

## The Peace Which Christ Gives His True Followers

Jonathan Edwards

*Peace, I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. (John 14:27)*

These words are a part of a most affectionate and affecting discourse that Christ had with his disciples the same evening in which he was betrayed, knowing that he was to be crucified the next day. This discourse begins with the 31st verse of the 13th and is continued to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter. Christ began his discourse after he partook of the Passover with them after he had instituted and administered the sacrament of the supper, and after Judas was gone out. None were left but his true and faithful disciples whom he now addresses as his dear children. This was the last discourse that Christ had with them before his death. As it was his parting discourse, and, as it were, his dying discourse, so it is on many accounts the most remarkable we have recorded in our Bibles.

It is evident this discourse made a deep impression on the minds of the disciples; and we may suppose that it did so, in a special manner, on the mind of love the beloved disciple whose heart was especially full of love to him and who had just then been leaning on his bosom. In this discourse Christ had told his dear disciples that he was going away which filled them with sorrow and heaviness. The words of the text are given to comfort them and to relieve their sorrow. He supports them with the promise of that peace which he would leave with them and which they would have in him and with him when he was gone.

This promise he delivers in three emphatic expressions which illustrate one another. “*Peace* I leave with you.” As much as to say, though I am going away, yet I will not take all comfort away with me. While I have been with you, I have been your support and comfort and you have had peace in me in the midst of the losses you have sustained and troubles you have met with from this evil generation. This peace I will not take from you but leave it with you in a more full possession.

“*My peace* I give unto you.” Christ by calling it his peace signifies two things,

**1. That it was his own that which he had to give.** It was the peculiar benefit that he had to bestow on his children now as he was about to leave the world as to his human presence. Silver and gold he had none; for, while in his estate of humiliation, he was poor. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head (Luke 9:58). He had no earthly estate to leave to his disciples who were as it were his family: but he had peace to give them.

**2. It was *his* peace that he gave them;** as it was the same kind of peace which he himself enjoyed. The same excellent and divine peace which he ever had in God and which he was about to receive in his exalted state in a vastly greater perfection and fullness. For the happiness Christ gives to his people is a participation of his own happiness: agreeable to chapter 15:11: “These things have I said unto you, that my joy might remain in you.” And in his prayer with his disciples at the conclusion of this discourse, chapter 17:13: “And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” And verse 22: “And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.” Christ here alludes to men making their wills before death. When parents are about to leave their children by death, they are wont in their last will and testament to give them their estate, that estate which they themselves were wont to possess and enjoy. So it was with Christ when he was about to leave the world with respect to the peace which he gave his disciples; only with this difference, that earthly parents, when they die, though they leave the same estate to their children which they themselves heretofore enjoyed; yet when the children come to the full possession of it, they enjoy it no more; the parents do not enjoy it with their children. The time of the full possession of parents and children is not together. Whereas with respect to Christ’s peace, he did not only possess it himself before his death, when he bequeathed it to his disciples; but also afterwards more fully: so that they were received to possess it with him.

The third and last expression is “*not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*” Which is as much as to say, my gifts and legacies, now I am going to leave the world are not like those which the rich and great men of the world are wont to leave to their heirs when they die. They bequeath to their children their worldly possessions; and it may be vast treasures of silver and gold and sometimes an earthly kingdom. But the thing that I give you is my peace, a vastly different thing from what they are wont to give and which cannot be obtained by all that they can bestow or their children inherit from them.

## DOCTRINE

That peace which Christ, when he died, left as a legacy to all his true saints is very different from all those things which the men of this world bequeath to their children, when they die.

I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.

II. A great blessing that Christ made over to believers in this his testament was his peace.

III. This legacy of Christ is exceedingly diverse from all that any of the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die.

### **I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.**

The new covenant is represented by the apostle as Christ's last will and testament. Hebrews 9:15, 16: "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." What men convey by their will or testament is their own estate. So Christ in the new covenant conveys to believers his own inheritance, so far as they are capable of possessing and enjoying it. They have that eternal life given to them in their measure which Christ himself possesses. They live *in* him and *with* him and *by* a participation of his life. Because he lives they live also. They inherit his kingdom: the same kingdom which the Father appointed unto him, Luke 25:29, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." They shall reign on his throne, Revelation 3:21. They have his glory given to them, John 17. And because all things are Christ's, so in Christ all things are the saints, I Corinthians 3:21-22.

Men in their wills or testaments most commonly give their estates to their children: so believers are in Scripture represented as Christ's children. Hebrews 2:13, "Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me." Men most commonly make their wills a little before their death: so Christ did, in a very special and solemn manner, make over and confirm to his disciples the blessings of the new covenant on the evening before the day of his crucifixion in that discourse of which my text is a part. The promises of the new covenant were never so particularly expressed and so solemnly given forth by Christ in all the time that he was upon earth as in this discourse. Christ promises them mansions in his Father's house (Chapter 14:1-3). Here he promises them whatever blessings they should need and ask in his name (Chapter 15:7; 14:23, 24). Here he more solemnly and fully than any where else gives forth and confirms the promise of the Holy Spirit, which is the sum of the blessings of the covenant of grace (Chapter 14:18; 17:26; 15:25; 16:7). Here he promises them his own and his Father's gracious presence and favor (Chapter 14:18-21). Here he promises them peace, as in the text. Here he promises them his joy (Chapter 15:11). Here he promises grace to being forth holy fruits (Chapter 15:16). And victory over the world (Chapter 16:33). And indeed there seems to be nowhere else so full and complete an edition of the covenant of grace in the whole Bible as in this dying discourse of Christ with his eleven true disciples.

This covenant between Christ and his children is like a will or testament also in this respect that it becomes effectual, and a way is made for putting it in execution, no other way than by his death; as the apostle observes it is with a will or testament among men, "For a testament is of force after men are dead" (Hebrews 9:17). For though the covenant of grace indeed was of force before the death of Christ, yet it was of force no otherwise than by his death, so that his death then did virtually intervene, being already undertaken and engaged. As a man's heirs come by the legacies bequeathed to them no otherwise than by the death of the testator, so men come by the spiritual and eternal inheritance no otherwise than by the death of Christ. If it had not been for the death of Christ they never could have obtained it.

### **II. A great blessing that Christ in his testament hath bequeathed to his true followers, is his peace.**

Here are two things that I would observe particularly, viz. That Christ hath bequeathed to believers true peace and then, that the peace he has given them is his peace.

*1. Our Lord Jesus Christ has bequeathed true peace and comfort to his followers.* Christ is called the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). And when he was born into the world, the angels on that joyful and wonderful occasion sang, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace:" because of that peace which he should procure for and bestow on the children of men; peace with God and peace one with another and tranquility and peace within themselves: which last is especially the benefit spoken of in the text. He has procured for them peace and reconciliation with God and his

favor and friendship; in that he satisfied for their sins and laid a foundation for the perfect removal of the guilt of sin, and the forgiveness of all their trespasses and wrought out for them a perfect and glorious righteousness, most acceptable to God and sufficient to recommend them to God's full acceptance to the adoption of children and to the eternal fruits of his fatherly kindness.

By these means, true saints are brought into a state of freedom from condemnation and all the curses of the law of God. Romans 8:34, "Who is he that condemneth?" And by these means, they are safe from that dreadful and eternal misery to which naturally they are exposed and are set on high out of the reach of all their enemies, so that the gates of hell and powers of darkness can never destroy them; nor can wicked men, though they may persecute, ever hurt them. Romans 8:31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Numbers 23:8, "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?" And verse 23, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." By these means, they are out of the reach of death, John 6:4-9, 50, 51, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." By these means, death with respect to them has lost its sting and is no more worthy of the name of death. 1 Corinthians 15:55, "O death, where is thy sting?" By these means, they have no need to be afraid of the day of judgment when the heavens and earth shall be dissolved. Psalm 46:1, 2, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed: and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Yea, a true saint has reason to be at rest in an assurance, that nothing can separate him from the love of God (Romans 8:38, 39). Thus he that is in Christ is in a safe refuge from every thing that might disturb him; Isaiah 32:2, "And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And hence they that dwell in Christ have that promise fulfilled to them which we have in the 18th verse of the same chapter: "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places."

And the true followers of Christ have not only ground of rest and peace of soul by reason of their safety from evil, but on account of their sure title and certain enjoyment of all that good which they stand in need of, living, dying, and through all eternity. They are on a sure foundation for happiness, are built on a rock that can never be moved, and have a fountain that is sufficient and can never be exhausted. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and God has passed his word and oath, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." The infinite Jehovah is become their God, who can do everything for them. He is their portion who has an infinite fullness of good in himself: "He is their shield and exceeding great reward." As great a good is made over to them as they can desire or conceive of and is made as sure as they can desire: therefore they have reason to put their hearts at rest and be at peace in their minds.

Besides, he has bequeathed peace to the souls of his people, as he has procured for them and made over to them the spirit of grace and true holiness; which has a natural tendency to the peace and quietness of the soul. It implies a discovery and relish of a suitable and sufficient good. It brings a person into a view of divine beauty and to a relish of that good which is a man's proper happiness; and so it brings the soul to its true center. The soul by his means is brought to rest and ceases from restlessly inquiring, as others do, who will show us any good; and wandering to and fro, like lost sheep seeking rest, and finding none. The soul hath found him who is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood and sits down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit is sweet unto his taste (Cant. 2:2). And thus that saving of Christ is fulfilled, John 4:14, "Whoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." And besides, true grace naturally tends to peace and quietness, as it settles things in the soul in their due order, sets reason on the throne, and subjects the settees and affections to its government, which before were uppermost. Grace tends to tranquility as it mortifies tumultuous desires and passions, subdues the eager and insatiable appetites of the sensual nature and greediness after the vanities of the world. It mortifies such principles as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, envyings, and the like, which are a continual source of inward uneasiness and perturbation; and supplies those sweet, calming, and quieting principles of humility, meekness, resignation, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, and sweet reliance on God. It also tends to peace, as it fixes the aim of the soul to a certain end; so that the soul is no longer distracted and drawn by opposite ends to be sought and opposite portions to be obtained and many masters of contrary wills and commands to be served; but the heart is fixed in the choice of one certain, sufficient, and unfailing good: and the soul's aim at this and hope of it is like an anchor that keeps it steadfast that it should no more be driven to and fro by every wind.

**2. This peace which Christ has left as a legacy to his true followers is his peace.** It is the peace which himself enjoys. This is what I take to be principally intended in the expression. It is the peace that he enjoyed while on earth in his state of humiliation. Though he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and was every where

hated and persecuted by men and devils and had no place of rest in this world, yet in God, his Father, he had peace. We read of his rejoicing in spirit, Luke 10:21. So Christ's true disciples, though in the world they have tribulation, yet in God have peace.

When Christ had finished his labors and sufferings had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, he entered into his rest a state of most blessed, perfect, and everlasting peace: delivered by his own sufferings from our imputed guilt, acquitted and justified of the Father on his resurrection. Having obtained a perfect victory over all his enemies, he was received of his Father into heaven the rest which he had prepared for him, there to enjoy his heart's desire fully and perfectly to all eternity. And then were those words in the six first verses of the 21st Psalm which have respect to Christ fulfilled. This peace and rest of the Messiah is exceeding glorious. Isaiah 11:10, "And his rest shall be glorious." This rest is what Christ has procured, not only for himself, but also his people by his death; and he has bequeathed it to them, that they may enjoy it with him, imperfectly in this, and perfectly and eternally in another world. That peace, which has been described and which believers enjoy is a participation of the peace which their glorious Lord and Master himself enjoys, by virtue of the same blood by which Christ himself has entered into rest. It is in a participation of this same justification; for believers are justified with Christ. As he was justified when he rose from the dead and as he was made free from our guilt, which he had as our surety, so believers are justified in him and through him, as being accepted of God in the same righteousness. It is in the favor of the same God and heavenly Father that they enjoy peace, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

It is in a participation of the same Spirit for believers have the Spirit of Christ. He had the Spirit given to him not by measure, and of his fullness do they all receive and grace for grace. As the oil poured on the head of Aaron went down to the skirts of his garments, so the Spirit poured on Christ, the head, descends to all his members. It is as partaking of the same grace of the Spirit that believers enjoy this peace (John 1:16). It is as being united to Christ and living by a participation of his life, as a branch lives by the life of the vine. It is as part thing of the same love of God; John 17:26, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." — It is as having a part with him in his victory over the same enemies: and also as having an interest in the same kind of eternal rest and peace. Ephesians 2:5, 6, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places."

### **III. This legacy of Christ to his true disciples is very different from all that the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die.**

The men of this world, many of them, when they come to die, have great estates to bequeath to their children, an abundance of the good things of this world, large tracts of ground, perhaps in a fruitful soil, covered with flocks and herds. They sometimes leave to their children stately mansions, and vast treasures of silver, gold, jewels, and precious things, fetched from both the Indies, and from every side of the globe. They leave them wherewith to live in much state and magnificence and make a great show among men, to fare very sumptuously, and swim in worldly pleasures. Some have crowns, scepters, and palaces, and great monarchies to leave to their heirs. But none of these things are to be compared to that blessed peace of Christ which he has bequeathed to his true followers. These things are such as God commonly in his providence gives his worst enemies, those whom he hates and despises most. But Christ's peace is a precious benefit, which he reserves for his peculiar favorites. These worldly things, even the best of them that the men and princes of the world leave for their children are things which God in his providence throws out to those whom he looks on as dogs; but Christ's peace is the bread of his children. All these earthly things are but empty shadows, which, however men set their hearts upon them are not bread and never can satisfy their souls; but this peace of Christ is a truly substantial satisfying food (Isaiah 55:2). None of those things, if men have them to the best advantage, and in ever so great abundance, can give true peace and rest to the soul, as is abundantly manifest not only in reason, but experience; it being found in all ages, that those who have the most of them, have commonly the least quietness of mind.

It is true, there may be a kind of quietness, a false peace, in the enjoyment of worldly things; men may bless their souls and think themselves the only happy persons, and despise others: may say to their souls, as the rich man did, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19). But Christ's peace, which he gives to his true disciples, differs from this peace that men may have in the enjoyments of the world in the following respects:

**1. Christ's peace is a reasonable peace and rest of soul.** It is what has its foundation in light and knowledge, in the proper exercises of reason, and a right view of things; whereas the peace of the world is founded in blindness and delusion. The peace that the people of Christ have arises from their having their eyes open and seeing things as they

are. The more they consider and the more they know of the truth and reality of things — the more they know what is true concerning themselves, the state and condition they are in; the more they know of God and what manner of being he is; the more certain they are of another world and future judgment and of the truth of God's threatenings and promises; the more their consciences are awakened and enlightened, and the brighter and the more searching the light — the more is their peace established. Whereas, on the contrary, the peace that the men of the world have in their worldly enjoyments can subsist no otherwise than by their being kept in ignorance. They must be blindfolded and deceived, otherwise they can have no peace: do but let light in upon their consciences, so that they may look about them and see what they are and what circumstances they are in and it will at once destroy all their quietness and comfort. Their peace can live no where but in the dark. Light turns their ease into torment. The more they know what is true concerning God and concerning themselves. The more they are sensible of the truth concerning those enjoyments which they possess; and the more they are sensible what things now are and what things are like to be hereafter, the more will their calm be turned into a storm. The worldly man's peace cannot be maintained but by avoiding consideration and reflection. If he allows himself to think and properly to exercise his reason, it destroys his quietness and comfort.

But with respect to the peace which Christ gives, reason is its great friend. The more this faculty is exercised, the more it is established. The more they consider and view things with truth and exactness, the firmer is their comfort and the higher their joy. How vast a difference then is there between the peace of a Christian and the worldling! How miserable are they who cannot enjoy peace any otherwise than by hiding their eyes from the light and confining themselves to darkness. Their peace is stupidity, it is as the ease that a man has who has taken a dose of stupefying poison, the ease and pleasure that a drunkard may have in a house on fire over his head, or the joy of a distracted man in thinking that he is a king, though a miserable wretch confined in bedlam! Whereas the peace that Christ gives his true disciples is the light of life, something of the tranquility of heaven, the peace of the celestial paradise that has the glory of God to lighten it.

**2. *Christ's peace is a virtuous and holy peace.*** The peace that the men of the world enjoy is vicious: it is vile depraves and debases the mind and makes men brutish. But the peace that the saints enjoy in Christ is not only their comfort, but it is a part of their beauty and dignity. The Christian tranquility, rest, and joy of real saints are not only unspeakable privileges, but they are virtues and graces of God's Spirit, wherein his image partly consists. This peace has its source in those principles which are in the highest degree virtuous and amiable, such as poverty of spirit, holy resignation, trust in God, divine love, meekness, and charity; the exercise of the blessed fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23).

**3. *This peace greatly differs from that which is enjoyed by the men of the world, with regard to its exquisite sweetness.*** It is a peace so much above all that natural men enjoy in worldly things, that it surpasses their understanding and conception (Philippians 4:7). It is exquisitely sweet and secure, because it has so firm a foundation, the everlasting rock that never can be moved because perfectly agreeable to reason; because it rises from holy and divine principles, that, as they are the virtue, so are they the proper happiness of men; and because the greatness of the objective good that the saints enjoy is no other than the infinite bounty and fullness of that God who is the fountain of all good. The fullness and perfection of that provision that is made in Christ and the new covenant is a foundation laid for the saints' perfect peace; and this hereafter they shall actually enjoy. And though their peace is not now perfect, it is not owing to any defect in the provision made, but to their own imperfection, sin, and darkness. As yet, they partly cleave to the world and seek peace from thence and do not perfectly cleave to Christ. But the more they do so, and the more they see of the provision made and accept of it and cleave to that alone, the nearer are they brought to perfect tranquility (Isaiah 27:5).

**4. *The peace of the Christian infinitely differs from that of the worldling, in that it is unfailing and eternal.*** That peace which carnal men have in the things of the world is, according to the foundation upon which it is built, of short continuance; like the comfort of a dream, 1 John 2; 1 Corinthians 7:31. These things, the best and most durable of them, are like bubbles on the face of the water; they vanish in a moment (Hosea 10:7) — But the foundation of the Christian's peace is everlasting; it is what no time nor change can destroy. It will remain when the body dies: it will remain when the mountains depart and the hills shall be removed and when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. The fountain of his comfort shall never be diminished and the stream shall never be dried. His comfort and joy is a living spring in the soul, a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

#### **APPLICATION**

The use that I would make of this doctrine is to improve it as an inducement unto all to forsake the world, no longer seeking peace and rest in its vanities, and to cleave to Christ and follow him. Happiness and rest are what all men

pursue. But the things of the world, wherein most men seek it, can never afford it, they are laboring and spending themselves in vain. But Christ invites you to come to him and offers you this peace, which he gives his true followers, and that so much excels all that the world can afford, Isaiah 55:2, 3.

You that have hitherto spent your time in the pursuit of satisfaction in the profit or glory of the world, or in the pleasures and vanities of youth have this day an offer of that excellent and everlasting peace and blessedness which Christ has purchased with the price of his own blood. As long as you continue to reject those offers and invitations of Christ and continue in a Christless condition, you never will enjoy any true peace or comfort; but will be like the prodigal, that in vain endeavored to be satisfied with the husks that the swine did eat. The wrath of God will abide upon and misery will attend you, wherever you go, which you never will be able to escape. Christ gives peace to the most sinful and miserable that come to him. He heals the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. But it is impossible that they should have peace while they continue in their sins (Isaiah 57:19-21). There is no peace between God and them, for, as they have the guilt of sin remaining in their souls and are under its dominion so God's indignation continually burns against them, and therefore they travail in pain all their days. While you continue in such a state, you live in dreadful uncertainty what will become of you and in continual danger. When you are in the enjoyment of things most pleasing to you where your heart is best suited, and most cheerful, yet you are in a state of condemnation. You hang over the infernal pit with the sword of divine vengeance hanging over your head, having no security one moment from utter and remediless destruction. What reasonable peace can anyone enjoy in such a state as this? Though you clothe him in gorgeous apparel, or set him on a throne, or at a prince's table, and feed him with the rarest dainties the earth affords – How miserable is the ease and cheerfulness that such have! What a poor kind of comfort and joy is it that such take in their wealth and pleasures for a moment while they are the prisoners of divine justice and wretched captives of the devil! They have none to befriend them, being without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world!

I invite you now to a better portion. There are better things provided for the sinful, miserable children of men. There is a surer comfort and more durable peace: comfort that you may enjoy in a state of safety and on a sure foundation: a peace and rest that you may enjoy with reason and with your eyes open. You may have all your sins forgiven, your greatest and most aggravated transgressions blotted out as a cloud and buried as in the depths of the sea that they may never be found more. And being not only forgiven but accepted to favor, you become the objects of God's complacency and delight being taken into God's family and made his children, you may have good evidence that your names were written on the heart of Christ before the world was made, and that you have an interest in that covenant of grace that is well ordered in all things and sure; wherein is promised no less than life and immortality, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, a crown of glory that fades not away. Being in such circumstances, nothing shall be able to prevent your being happy to all eternity; having for the foundation of your hope that love of God which is from eternity to eternity and his promise and oath and his omnipotent power, things infinitely firmer than mountains of brass. The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, yea, the heavens shall vanish away like smoke and the earth shall wax old like a garment, yet these things will never be abolished.

In such a state as this, you will have a foundation of peace and rest through all changes, and in times of the greatest uproar and outward calamity be defended from all storms, and dwell above the floods (Psalm 32:6, 7). And you shall be at peace with everything, and God will make all his creatures throughout all parts of his dominion to befriend you (Job 5:19-24). You need not be afraid of anything that your enemies can do unto you (Psalm 3:5, 6). Those things that now are most terrible to you, viz. death, judgment, and eternity, will then be most comfortable, the most sweet and pleasant objects of your contemplation, at least there will be reason that they should be so.

Hearken therefore to the friendly counsel that is given you this day, turn your feet into the way of peace, forsake the foolish and live; forsake those things which are no other than the devil's baits and seek after this excellent peace and rest of Jesus Christ, that peace of God which passeth all understanding. Taste and see; never was any disappointed that made a trial (Proverbs 24:13, 14). You will not only find those spiritual comforts that Christ offers you to be of a surpassing sweetness for the present, but they will be to your soul as the dawning light that shines more and more to the perfect day; and the issue of all will be your arrival in heaven, that land of rest, those regions of everlasting joy, where your peace and happiness will be perfect, without the least mixture of trouble or affliction, and never be interrupted nor have an end.