

*John 14:23-29. <sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. <sup>24</sup> He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.<sup>5</sup> "All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. <sup>28</sup> "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.*

### *Live in the Peace of Christ*

Have you ever met someone who just exudes that sort of grace under pressure? World leaders have to have some level of this. An athlete, a musician, a news anchor, has to go in front of all those people. That person often has thousands upon thousands of eyes staring at them, and yet there is a calm confidence, a peace that falls about them. They seem like they are right at home. Think about that type of peace under pressure. Think about that level of calm; that feeling of being right at home. If you have ever met someone like that it may have an impact on you. If you know someone who has that calm and peace on a smaller scale, but still has that way about them, it may rub off on you. Or then again it may only lead you to see how you just can't do that. Either way the truth remains: to possess that kind of calm, to enjoy that type of peace, is quite the desirable virtue.

Our lives are often filled with the opposite of calm; with stress rather than peace. And maybe this time of year especially things begin to get a bit more stressful. The end of the school year brings important events and activities that add to the calendar. The planning of summer schedules takes up our time as we try to balance work and play. The pressures of deadlines and the anxiety of the planting season: waiting for the fields to dry, wanting to be done by this time, and then waiting for the rains to come again; it can all stir up our hearts with anxiety. Even as we plan our leisure time and our vacations there can be the stress of making sure that this is covered and that is taken care of while we are absent. Add to that the daily incidentals, the unexpected expenses, illnesses, accidents, and crisis and there is no doubt that each one of us has a certain amount of stress in our lives. Our hearts and lives are often stirred with anxious thoughts and more than a few fret-filled moments.

We all have stress. While some people seem to be built to handle pressure and stress better than others, the rest of us, we try to avoid stress and pressure if we can. We prefer to not have to deal with things and so we avoid this or that. We don't like confrontation so we might let a few things go that should be dealt with, and we know it. We try to minimize stress in our life in different ways. However, that habit of resisting stress and avoiding conflict might even lead us to be hesitant to live our faith like we should. The sinful mind can easily

reach for this seemingly logical conclusion: *I have so many other things that cause me stress, I don't need another. And so if faith, or living as a Christian, or believing or speaking as a Christian might cause me more stress, I am going to avoid it.* For example: we might give into the temptations and the pressures of our peers just so that we might avoid what we might label unneeded stresses. We might give into the temptation of gossiping, or drinking too much, or swearing, or coarse joking, or the like, just so that we aren't criticized by the rest of the group. At school, or work, or with a group of friends and family we might lack the courage to say what we really believe when certain social issues become the topic of discussion, or we might fail to speak up for someone who cannot defend themselves because that would be too difficult. At this time of the year especially the Christian teen on prom night may very well be confronted by a different view of what the world expects and accepts and what God's Word says is right; at that can be unnerving. The Christian of any age may look for peace in avoiding such stress by trying our best to fit in or at least by doing our best not to stick out.

But Jesus calls us to something better. He leads us to a path of peace, which includes following his will, keeping his teachings and his commands in close view, and following them in love knowing that he first loved us. Our LORD recognizes the difficulties that may come. But in love he calls us to live a God-pleasing life, and in love he promises real peace, lasting peace. He forgives us for all the times we fail to heed his command to live for him perfectly and he reminds us that through his perfect life and innocent sacrifice we have peace with God. Christ Jesus forgives us and moves us from a love of ourselves and the love of being comfortable with the world around us to see that our LORD gives a peace that is much more lasting and much more satisfying. And even when the challenges of life and the conflicts of living in an ungodly world come we can be filled with courage that comes from the good news of peace with God. Jesus gives us his Spirit, he reminds us of his Word, he reminds us of his love and forgiveness and his righteous ways so that we may live for him. And we can feel right at home keeping his commands. There is peace in Jesus. He takes away our fears, our anxieties, and in him we find the right kind of comfortable.

Consider how comforting Jesus' words must have been as he spoke to the disciples in that upper room. Jesus and his disciples had come to enjoy a festive meal and now suddenly the stress level had gone through the roof. And yet, notice how Jesus projects and promises and provides remarkable peace. Jesus was talking of his suffering and death. Jesus had mentioned that one of the disciples would betray him and they all asked in one form or another, "Lord is it I!" It was a stressful situation and now Judas was gone from the room leaving the remaining disciples with perhaps even more questions and more anxiety. The tension would continue to build as Jesus again speaks of his own departure, his coming death, and he speaks with Peter and tells him that even this boldest of the disciples would deny him. And while this must have been an emotional time for Jesus yet Jesus still continues to teach, he continues to calmly instruct his disciples, and speak about peace.

Jesus was certainly an individual who was able to exude peace in any situation. He was built to handle stress and no doubt it showed. And so it should not have really come as a surprise to the disciples that he seemed so calm even in these tense moments in the upper

room. After all, Jesus was the one who had handled the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders with such patience and grace and peace. Nothing seemed to rattle him. And so his words in the upper room would certainly match quite well with his usual demeanor. ***“Peace I leave with you”*** he says to them. But it is clear from all that he says to them that Jesus is not talking about any kind of peace. This is not just a regular run-of-the-mill calm that can be mustered by anybody who has that gift or is skilled enough. But this is my peace, he says. ***“My peace I give to you.” “I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be stirred (or troubled) and do not lack courage (or be afraid).” He says to them.***

As he speaks to them he talks about the coming tribulations. He alludes to the stress of the next few days, and the stress and trouble that will follow them all their days because they were his disciples; but as he speaks, he speaks of peace. He would be with them. His Spirit would help them. The anxieties of the day would be there but they would fade away, and there would be daily peace in him. But as Jesus speaks to them he is also talking about more than just the day to day. He speaks of the eternal. As so as he is speaking to them, he speaks of his suffering and death. He speaks to them of preparing for them a place in heaven. He speaks of having a proper relationship with the Father; being at one with God and one with each other. He speaks of loving each other and showing love to God by guarding and keeping his teachings and obeying his commands. Yes, Jesus is talking about having peace in a stressful situation, but ultimately where can his disciples draw that peace from? It would stem from and flow from peace with God. This is the peace of sins forgiven. We are at one with God through Christ’s all atoning sacrifice. Through Jesus the eternal peace of heaven belongs to the believer. This is the peace that transcends all understanding and yet makes all the difference in our day to day lives. This peace with God, this peace with Jesus, is what centers us and grounds us and makes us stable enough to withstand the troubles of the day and courageous enough to live our faith which so often contradicts the ways of the world. There is peace in Jesus and in his forgiveness. There is peace as you gratefully follow his teaching and his commands; for you have been given the peace of knowing that one day the eyes of a holy God will be on you as you stand before him and you will be able to look at him in calmness knowing that Jesus has died for me. Jesus has forgiven my sins. Jesus has given me heaven. Jesus bought me and purchased and won me and now I live my life for him, and die in peace in his love. And if the living LORD Jesus has done this all for me; if he has given me that kind of peace, no earthly trouble can take that away. When co-workers question, when family members oppose you, when the world around you seems to pick on you and contradict article after article of your faith; there is still peace in Jesus. When the sinful world tries to make you feel isolated and alone Jesus is with you and his peace remains and overcomes. Through Christ Jesus you know that in him and in his word you are right at home. In times of uncertainty and stress Jesus speaks these words of comfort and encouragement to you, ***“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*** Isolated and alone no more, God deigns to dwell with us. He chooses to live and dwell in our hearts through faith. He who chose to live among us, gracious leaves his peace behind for us to enjoy. He gives us his Spirit. He gives us his Word. He promises to come again so that we can live with him forever

in heaven. And he wraps this all up so neatly in the phrase, ***“we will come to him and make our home with him.”*** Our Savior makes us feel right at home as we listen to his Word and we follow his will even when it contradicts the thoughts and opinions, the ways and practices of this sinful world.

Consider what is about to happen to the disciples. They would soon be scattered. Scattered by persecution and mission. The message would go out, the disciples would go out to the corners and if they were not forced from their homes many of them would willingly depart. They would leave behind family and friends and be on their own as they went out to spread gospel to the world. Many times they would face opposition, they would meet people with very contradictory viewpoints and opinions, and so Jesus reminds them that he would be with them. He encourages them to keep his teachings in view, to follow his commands, to guard the words and instructions that he gave them; and thus, in that way, home would be right there. God the Father, God the Son, would dwell with them, and make a home with them. That’s the picture of a special relationship, an eternal bond, an ever-present connection, that comes only through faith in Jesus. He is the only one who could make such lasting and peace between sinners like us and a holy God. And that peace with God which Jesus gives to us is the ultimate foundation for our lives in general. Knowing that our God loves us in Christ, knowing that Jesus lived and died and rose again to make us right with God, we can be at peace. We can be at peace putting our plans and our troubles and our anxiety into the hands of our Almighty and all loving God. A guilty conscience can be put at ease. A restless mind and heart can be put at ease. We can be at peace, because our sins have been paid for in full. We are at peace with God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. He will be there to help us and guide us we face conflict with the world because of faith. He will be there to help us and guide us as he makes his home with us.

Jesus’ has to be on the top of the list of people who were built to handle stress, and his example of peace in the face of pressure can certainly be helpful. As we learn more about our Savior and spend more time with him his Word, that example of peace will hopefully rub off on us more and more. But even more blessed than the example is the impact and the promise he left behind, ***“Peace, I leave with you. My peace I give to you.”*** Jesus speaks these words of comfort and encouragement to you. Dear friends, don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in Jesus. In love follow his commands. Be at peace knowing that he has made peace between us and God. He gives us the peace of sins forgiven. He gives us the peace of the coming heaven. And your Savior assures you, his disciples, that he will give us peace. he will make us feel right at home in him even when we are in conflict with the ways of the world. Cast your anxiety, your worry, your stress, upon your living Lord and Savior. Know that he is there for you and go and live in faith. Go and live in the peace of Christ. Amen.