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"PRAYER AND THE WAY TO SERENITY"

2 Thess. 3:16

Top selling books today: How To Stop Worrying And Start Living -- Peace Of Mind -- The Way To Power And Peace Of Mind -- Understand Fear -- A Guide To Confident Living.

The abundance of such material may tell us there is a scarcity of peace.

Latest drugs, concoctions called tranquilizers. Suggest something of our times. Popular names have been given them - labels on drugs.

The culture of Paul's day did not have the books or drugs but did have anxiety, fretfulness.

Christian people had not learned Christ's secret of the undistracted heart.

2 Thess. 3:5-16 - Are two brief prayers of healing grace which bring to a close his second letter.

Two verses of intercessions separated by a dozen verses, may be thought of as closely linked.

Both are concerned with stability, tranquility. Paul had found this in Jesus Christ. In disturbance and restlessness.

2:16-17 - "And may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who has loved us and has given us in His grace eternal consolation and good hope, comfort your hearts and make you steadfast in every good work and word."

Consider what sort of peace this is, for which the Apostle prays.

I. PEACE IN THE MIDST OF DISTRACTION

In this noisy world, how futile is the wish for peace that is externally conditioned and guaranteed!

With respect to the surroundings the Christian's serenity is a serenity, not because of, but in spite of!

Ample evidence of the situations.

1/ Take the (distraction of indecency.) Paul felt its power, knew the Christians felt it.

3:1-2 - "Brethren, pray for us, that the words of the Lord may have free course and be glorified; even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men."

2/ Ellicott's C translates - "These monstrous and depraved people."

Clearly, the enraged, vengeful Jewish monsters who are described in Acts 17:5-9 by Luke, "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar."

Peace in the midst of that! Can anyone have peace we are prone to ask.

Paul says yes, when he prays for it, he is not baying at the moon. He is

confidently asking for the possible.

John Wesley is recorded, preaching one day in evil section of London when two ruffians appeared at the edge of the crowd. Who is this preacher? They asked, roughly. What right has he to come here and spoil our fun? We'll show him. A moment later, each with a stone in hand, began elbowing their beligerent way through the throng.

Just as they were ready to let fly at Wesley's face, he began talking about the power of Christ to change the lives of sinful men.

It is reported that, even as he was speaking, "a serene beauty spread over his face." The two men, obviously quite overcome by it, stood with their arms poised in mid air.

Then one turned to the other, and said, "He ain't a man, Bill, he ain't a man."

Their arms came down. The stones dropped from their hands. As Wesley continued to preach, their countenance softened and hearts moved.

The sermon over, Wesley made his way through the crowd. People had respect for the preacher, one of the boys almost tenderly reached out and touched the evangelist's coat.

Mr. Wesley paused, placed his hands on the heads of the lads and said "God bless you, my boys!" And he passed on, one of the ruffians turned to the other and said, "He is a man, Bill, he is a man. He's a man like God!"

Was that serene beauty on Wesley's face the playing of an actor's part? Or was it the outer reflection of an inner presence.

2 - Distraction of undisciplined.

V. 11 - Now we hear that you have some among you living quite undisciplined lives . . . busy only in other people's affairs.

V. 6 - His advice - "Don't associate with the brother whose life is undisciplined."

The brother who was disorderly - he had an idea that ordinary activities and responsibilities were of little value.

By misreading the "blessed hope", Paul warned they were unteachable and opinionated.

Such persons make it hard for Christians with high loyalties.

We have all felt the sharp edge of this problem, some folks like to ruffle the pool of our peace.

They aren't liars - they are just ^{Not} careful about the accuracy of the things they say.

They aren't dishonest - they are careless and slow in meeting their obligations.

They aren't slanders - they are just thoughtless about other people's reputation and influence.

Knowing this - Paul prayed - The Lord of Peace give you peace.

3 - Distraction of indolence.

V. 10-11 Moffatt - "We used to charge you even when we were with you, if any man will not work, he shall not eat: But we are informed some of your number are loafing."

Henry Ward Beecher answer to the letter of a student who wrote him for an "easy berth".

"Young man, you cannot be an editor; do not try law; do not think of the ministry; do not try to be a merchant; abhor politics; don't practice medicine; be not a farmer; a soldier; a sailor; don't study; don't think. None of these are easy. Oh, my son, you have come into a hard world. I know of only one easy place in it, and that is in the grave!"

The Christian peace is in the midst of distraction.

Look at the ^{Paul} man who are praying for these Thessalonian believers. The wide travel - the heckling of critics rang frequently in his ears. The brutality of his persecutors drew blood from his back. The care of the churches pressed upon his mind. Despite this no one spoke more often about this peace that passeth understanding.

II. PEACE BY MEANS OF DIRECTION

"May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."

"Guide your hearts." Wey.

"Pilot your hearts." Ar. May.

Prof. Rollo May wrote a book 1953 - "Man's search for himself." First chapter - "Loneliness and anxiety." He said the chief problem of people is the feeling of emptiness and the sense of undirectedness.

David Riesman, "before the first World War people were more "inner-directed". One has motives, standards, ambitions which command his respect and shape outer conduct.

"Outer-directness" is one lacking strong convictions and are governed by the pressures and desires of those about them.

Illustrates two ways of life: gyroscope, has an inner stability that makes for a calm mind. Radar, is perpetually in stress and getting directions from others.

Therefore, on our streets or those of Thessalonica we need some to pray "And the Lord directs your hearts."

1. The Sovereignty of the Guide (The Lord Directs)

At this point many of us hit foul balls in the game of life.

We don't want to stay within the guide lines of fair play.

Whoever said "A man's worst troubles begin when he takes it in hand to do as he pleases." For to be self-ruled means to end in self-ruin.

A motor car is made to run on gasoline. Human beings were made to run not on self-will but on the will of God. Put alcohol or witch hazel in the tank, the car fails to function.

Parable -- ones own will frustrates, stalls, fouls it up.

Worldly miss God's calm control. For a long mile no trouble, at bend of the road, it climbs up in God's seat and takes the reins. It never dies before the cross.

The God-guided life really comes into its own -- George Muller of Bristol testified

"There was a day when I died -- died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will. Died to the world, its approval or censure, died to the approval or blame of my friends, I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

It was this George Muller who said in life's sunset - "I never remember in all my Christian course, a period now of sixty nine years and four months, that I ever sincerely and patiently sought to know the will of God by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of the Word of God, but I have always been directed rightly."

There are not words of sinlessness by qualifying terms - sincerity - patiently - know the will of God.

2. Sphere of the Guidance

"The Lord direct your hearts."

Heart - mind - understanding - affections. Conscience - soul of man - will.

Not uncommon to hear - "My heart tells me one thing and my head tells me another."

A bad heart in view of Scripture is bad thinking, feeling.

A good heart, the mind and emotions have been cleansed and surrendered to God.

Luke 10:27 - Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all Thy heart - Thy soul - strength." God guides the heart in unexpected ways.

3. The Splendour of the ~~Book~~ Hoah

Towards what objective does the Lord's direction carry us?

Two answers:

First: "Into the love of God."

Second: "Into the patient waiting for Christ."

Into the love of God! If we are Christians, aren't we already there? Yes and no.

Here is a vastness beyond our vision unveiled Christ.

Franz Liszt - end of life wrote Sept. 4, 1860 - "The elevation of the Holy Cross, this was my true vocation."

Do you think of the love of God as response. Our love for him rather than his love for us.

William Tyndale in opposition to the king and powers that be translated the Holy Scripture. His dying prayer - "Lord, open the king of England's eyes!"

John Newton wrote -

"Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less;
The heirs of salvation, I know from His Word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

III. PEACE IN THE FORM OF DONATION

"Now the Lord of peace himself gives you peace always by all means." V. 16.

Phillips - "Now may the Lord of peace personally give you his peace at all times and in all ways."

Peace and the presence inseparable.

Doner is greater than the donation.

Giver than his gift.

Nelson of British fleet put on the run a Spanish fleet twice his size. One of his Commanders wrote - "We are half starved and otherwise inconvenienced by being so long out of port. But our reward is -- we are with Nelson."

We are with the Lord of peace.

He is the donor of peace at all times and in all places. To the leprous, blind, lonely, calm to nerves.

The man of the Gadarenes came to Jesus and worshipped him - Mark 5 relates. Results - clothed - right mind - told to go tell friends things Lord had done - peace.