



A V o i c e F r o m T h e W i l d e r n e s s

Peace or Panic?

It is a new year - nineteen hundred ninety nine. We are on the verge of a new decade, a new century, a new millennium. A new page in history is opening and with it - questioning, a sense of unrest, fear, and panic. A crisis is about to come, people feel it, talk about it, and fear it. Everywhere **panic grips the heart!**

While it is true that a crisis is coming, so also is it true that Christ is coming. Many are focused on the crisis and not on Christ - thus they find panic rules them instead of experiencing peace, that peace which can be ours only in having our wills fully submitted to God's will. Having this experience of **Christ abiding in our hearts will bring peace** regardless of the circumstances or crisis we find ourselves in. Our focus should be to have our lives in complete harmony with Christ, His will our greatest delight, and doing faithfully what He has for us today and each day to come.

We are told that it is in a crisis that character is revealed, and that when God brings us into trial, He has a purpose to accomplish for our good. (COL 142 & DA 126). The little trials that we may face daily or a major

crisis that may come are all allowed because of God's love for each of us and **His desire to save each** to the uttermost. For it is in these that our characters are developed and prepared for Christ's coming and His eternal kingdom.

We were in Europe for meetings and were traveling via train from Amsterdam to Wales due to the storms on the North Sea making our scheduled ferry crossing too dangerous. In the course of our trip we had to change several times to different trains. Upon arriving in London we had to change from the Eurorail to the London Underground to cross the city to another train station to catch our last train to Wales. We were traveling with a lot of luggage because of our extended trip. When we got down to the Underground train we all waited for just a moment for the next train to pull in. It came in quickly, the doors flew open and people were pushing out and others in. Tom, Josiah, and I quickly got on with our luggage, but due to the crowded conditions there was no room for the girls to get on at that door with their luggage, so they went to the next door

down, still opening into the same train car. Just as they started to get on the doors began to close. A man, standing inside the train, tried to keep the door open by putting his hands in it and trying to pull it back, but to no avail. The doors are electronic and open and shut automatically regardless of human interference. There we were in the train being whisked away and our two girls standing on the Underground train platform with luggage in hand, but with no tickets or money, and not knowing where they were, where they were to go, or where we were going either.

Now imagine just for a moment what your feeling would be. What thoughts would be going through your mind? Would you be at peace or would you panic in the crisis?

My initial reaction was shock. I could not believe that we were separated. My mind began to think of all the *what if's*. I didn't have peace. My mind was flooded with thoughts accompanied with emotions that any parent can quickly relate to. These emotions that I speak of are very real! My insides were churned up like a raging sea. Immediately I felt that *sick feeling* that comes when anxious thoughts take control.

I have recognized that "without Him - I can do nothing." John 15:5. I often pray for God to show me when I begin to stray from His will and keeping and He does. Often I recognize my need of Christ in my thoughts before my emotions get involved. But I am also learning that if I miss it there the next recognition of my need of a Saviour and His call to my heart is when my emotions, whether they be frustration, irritation, hurt, or anxiousness, begin to develop.

As the train was speeding down the track, I felt my helplessness and realized my need of Christ. Amidst all the clamors of self and the crisis, I recognized His call to my heart and by faith - not feelings - I yielded myself to Him and prayed for His keeping power and protection for our girls.

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When we got off the train at the first stop, less than two minutes from where we left, I had peace. The raging sea inside was calmed, I was trusting that God's will would be done. There my husband found an employee for the London Underground train system and told him what had happened and asked if he could call back to the previous station and get a message to our girls to get on the next train. He called back and relayed the message. In just a moment the next train sped into the

platform, but our girls were not on it. At that moment, the troubled, anxious thoughts returned, but before they took control, I again prayed for the peace that comes only from God. Then another train came and left, but still no girls. With each train that came to the platform we looked carefully and quickly to see if our girls were on board. In spite of the continuing crisis I still had peace, the peace that comes from continuing to respond to our Saviour. He has promised, "**Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace**, whose mind is

stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Isaiah 26:2. And He Who has promised will also do it! The tumultuous sea of anxiousness never rose again, my thoughts never doubted. I knew that God knew where the girls were and in His time and according to His will they would come. We were doing all we could to send communication back to our girls, but still they didn't come. Finally, after several more minutes and trains, we got word that they would be on the next train.

What a happy and wonderful reunion it was when our girls got off the train! But friends, it was not the ended crisis that brought my peace, it was the conscious choice to trust and surrender to God continually throughout the crisis. The girls told us of their concerns of how we would feel and how they had found peace in this experience to help them through the crisis.

Someone reading this might get the impression that I stood on the train platform carefree, unconcerned,

with no earnest expectation as each train rolled to a stop. It is difficult to describe in just a few short paragraphs all the thoughts and feelings of an experience that might take 15 or 20 minutes to tell. Even though my peace may not have equaled the peace of Jesus sleeping in the boat in the wild storm on Galilee, my peace was as real and deep to me, because of my surrender and dependence upon God at that time.

Our peace or panic is an indication of our willingness to accept the work of righteousness to be wrought out in us. Isaiah 32:17 says, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace: and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." How true this is! It is not in us to gain the peace, it is not in man, but rather the work of righteousness. Our part is to take hold of it as our own peace in the midst of crisis. Our peace is the evidence of His power to keep us to the uttermost. It is the effect of His righteousness that works peace in us.

So what keeps us from having peace? Here are just a few: harboring negative thoughts and feelings toward someone; holding onto bitterness, jealousy, or animosity; holding onto a pet or cherished sin; waiting for peace until I get my way; and resisting the gentle convictions of the Spirit. The list could go on, but the sad reality is we can't have these and peace at the same time. These and many other manifestations of self-love destroy our peace. When we refuse the way of peace, or do not know what Jesus can do in us, we panic in the crisis.

This was what happened to Saul. He had not allowed God to have his heart, but continued to seek after his own selfish ways. He had no peace, yet David had peace, in spite of being hunted by Saul. **True peace comes from true surrender**, and can be ours at any moment, regardless of our circumstance or our past, when we call out to God to save us. He says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Psalm 50:15. David was not a perfect

man, but he was willing to yield to God and be managed by Him. Saul, on the other hand, was unwilling to surrender to God and instead let self manage and rule. When his crisis came he had no disposition to surrender and in panic he sought out a witch for counsel, frantic to find peace, a peace that could come only from God, not apart from Him.

We may say "I'd never do that!" But friends, what are we doing right now in this time of preparation? Are we being self-willed and unforgiving? Are we picking and

choosing the parts of truth that fit our personality while rejecting others because it crosses self? If we are not now **seeking after the Prince of Peace** to bring Him into our hearts and lives personally and practically then we are preparing ourselves to panic in the crisis instead of being at peace with Christ in the crisis. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." Isaiah 48:22.

This is what Judas did. He walked everyday with Christ for three and a half years. Yet he held onto one *little* part of his self-will, his self-nature - his greed. For each of us it can be something different. Judas felt that a partial following and yielding was sufficient. He continued to rationalize and justify his course in his own mind and convinced himself, in spite of the pleadings of the Lord to his heart, that his way was really better. When the crisis came he was unprepared by his own day by day, moment by moment choices. When the crisis came Judas panicked and took his own life - a life that he had tried to save for years. How sad! Jesus says, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Mark 8:34 &35. Our part is to **come to Christ now** just as we are and give all to Him accepting His peace.

If you find yourself saying, "This sounds a lot like me

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and I didn't think I was that bad," don't become discouraged, rejoice - because Jesus truly is a wonderful Saviour and will give you all you need. But often we don't feel our need until we see our condition. This was the experience of John the Beloved. He saw his true condition in the trials he faced. He recognized his violent temper, how easily he was wounded by others, his resentful spirit, his pride and many other deficiencies, but John did not give up in discouragement. He **yielded to the Saviour** and allowed the transforming grace of Christ to work a complete change in him. When he faced the crisis in the garden where Jesus was taken by cruel hands to Pilot's judgment hall, John followed his Master even though he didn't understand His mission. He was not afraid to be known as one of His followers. He wanted to be with Jesus.

Like John, we may recognize our weaknesses and failures but are we willing to allow the transforming power of Jesus Christ to completely change us? "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1. The justification by faith spoken of here is a full and complete yielding of myself, my self-will, to the ownership of Jesus Christ. The ownership?!? "I want to be the boss" - is the nature each of us has from the youngest to the oldest and that is why we often don't have peace in the everyday circumstances that don't go our way. Instead we panic, meaning self immediately takes control and tries to find a way to please self, thinking then peace will come, but it never does. "It is the love of self that destroys our peace." MB 16. We can never find peace - true peace and rest outside of Christ. But we, like John, David, and countless others, can have this experience - His peace in the trials we face everyday and in the crisis as well. It can be ours at this very moment. The choice is ours.

I think we all desire this peace and I believe we are tired of doing it "my way" with the results we get. I know the heartache and eruptions of self's way, but I also know the experience that a full surrender to Christ brings - "a peace," real peace, "that passes all under-

standing," (Phil. 4:7) that can and will keep my heart (emotions) and mind (thoughts) in trying circumstances.

The decision lies with us moment by moment. Now is our time to prepare for the crisis by choosing Christ to be our Lord and Master in every situation and interaction we face during the day. There is a crisis coming, "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." Daniel 12:1. Are we preparing? Are we making use of these daily circumstances and trials to have our lives and hearts cleansed from all sin and self and finding the true peace that only comes when Jesus is the Lord of our lives? Our greatest preparation for the crisis ahead, is to do faithfully the work that God has given for us today. He can be ours - *now*, His peace can be realized in each heart at this very moment. For He has promised, "These things have I spoken unto you, that **in Me ye might have peace**. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: **I have overcome the world**." John 16:33.

A Voice From The Wilderness

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