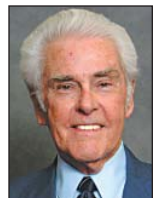


# Our need for peace

In the midst of the multitude of conflicts and acts of violence in our world, the need for peace crowds in upon our consciousness. Recently in Brussels, suicide bombers killed 31 persons and injured hundreds with their extremist actions. The same groups have been identified as carrying out the Paris bombing short weeks ago.



**John Howell**

Paul provides an excellent introduction to our lesson when he tells the Ephesians that Jesus “came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to them that were near” (Ephesians 2:17). What kind of peace do we need?

*Peace with God.* Isaiah speaks virtually the same message from God when he writes, “I have seen his ways, but I will heal him. . . . I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him” (Isa. 57:18, 19).

*Peace with others.* Christ is the Reconciler to overcome enmity and make peace, and we know of no other meeting place where men can be at peace with men. Williams’ translation of 2 Thessalonians 3:16 brings out this idea well: “And may the Lord who gives us peace give you peace in whatever circumstances you may be.”

We must be on our guard not to let the daily news and world events overwhelm us. Nations are at odds, groups within nations fight among themselves, economies are often on the brink of disaster, and nothing feels safe or secure. Apart from Christ, any of these issues would be a cause for anxiety. Jesus becomes our source of strength and comfort in this kind of world.

**Trust in Jesus keeps our hearts from being troubled (John 14:1).** When Jesus gave his disciples this challenging message — “Let not your hearts be troubled...” — he spoke to a group of men whose need for comfort

was excessive. It was well into the evening of Jesus’ last night on earth and they had heard about Judas’ coming betrayal of Jesus even though they did not know who it might be, and also Jesus’ sorrowful announcement to Peter that “before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times” (John 13:38). So when we turn to John 14:1, in the midst of our struggles, the disciples were facing more heart-rending crisis times than we might.

However, Jesus gives assurance to them when he says, “Trust in God, trust also in Me.” The late Herschel H. Hobbs, one of Southern Baptists’ most respected biblical scholars, points out that Jesus’ prescription for peace in such circumstances is *faith*. Literally, “Keep on believing in God, and keep on believing in Me.’ Faith in God’s love, will, purpose and our Lord’s presence, enables us to be victorious over every trial.” (Hobbs, *The Gospel of John: Invitation to Life*, p. 81). Probably John 14:1 and Psalm 23 are the two main resources for Christians to find comfort and peace in life’s trials. Certainly they appear constantly in funeral services to give comfort to those who have lost loved ones through death.

**We can trust in Christ because he is preparing a permanent place for us in heaven (John 14:2-3).** Jesus explained to his disciples, “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so I would have told you.” The Father’s house is his dwelling place in heaven, which Jesus left to be born into our earthly abode. But now, “I am going there to prepare a place for you.”

“The faith of these first believers was stable and strong in proportion as it rested in Jesus as in God, believing that Jesus’ departure was a return to His Father’s presence, a return which itself opened up the Father’s house to them.” Since our faith also rests in Jesus, “believing that Jesus’ departure was the cross, now an event almost two thousand years in the past, was His triumphant return to the Father, and the means by which we too need never fear abandonment.” (D.A. Car-

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Scripture: John 14:1-7

son, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus*, p. 24).

Jesus’ promise is “that if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me.” Carson provides a most realistic interpretation of what Jesus means when he explains that it is best to take this promise as a reference to the second coming. “The supreme hope of the church has always been the return of Jesus Christ. But in contemplating that happy prospect, we must never lose sight of the fact that the goal is to be *with Christ*” (p. 25).

In v. 1, John encourages us to have faith in God’s blessings for us such that we do not need to fear the future. Through our trust we are enabled to know that in spite of the many stresses we face in life, God’s abiding peace and love will help us get through these stresses.

**We can trust Christ because he is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:4-7).** Jesus said to the disciples, “You know the way to the place where I am growing.” In spite of all the teaching that Jesus had taught them about his mission and purpose on earth, Thomas voiced the question in the minds of the disciples, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

In his response, Jesus declares that he is the way to the Father. He came into a world perplexed by obstacles on the pathway to fellowship with God and he opens the way for men to come freely into fellowship with the Father in his house; the opportunity for worshipping God is love through Christ. The author of Hebrews says it well, “since in Him we have a great Priest over the house of God, let us continue to draw near to God with sincere hearts and perfect faith” (Hebrews 10:21-22).

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