

THE GREAT PREVAILER

“These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation [affliction, pressure]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

The people of the world plead impassionately for peace. As Jesus perceived with wrenching compassion, the people *“fainted, and were scattered abroad [beat down and pursued], as sheep having no shepherd”* (Matthew 9:36). Caught in the crossfire of the avaricious aspirations of world leaders, the people are fearful and frustrated. All they want is the freedom to feed themselves—to work with their fields and earn their bread, and pursue their private fascinations. In their search for peace they don’t know where to turn—whom to blame; whom to trust to bring order out of the cosmic chaos.

The truth of the matter is that the complexities of the present world are beyond the capacity of the human mind to solve. All the bright hopes that accompany political change soon disintegrate in the realism of the human condition. Avarice, egoism, bias, and a prevailing inadequacy soon dull the cutting edge of progress in solving world problems. Ineptitude follows ineptitude in weary succession, as civilization sinks in the quagmire of unresolved and unresolvable crises. The quality of leadership is inevitably secondary to the political forces that bring leadership to power. So, lamentably, it is not the qualified that lead the world, but the ambitious, the opportunist, the power broker.

So what is the hope for the world? Is civilization moving inexorably to complete desolation? In moods of pessimism, it is tempting to assume so. Of course, there is the irrepressible optimist who begs us “keep the faith;” “think positively;” “sow a little love;” etc., etc., etc.; in silly aphorisms that sound great, but mean nothing in the crushing realities of human failure. Keep the faith? In what? Oneself? Others? Nature? Tell that to the Colombians; the people of Mexico City; the hundreds of millions oppressed by totalitarian governments; the millions of tragedy-scarred lives that cover the face of the earth.

So then there is faith in God. What of that? Can we not believe that if we really, really, trust Him, He will preserve us from all harm? Ask the prophets; Job; Peter; Paul; the Martyrs; the “prisoners for Christ’s sake.” Paul told Timothy that those who would reign with Christ must suffer with Him (II Timothy 2:10-12). Peter says that Christ left us an example of suffering that we should follow in his steps (I Peter 2:21). Paul tells the Philippians that suffering is a gift—in fact a “gracious gift (Charidzo).”

And what of the world: What is God going to do with it? What hope do we have? There is something that all Christians must understand. God has no intention of nullifying the consequences of sin in the world. People would love to do as they please without fear of consequences. Adam and Eve made that mistake in the Garden of Eden, and it has been the prevailing passion of humanity ever since. But, if God intervened to eliminate consequences, it would defeat His purpose of bringing the world to repentance. If He would correct all the conditions that today are the consequences of sin and evil, released in the fall—the earthly dominion of Satan—would there be a universal turning to God? By

no means! There would be rather a universal assumption that mankind had at last solved its problems—who needs God?

Then if God is not going to solve these problems, what is going to happen? The world is going to continue in its present turmoil and turbulence until Christ comes. Is it going to be blown up by nuclear holocaust? By no means. How do we know that? Because at the time Christ comes back to deliver Jerusalem and stands on the Mount of Olives, the nations are still in place (Zechariah 14). Christ does not come back to desolation. Jerusalem is surrounded by nations who challenge her. After the millennium these nations will be destroyed with a stroke, but until Christ comes there is no indication of cosmic destruction. Nevertheless, there will be continual earthly chaos orchestrated by Satan, the arch-enemy of God and His people. Totally blind to the truth, Satan will think, right to the end, that He has a chance of overthrowing God and subverting His people. So tribulation will reign on earth until He is removed. Then where is our peace? It is in the spirit realm, and not in the world.

“In Me, Peace... In The World, Tribulation.”

Jesus did not say “In Me, as the solver of problems,” but “In Me.” Christ is the essence of the spirit realm. As such, He is our eternal dwelling place—the substance of our eternal life. This is clearly expressed in the intercessory prayer of Christ before the event of the cross and the resurrection, where He secured that place for us. This is the key—not the power of Christ making a better world, but the power of Christ joining us to his spirit, so that we can be on earth as He was—invincible in the spirit within and coping with the world without.

As far as the cosmic chaos is concerned, it is not going to be resolved. In the thousands of years of human history we have only learned more expertly how to destroy one another, but not how to live with one another. When human degradation has come to the full, and there is absolutely no hope for human solutions, then will Christ come to finish His redemptive process and deliver His creatures from the grip of the evil one.

Meanwhile, He says to His people “Let not your heart be troubled.” In John 14, Jesus tells His disciples of the eternal dwelling place. “In my Father’s house are many dwelling places.” The Greek word for “dwelling places,” *monai* was translated in the Old English of the King James by a word akin to “Manse,” which referred not to a palatial residence, but simply an abode. Surely Jesus was not attempting to alleviate the hearts of the disciples by offering a grand residence—however palatial. He was on the way to the cross. Why would He talk about the very thing He had told them to give up? Would the prospect even of a true “Mansion” have been anything but a mockery at this desperate hour? Imagine a father on his deathbed comforting his children by the thought that after all they stood to inherit his mansion upon his death? Such thinking is too absurd to consider.

No, indeed, the abode Jesus speaks of is the abode of the Spirit as the rest of the chapter clearly reveals. “*We [the Father and I] will come unto you and make our abode with you*” (V. 23). Jesus had said previously, “*And if I go and prepare*

a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am that you may be also" (V. 3). But what was the preparation? It was the death and resurrection and ascension to glory, which resulted in His coming back in the form of the Holy Spirit to take up His permanent abode in the hearts of His people. He certainly did not return to glory to "build a housing project." But, coming again to dwell within us, would make us at the same time citizens of the universe. So the peace of Christ is not the peace of tranquil circumstances, but the peace of His indwelling spirit—a peace that transcends all earthly turbulence.

I Have Overcome The World.

Jesus is called by Isaiah, "the Prince of Peace." The Hebrew word for "Prince" is *shar* which means not only "ruler," but "overcomer," "prevailer." When Jacob came to the ultimate crisis in his life, he was met by an angel of God at a place which he later called "Peniel (face of God)." All night he wrestled, and at the breaking of day, triumphed. At this point, the Messenger of God (probably Christ, himself) changed his name to "Israel (Prince with God)," "For," He said, "*as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed*" (Genesis 32:28). Christ has prevailed (not will prevail) over the world. The back of the enemy has been broken. No more will sin have dominion over the world, although for the present, the consequences of evil are still apparent. Why then the tribulation, the affliction, the pain? That is only in the temporary material realm. Jesus suffered in the material realm, as we do, but the spirit realm where Christ dwells is completely impervious to the enemy.

If we expect anything of the material realm, we are subject to disappointment. We cannot put any weight whatsoever on our earthly circumstances. Christians are not preserved from the consequences of a world savaged by Satan and by human failure, but are given the inner strength to cope with them. So peace is ours, not in the cessation of earthly afflictions, but in the triumph of our spirits where dwells forever, the Prince of Peace—the Great Prevailer.

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