



One Step to Crisis Relief

How Will You Cope with Your Next Crisis?

I've had plenty of times when it got rough, I mean really bad, and I needed peace. Perhaps one of the worst was when our youngest son in the middle of the night started having a violent seizure. None of our other kids ever had one and both Mary Jo and I were scared to death. Times like this come without warning. We often don't have time to psychologically prepare for what we are facing! The loss of a job, a health crisis, the collapse of a marriage, the son or daughter who gets arrested, a looming church split, a friend's emotional breakdown all can spring upon us and leave us in shambles. You can't just wave such sudden crises away either. You don't wake up from them like a nightmare and they are gone. You need something inside you to help see you through it. You need peace, peace that carries you; that sustains you when life is tough to face.

Jesus made a statement that has offered great hope to many. He said, "**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 NIV) The difficulty though is recognizing what sort of peace Jesus has for you. Is it actually the elimination of problems, relief from trials? Many teach that Christianity promises the end of your troubles. Pray and it's gone.. Prosperity, great health and success are all yours if you have enough faith. Yet listen to what Jesus says about what is coming. Addressing those who embrace Christianity because they think it is a hedge against hardship, Jesus shared a parable to let the cat out of the bag regarding how things are, even for passionate Christians. He used the metaphor of soils to describe how many react to hardship. He said that some of us are like a seed that is planted on rocky ground which springs up happily but quickly shrivels and dies. Here is the problem for this seed. **But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.** (Matthew 13:21 NIV)

The point is this. Just because you are a believer in Christ doesn't mean you won't have bigtime troubles. Jesus famously told us, "**Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**" (Matthew 6:34 NIV) Of course, Jesus is mainly insisting that we need to be rid of worry. There is though an oft overlooked acknowledgement. Each day has trouble. Why do we act as if it shouldn't; as if it is the exception rather than the rule? Remember that Jesus is talking to His people, not those who hate Him or are estranged. Each day brings trouble to the Christian. Just before He went to be crucified, the Lord gave this assessment of things. "**In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.**" (John 16:33 NIV) So there it is. Problems are on the way and they don't run from us because we have faith in Christ. So why does Jesus crush our dreams for a trouble-free day or week? It is so we can realize what sort of peace He offers us. "**I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.**" (John 16:33 NIV)

The peace Jesus has for you is not an external peace, not the removal of your troubles but something much more valuable. As I mentioned before, just because you have an easy life doesn't mean you will be happy. Solomon proved that. What you are being offered is peace that enables you to rise above your troubles, to face them triumphantly. Remember Jesus' exact promise to you. **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.** (John 14: 27 NIV) What's important here is that Jesus is saying

that He is giving you His peace. It is not His intention to strengthen your peace or upgrade it. Rather, He has His own peace to offer you. What sort of peace are we talking about? It is the peace Jesus had when He calmly slept in the boat as the storm raged on the Sea of Galilee and His disciples, some of whom were seasoned fishermen, feared for their lives. It is the peace Jesus had when He calmly met the mob that came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing full well He would be crucified if He did not fight back. It is the peace Jesus had as He faced death and the mocking thief on the cross. It is Jesus' own peace that He has for you if you want it.

So how do you gain the peace of Jesus? Notice what Jesus says in John 16: 33. **"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace."** "In" Jesus you can have His peace. That's it! That is your answer. And yet, what does that mean? What does "in me" entail? Let's look at another statement He made in the famous passage where He compared life with Him to being attached to a vine. **"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."** (John 15:7 NIV) Jesus promises that if we do something, then God will do something. If we remain in Jesus, God will give us what we wish to have. We can't give time to the last part of this today, "ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." It is the first part that is in question. "If you remain in me..." is exactly what grants us His peace. Being in Him. But what is this then, "remain in me" or "remain in Jesus"? Here it is.

When you look at this statement in the original Greek language, there are two parts. "If you remain in me" and "my words remain in you". It sounds in the English translation as if these are two different requirements, remain in me and my words remain in you. It however is actually a restating of the first phrase with the second phrase. They are connected by the Greek word "kai" which can mean and, but or even. "And" and "but" we understand. "And" implies these are two separate matters. "But" would mean that we are not to do the first, we are to do the second. That of course can't be the case. "Even" is how I am certain it is intended and would read like this. If you remain in me, even my words remain in you. Thus, my words remain in you is what remain in me means. We may not grasp what remaining in Jesus means but we can be certain what "my words remain in you" indicates. Do what Jesus tells you to do and don't ignore what He has to say. It is quite simple. Jesus' peace is the property of those who pay attention to Him, who follow and obey Him.

John the Apostle tells of a time when the disciples went across the Sea of Galilee without Jesus. In the middle of the journey, a strong wind was blowing, and the waves grew treacherous. In the distance, they spotted Jesus walking on the water and they were terrified. Probably they did not realize it was Him. Maybe they thought it was a spirit or a ghost. When Jesus called to them, "I, I am, don't be afraid", they were comforted and took Him into the boat. The text says that "immediately" the boat reached the shore where they were heading. Life would be so much easier for us and we would be greatly encouraged and enjoy much peace if we would just take Jesus into our boat. Let Him join us in what we face.

Author Philip Yancey tells of a friend of his who lived in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Chicago. He used to organize work teams to fix up buildings so that homeless and underprivileged people could own their own places. He was working with a sandblaster and had air pumping in through his helmet when the compressor started leaking carbon monoxide into it. Carbon monoxide of course is a poisonous gas that is both odorless and invisible. He passed out from it and was dying. A friend of his was driving on a highway hundreds of miles away and unmistakably heard God say to him, "Ken, you need to check on Bud." It was such a strange message and completely inconvenient. He was a five-hour drive away. The friend was so flummoxed by the strange directive that he passed by two different routes that would have been the best way back to Chicago. Only after the Lord kept after him did Ken turn around and go search for his friend. When he got there, Ken found Bud unconscious and dragged him to the hospital, literally saving his life. Because Ken let the word of God remain in him, direct him, he was used by God to be a miracle. God's peace is available at levels that cannot be produced by yourself. If though you let Christ have His way with you, His peace will take over and carry you when your troubles arrive.