all those who truly wanted to become His followers, then and now. Yes, my friend, this means you and me too. Do you always feel that peace? Do you always feel that comfort from His words recorded for us at Matthew 28:20, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”*?

When you were driving home from work tonight and Mr. Inarush cut you off at the freeway, did you hear those words of Jesus, *“My peace I give you”*, or did you get that urge to retaliate? Earlier in the afternoon, when your boss called you in for your annual review, did you hear those words again, *“My peace I give you”*? Did you go into that office, with the peace of Jesus, knowing that you had done your job to the very best of your ability? This peace from Jesus can sometimes be very illusive considering our sinful state of existence. Jesus knew of our sinful state when He gave this promise. He knew the trials we would be facing in this fallen world. He knew because He had already walked in our shoes. He went through many of the same or similar trials when He came to redeem us. Let’s look at some of the trials His apostles went through as they tried to place their trust in this promise Jesus gives and means for us.

Peter is believed to have been crucified, upside down on a cross.

Paul, at about the same time was martyred by beheading in Rome.

James the son of Zebedee was murdered by Herod Agrippa about eleven years after the death of Christ, as recorded in Acts 12.

James the son of Alphaeus was thrown from the temple, stoned, and then beaten on the head with a club.

In all, it is believed that eight of the twelve disciples were martyred. Would any of these endings, for you, be terribly conducive to experiencing that sometimes illusive peace of our Lord, Jesus? Hopefully none of us will ever have to suffer these trials.

We need to rest assured that regardless of what we may have to go through, that peace of Jesus is still present and freely given to all who believe in Him. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we already believe the tough part—that Jesus, God incarnate, came down from His place in heaven to die a criminal’s death on a cross that we might be set free from our bondage of sin. Why is it so difficult to believe His words in Matthew 28:20, *“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”*? Why would God send His Son, whom He loved, down to redeem us from our fallen state only to leave us to flounder in this evil world on our own? Are we going to repeatedly doubt the promises of Jesus as His disciples did? Remember how they feared the turbulent storm with the winds and rain, as they thought they were going to drown on the Sea of Galilee? They were so afraid they accused Jesus of not caring if they were drowned and He rebuked them, calling them men of little faith. Do you have the faith it takes to believe in His promises today? As we watch the turn of events in our lives in this once Christian country slowly falter and deteriorate, many feel great fear. We seem to see the influx of Satan’s hordes appearing to overpower Christianity, infringing on the very concepts of our faith. Will we remain true to that faith in light of the turmoil arising? Are we going to begin to doubt God’s

promises to us? We may begin to doubt our Lord through weak faith, but the truth of His promises is still intact. He does not go back on His word! God does not change! Take to heart the promise of peace He has given us. Seriously take it to the very innermost of your being. With this belief comes trust and when we trust, really trust, in our Lord and His Word we can have no room for fear. The apostle Paul gave us some sound encouragement when he wrote to the Roman Christians and us. *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”*

Do you experience doubts from time to time that Christ is not near you? Take the time to hear His promise again. *“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* This is Jesus speaking to you! He said “I am with YOU.” Perhaps it is not Jesus who has moved away. Maybe it is you who is setting the distance from Him, in your doubt, fears, worldly desires or some other “Me” issue. Try returning to Him. Get down on your knees, pray for His direction and stop looking to your own interests, wants and needs. Remember what we were told in Matthew 6:33. *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”* God knows better than you what you need for your life. He has promised it all to you if you just follow His direction for obtaining it.

This peace that He has promised you is not a piece of the lottery! It’s not a piece of worldly wealth or personal gain. No, it is a PEACE not PIECE. It is the peace of contentment, knowing that no matter what ill may befall you in this world, He is holding something specifically for you in His world where you can never lose it and no one can take it from you. It is the peace in knowing that He is going to give you more than you could ever imagine or deserve. It is *“the peace of God, which transcends all understanding.”* (Philippians 4:7)

Jesus went on to say in our text from John 14:27, *“I do not give to you as the world gives.”* We all know that the world can never give us a lasting peace. There has been no peace anywhere in this world, by man’s endeavors, since the beginning of time. What little peace one might experience from our world is at best very fleeting—“here today, gone tomorrow.” The temporary peace that the world might offer can never come close to the peace that Jesus is speaking of. He is promising us an eternal and everlasting peace in knowing that we have truly been redeemed by God from our sinful fallen state to full acceptance by Him as sanctified individuals, worthy to live in His Kingdom. We are never going to realize this peace by watching the nightly news or reading all the terror mongering posts on Facebook and the other social media sites. These posts generally are meant to produce doubt in our leaders, fear of the unknown and hate, if we believe all the propaganda spread by the hate mongers. Satan has a very large army of supporters working overtime to take our attention as far as possible from the truths and promises given to His followers by our loving and righteous God.

Remember what Paul wrote to Timothy while he, himself was suffering at the hands of those who would destroy Christianity. *“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.”* (1 Timothy 1:7) We, too, have been given that power and love and discipline to live our lives just as Paul did. Are you facing turmoil in your lives, pain, suffering and that natural fear of the unknown by our sinful condition? Recognize our great need to believe and accept those promises of Jesus as the truths that they are. They are for you and for me! They are for all believers in Christ! Bring the Word of salvation to all, that all may believe!

Take to heart the words written by Peter regarding the wishes of our loving God. Do your part. Live your faith and bring other sinful, lost souls, regardless of color, race, religion or personal beliefs, out of the darkness of this fallen world. *“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”* 1 Peter 3:9