

THE PATHWAY TO PEACE
John 14:27; Phil. 4:7; Isa. 2:3,4

*to Sutl
or Aug.*
INTRODUCTION

In recent years
Today in ~~in~~ churches across our Convention, and many other churches of many denominations, ~~we are observing~~ a special day of prayer for world peace. This is especially important and should receive much more attention than it will get. As William Penson has written, "Baptists need to say and do more about peace. We need to preach as intensely about the urgency of peace as about the dangers of pornography and drug abuse." And I would add also, about abortion, inerrancy, the lottery, ecclesiastical politics, political philosophies, the ecumenical movement, theological hair-splitting, and scores of other issues which we tend to put far ahead of world peace.

I. All the yawning centuries that have passed into the hoary tomb of time have testified that to the present the pathway to peace has been a most PATHETIC one.

A. World War I caused almost 38 million casualties in human lives, more than the total of those slain in all wars between 1793 and 1914, including the bloody Napoleonic Wars.

B. Contrary to early hopes, however, this was not a war to end all war. The world failed to profit by this terrible experience.

On September 1, 1939, World War II officially began with the German attack of Poland and the intervention of Great Britain and France.

For this oppression Germany paid with almost 4 and 1/2 million lives of her own people. Italy, as Germany's partner lost 60,000 killed and 200,000 wounded.

These axis nations, however, pulled the house of the whole world in on top of them, causing about 30 million allied casualties.

C. The dreams raised by the foundation of the UN have been transformed to at best a great disappointment, and at worst a near nightmare.

Russia, our former ally, holds her mobilized millions massed for the threat of world conquest either by the sheer numbers of conventional forces, or by nuclear war, or by the mastery of space.]

D. Never since the deluge of Noah drowned the wicked antedeluvian civilization, or since Jesus was born in Bethlehem and the people's scepter was frozen with the tyranny of Roman regimentation, or since the dust of dreary decades blanketed the debris of fallen empires, have we seen a generation groping so for the pathway to peace. Yet we seem to be so far from it.

While we are hoping for peace, and talking peace, and striving for peace, we find ourselves preparing for more frightening and totally destructive war.

Today our feeble and pathetic efforts toward peace show how hard it is for our national leaders even to talk to each other, much less agree on concrete steps to reduce the likelihood of war and increase the possibility for peace.

Forty years ago Winston Churchill spoke of the conflict between East and West and the deadly danger of another great war.

He said, "Mighty forces armed with fearful weapons are baying at each other across a gulf which I have the feeling neither wishes and both fear to cross, but into which they may tumble or drag each other to their common ruin." And he said that before Russia had a single atomic weapon! What would he say today, with both the United States and Russia with far more than enough atomic warheads to destroy each other several times over!

II. The Pathway to Peace is not only a pathetic pathway to date, but it is also a PUBLIC PATHWAY.

Everyone can, or should be able to see what is going on. This challenge for world peace concerns everyone, because it concerns the whole world.

What almost happened at Three Mile Island, and what DID happen at Chernobyl, near Kiev, has shown everyone what could very well happen in a far worse nuclear accident, and has made many think seriously about what no doubt WOULD happen in a thermonuclear war.

The best word to describe it is "UNTHINKABLE," which doesn't really describe it at all, but merely suggests that it would be so terrible that we don't want to think about it.

A. No one wants to suggest that our country should not have an adequate and strong defense, but at some point we should be able to raise our Christian voices about sensible priorities, and what constitutes an ADEQUATE defense. This is the one greatest cause of a mounting national debt which each year increases total interest accumulations large enough to finance the missionary program of all churches of all denominations in America for the next 50 years, or to finance thousands of hospitals, schools, research centers, and cultural, social, and scientific programs for decades.

B. Russia may be able to hide its defense budget, but ours is a public budget, and our national priorities are, or should be, public.

Therefore, Christian citizens in a democracy must accept their responsibility for speaking out in matters of priorities of our national resources in matters relating to war and peace.

C. Alfred Lord Tennyson was a great public literary figure who believed that peace was possible. He wrote:

"For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world,
 and all the wonder that would be;
Saw the heavens filled with commerce,
 argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight,
 dropping down with costly bales;
Heard the heavens filled with shouting;
 and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies
 grappling in the central blue;
Far along the world-wide whisper
 of the south wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the people
 plunging through the thunder storm;
Till the war-drum throbbed no longer,
 and the battle flags were furled
In the Parliament of man,
 the Federation of the world."

Tennyson never lived to the time when "the war-drums throbbed no longer," and that time is not yet with us either. Again and again we ask, "Is it possible to find this pathway of peace, or is it only an illusion?" Deep within us is a voice telling us that peace IS possible, and that we CAN have peace on earth.

There are lessons, however, which we must learn before this can be realized. We must learn that, as someone has said, "war is politics at white heat." It is the last resort among nations to settle their differences and achieve their national goals. When nations cannot settle their differences by peaceful and friendly discussion, arbitration, or reasoning they resort to force to impose their views and desires on the weaker side.

Everyone seems to be in favor of peace. One might suppose that the universal desire of people everywhere for peace would take precedence over all other differences. But this is not the case. People want peace, but not peace at any price. [The communist leaders want peace if they could arrive at their worldwide objectives without fighting, but if not, they are prepared to fight. We too do not want war, but we feel that liberty with justice as we know it in our American way of life is worth fighting for.]

Rationalize as we may, we still find ourselves in a situation we do not relish, preparing for war while we hope for peace.

Where shall we go to find this pathway to peace? In chemistry men listen to Lavoisier. In astronomy they look to Hershel. In poetry and drama they follow Shakespeare. In philosophy they listen to Plato. In invention they follow Edison. In sculpture they look to Michaelangelo, who "from the sterile womb of stone raised children unto God." In painting they look to Millet, "who held a thousand landscapes in a single brush." In music they listen to Beethoven "who made surging seas of tone subservient to his rod." But in all matters of life and death, of duty and destiny, of time and eternity, every single one of us should listen to JESUS, look to JESUS, and follow JESUS.

III. The pathway to peace, then is a PERSONAL Pathway.

A. Peace can be found through a Person, the Prince of Peace. Christ said, "I am the way." He is not only the way to salvation; He is the way to peace.

We have tried just about everything else in order to find peace. Isn't it about time we gave God a chance? All our tall-columned Universities have not EDUCATED us to peace.

All our multitudinous governmental bureaus have not legislated peace.

All the billions of inflated dollars which we have so magnanimously strewn across the whole world have not purchased peace.

We have tried everything from the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the Great Society, and the New Frontier, to Detente, and Constructive Engagement, and Summit meetings. We have tried the Democrats and the Republicans. We have tried isolation, negotiation, and confrontation. Now let's try JESUS!

B. Let's admit that the world needs God more than it needs guns, Christ more than it needs cannons, the Bible more than bombs, truth more than tanks, the Gospel more than grenades, and atonement evangelism more than atomic energy!

Christians should not be so timid as to hesitate to propose Jesus Christ as the solution to the world-wide problem of war and peace.

He is the solution to the problem of selfishness, which lies at the root of the war problem.

He can be the basis of universal understanding which is the prerequisite for peace.

Jesus Christ can provide the needed unifying factor for a world torn asunder like an exploding grenade.

When you get the spirit of Christ into a man's heart, you remove the spirit of war.

C. The cause of world peace is so important in our day, that Christians absolutely must get involved. Just what are YOU doing to help bring peace to this terrified planet? It is such a rewarding challenge that you will want to learn more about it, pray more about it, work harder for it, and lead your friends and neighbors to find this Prince of Peace and enjoy His peace that passes understanding and share it with a lost world. This is our greatest challenge and our finest achievement, and it deserves our total concentration and highest priority.

D. Several years ago a writer in the Christian Century told the story of "The Fishermen on the Seine." It was based on an impressive historical incident that occurred during the French Revolution. After four eventful years the day arrived when Louis XIV was to be executed. Early in the morning, to the accompaniment of muffled drums, the condemned monarch began the fateful journey through the streets of Paris to the place where, high above the surrounding crowd, there stood the scaffold. When he arrived his arms were tied to his sides, and he was led up the steps to the platform. The blade of the guillotine descended, and the crowd roared its exultant approval as the head of the appointed king of France rolled into a basket. It was the supreme event of the century for France.

A short distance from the guillotine, in plain view of the proceedings, there stood on the banks of the Seine River a row of fishermen with their lines in the stream. Their backs were turned to the scaffold, and they paid absolutely no attention to the historic spectacle. Even when the thunderous roar of the crowd announced that the tremendous deed had been consummated, they did not even turn their heads. They continued to watch their corks bobbing on the water. It seems incredible that any Frenchman could have been so indifferent to such a momentous occurrence as to have ignored it by concentrating attention on a trifling business like fishing.

Just why those fishermen were so apathetic can only be conjectured. One plausible explanation is that having passed through one crisis after another, having experienced so much tragedy, having witnessed so much cruelty and suffering, they were unwilling to subject their nerves and emotions to additional strain. Perhaps it was for sanity's sake that they concentrated on their fishing.

Commenting on this, the editor tells us that, properly interpreted, the conduct of those fishermen on the Seine contains a vital message for Christians just now. In this modern day momentous events are happening hourly. Newspapers, radio bulletins, and TV news programs bring instant reports of crashing planes, bombed and burning cities, terrorist attacks, armies locked in mortal combat, and diplomats negotiating stupendous affairs. Of course, these things are of vital interest to us. They should be. But there is a grave danger that we will allow them so to distract our attention that we shall be diverted from the supreme business in which we should be engaged as Christians-- serving as fishers of men in the name of Christ. For no matter what colossal events are happening, still the most crucial of all issues is the relation between the individual soul and God.

E. Jesus Christ came to inaugurate stupendous changes in the world, indeed to revolutionize human affairs. And he DID it. He lifted empires off their hinges and turned the stream of centuries out of its course. But He did it primarily by changing individuals one by one. So, while tremendous events are happening in the world, and while vast plans and programs for national defense are being promoted in our country, and while distinguished diplomats prepare for Summit Conferences, let us in principle emulate the example of those French anglers and continue undisturbed to concentrate on fishing for men in the name of Christ.

God is on our side, and we shall not fail. We are not chasing an illusion. We are on the right path, and it will lead us to the right destination. God's plan for peace within and without cannot be thwarted.

Some wise observer has said:

"Drunk with power and swollen with prosperity, Napoleonized nations may insist on throwing themselves upon the international operating table. And once upon that table, for a long time they may resist the Surgeon's keen, steady knife. Yet the Surgeon cuts on and on, as grim as Death and as clean as Truth. In due time, the offending eyes of militarism and war shall be plucked out, the grasping hands of plunder shall be cut off, and the steel feet of invasion and aggression shall stumble over the abyss of world empire to certain downfall."

Then all shall see down this pathway the glorious sunrise of a grand tomorrow, when the nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Then shall men learn that right and not might, that character and not efficiency, that integrity and not expediency, that Christ and not Caesar, speak the final word by which both individuals and nations live.

If all this makes you love this marvelous Savior and matchless Prince of Peace, then give Him your heart, your life, and your all now as we sing.

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