



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

THE NARROW PATH TO PERSONAL PEACE

KEY PASSAGE: John 14:27 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:9 | Luke 9:5; 10:5

► SUMMARY

The night before His crucifixion Jesus gave His disciples an amazing promise: “Peace I leave you, My peace I give you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, nor fearful.” (John 14:27).

He wasn't saying that all their conditions would be serene, easy, and comfortable. On the contrary, He was telling them they would have peace of mind and heart even though their circumstances were painful, difficult, and uncertain. And this is the same kind of peace Jesus promises to all of us who belong to Him.

► SERMON POINTS

The peace Christ gives is a settled sense of satisfaction in Him. It's not dependent upon good conditions but on a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We can be confident that no matter what we face in life, He is with us and in us through the Holy Spirit. And one of these days, whether we die or Jesus comes first, all the troubles of this life will be over, and we will be in heaven with Him forever. Then everything will be made right just as He promised; but until then, we have His peace within us as we live in this world's pain and trouble.

Christ's peace is not like that which the world offers.

This age is not characterized by peace, whether external or internal. People are anxious about their jobs, finances, relationships, and situations because the world cannot give them the peace that transcends circumstances. The only thing it can offer is counterfeits, which falsely promise that peace will come when they can have whatever they want.

In the days when Jesus lived on earth, Rome was doing its best to keep external peace in the empire by subjecting everyone in two ways—through power and pain. But the peace Christ gives doesn't come through coercion. The Greek word for peace is *eirene*, which means to bind or join together, signifying oneness without strife or consternation. Jesus Christ's offer of peace comes when a person is bound together with Him.

Without that relationship, genuine peace will always be missing, no matter how many other good relationships one may have. Furthermore, anxiety and a lack of tranquility may result in physical ailments. Although people oftentimes seek relief in other alternatives, they will never truly find peace apart from Christ.

Jesus is the source of this peace.

Christ's peace is not something we can work to attain but a gift freely given to all who belong to Him. It's actually the gift of Himself that is acquired at salvation. At that moment, an eternal relationship with Christ is established, and where He is, there is peace. One of the evidences of this relationship with the Prince of Peace is that we become peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). And the most basic way of doing this is by connecting other people to the ultimate Peacemaker, Jesus Christ.

There is a narrow path that leads to peace.

The world offers a wide selection of ways to find tranquility, but they are all false. Yet this is the path most people choose. They move from one false hope to the next but are never able to satisfy the gnawing need for peace in their hearts.

When Jesus sent His disciples out to proclaim the kingdom of God, He said to them, “Whatever house

you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house'" (Luke 10:5). This verse is a good reminder for us to pray for those whose homes we visit. Although we may not know the circumstances of their lives, the Lord does, and we can pray that they will receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, and experience His amazing peace.

On the narrow path to peace, there are obstacles that steal our peace.

- **Lustful thoughts.** When a Christian is looking where he shouldn't and desiring something sinful, he will have no peace because of the conviction of sin that comes from God's Spirit within him. Lust always creates chaos in the heart and soul.
- **Guilt.** Peace is fragile and is easily lost when we feel the guilt of our sin. It could be something we said or did that we shouldn't have, or perhaps something we should have said or done but didn't. Either way, our peace evaporates under the Spirit's conviction.
- **Anger.** Peace and anger do not coexist. Animosity toward someone stirs up negative emotions and robs us of a tranquil spirit.
- **Bitterness.** If we allow past hurtful experiences to fester, we will have no peace because our focus is on the wrong done to us and not on Christ. He suffered more injustice than anyone else ever has but harbored no bitterness, and we are to follow His example.
- **Self-centeredness.** If we are preoccupied with what we want or think we deserve, we will have no peace because such thinking is rooted in pride.
- **Doubt.** Any time we doubt the truth of God's Word or His promise to answer our prayers, we can't have the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts.
- **Unbelief.** Those without Christ cannot have His peace because they don't have a relationship with Him. They

may display a limited or conditional serenity, but it is easily lost and won't last.

- **Jealousy.** A preoccupation with a desire to have what belongs to someone else robs us of tranquility and contentment.

How can we experience Christ's peace?

- We must believe that He is in control of our lives and our circumstances. Otherwise, we will try to take control, and there is conflict in that struggle.
- We must believe that Christ's offer of peace is real and be willing to accept it in spite of our feelings.
- We must fully surrender our lives—mind, will, and emotions—to Jesus as our Lord. This includes yielding and conforming our character, conversation, and conduct to His will.

Having Christ's peace does not mean that we will never have any trouble, suffer pain or illness, or feel afraid. But whenever these experiences come our way, we will be able to respond with absolute confidence and certainty in the sufficiency of Christ. He is adequate for every situation and will always carry us through it. In fact, sometimes the most difficult, painful, and trying circumstances can become the seedbed for the awesome peace God gives to us in those moments.

► RESPONSE

- Is your life characterized more by peace or anxiety? What situations most commonly rob you of peace? Where is your focus in those times? Is it on yourself, others, circumstances, the unknowable future, or Christ?
- What is your level of peace when you are trusting God versus when you are trying to control your life or the lives of others? Who is more qualified to be the one in charge—you or God?

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