

**Sermon Notes of
Elder Larry Omasta's Sermon on March 28, 2021:**

**"In Stressful Times, We Can Have Peace
(John 14:27; John 16:33)"**

[In today's sermon, Elder Larry Omasta on Zoom shows us that the peace Jesus will give us to help us through our times of distress is truly amazing and surpasses all our understanding.]

Introduction:

- Unfortunately, at this time in our lives, we're under a lot of stress and anxiety.
- With the COVID-19 pandemic and with friends and family members experiencing severe health issues along with several unexpected deaths these past 12 months, we need something to calm us.
- We need something to uplift our spirits. And the answer is – the spiritual peace of Jesus Christ.

- The subject of the peace that Jesus gives us is a huge topic with many facets. So, just to let you know, we're only going to cover the fundamental basics today.
- So, the title of today's message is, "In Stressful Times, We Can Have Peace".
- So, let's start off by reading the two key scriptures.
- These are the words of Jesus when He is talking to His disciples for the last time just before He was betrayed by Judas and taken captive to be crucified.

- And believe it or not, next Sunday is Easter, when we're going to celebrate Jesus' resurrection and the incredible things that he accomplished for us because of His death and resurrection.
- So, now, we're going to read about Jesus' incredible peace He is going to give us as a result of His resurrection and glorification.

John 14:27, (NIV), 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.

John 16:33, (NIV), "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

- Now, let's read these verses from the Amplified Version, which gives us a more complete understanding of the intent of the Greek.

(AMP) John 14:27, Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]

(AMP) John 16:33, I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. In the world you have tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous

[be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world.” [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding.]

- Wow! What powerful reassurance Jesus gives us who have accepted Him into our hearts, minds, and souls.
- Jesus promises to us that His peace, which He will give to us, will give us courage and strength for every challenge we face in our lifetime and also take away our fears, our frustrations and our anxieties.

This life has suffering as well as good times:

- Now, what’s also interesting is what Jesus stresses in **John 16:33**, which in the past, most of us read right over quickly and don’t fully grasp.

John 16:33, In the world you have tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world.”

- In the past, a lot us in our denomination along with many other Christians today, believe that when we accept Jesus, we won’t experience very many hardships, trials, and suffering in our lives.
- We assume that Jesus will prevent bad things from happening to us, which is not true.
- It’s not true, because it’s NOT what Jesus said.
- We assumed that a good Christian will live his/her life on “The Good Ship Lollipop” or live in Disneyland forever and only experience the good and fabulous things of life.
- But the truth is, when bad things do happen to us, which they will, it’s not because we are Christians who have committed some horrible sin, but rather it’s because we live in a fallen, sin-filled world, where bad things always happen.
- We live in a fallen world where trouble or sickness appears at the most inopportune times. And we’re left to face the consequences.
- But, just because we experience trials and difficult times in our lives doesn’t mean that God has abandoned us.
- Quite the contrary, God will provide a way out of our troubles and give us His divine peace, as well.
- So, let’s look again at what Jesus said.
- He told His disciples and all the rest of us that we, as believers, would still “have tribulation and distress and suffering” in our lives, but then He quickly added, “My perfect peace will calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.”
- And that was so true for all the original disciples and even new ones that were commissioned to preach the gospel like Paul, Barnabas and others.
- Even though they were fulfilling a great commission from God, they suffered from many severe difficulties, including martyrdom.
- But, you know, they didn’t get upset with God or condemn themselves, but were encouraged and filled with joy by the spiritual peace Jesus was giving them.

- Paul wrote these encouraging words to the Philippians that he personally had experienced over and over again despite the many disasters that had afflicted him like being shipwrecked, stoned, beaten with rods, thrown into prison, etc.

Philippians 4:4, Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6) Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- This message that we, even as Christians, will experience distress and suffering in this life is constant throughout the New Testament.
- But, Revelation tells us that believers who will enter the Kingdom of God in the future, as God's sons and daughters, are going to experience a different life style than we ever did while living on this earth.

Revelation 21:1, Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2) I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4) 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

- So, in our former old order of things, in our physical lives, we did experience sorrow and anguish and pain even though we were believers and followers of Jesus.
- But that will all change in our new spiritual life.
- And so, our new life is something definitely we are looking forward to.

Receiving spiritual peace from Jesus:

- So the next question we're going to answer is this: how do we receive this spiritual peace from Jesus?
- Well, first of all, we need to realize that Jesus came to offer us a special, intimate relationship with our triune God.
- It's a relationship built on love, which was initiated by God to us.
- What's so amazing is that Jesus came to offer us this special, intimate relationship with Himself, the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- But Jesus doesn't force that relationship on us.
- He desires for us to respond to His love and enter into that intimate relationship with our whole being.
- And in our intimate relationship with God, Jesus gives us His Rest and His Peace.
- The peace of Christ doesn't force itself upon us or doesn't just come automatically.
- What we have to do is to ask for it and allow Jesus' spiritual peace do its work within us.
- It's a collaborative effort that we participate in.

- And when we do that we will face our troubling events in life with a deep sense of calm.
- The peace of Christ in us calms us and even gives us joy in the midst of trouble.
- That is so wonderful. It's beyond words to describe it.
- As Pastor Craig so often reminds us, we enter into that intimate relationship with God through prayer, meditation and study of the Scripture.
- Now, Jesus, just before the Last Supper, taught His disciples and all of us who read the Bible about the need for us to ask Him for peace and other spiritual gifts.

John 16:24, Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

- Yes, we need to ask for God's peace, among other spiritual gifts that Jesus offers to us and He will graciously give them to us, especially His peace.
- In Godly joy, which is the result of His peace given to us, the pain and the agony which went before losses its impact.
- Godly joy can never be taken away from us.
- Godly joy is independent of anything that our evil society can do to us.
- Godly joy, as a result of the spiritual peace Jesus gives us, is perfect and complete.
- No experience of life – no sorrow, no suffering, no threat of danger can ever take God's peace and joy from us.
- They are independent of all outward, physical circumstances.

Contrast between worldly peace and Godly peace:

- The peace which the world offers is the peace of escape, the peace which comes from the absence or avoidance of trouble and violence and war.
- The peace of the world also comes when we refuse to face the reality of what's happening to us.
- The spiritual peace that Jesus offers us is the peace of conquest, the peace that relieves us of stress and anxiety.
- No sorrow, no suffering, no danger can ever overcome God's inner peace that He gives us.
- Again, we need to remember that we need to ask Jesus for His peace especially when we undergo times of stress and anxiety.
- So when we've been overcome with great stress or as we so often say today, "when we have been freaked out by stress", that is the time we need to participate in our relationship with God by asking Him to take away our burdensome stress by giving us the spiritual peace that comes from Jesus.
- And in those stressful times, our prayers are filled with tears and not often logical or cogent or very understandable.
- But that's OK – because Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit will intervene for us during these stressful and intimidating times.

Romans 8:26 (NIV), In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

(AMP), In the same way the Spirit [comes to us and] helps us in our weakness. We do not know what prayer to offer or how to offer it as we should, but the Spirit Himself [knows our need and at the right time] intercedes on our behalf with sighs and groanings too deep for words.

The example of Paul and Silas:

- So now, let's look at how the followers of Jesus have responded to the answer of their prayers for divine peace.
- Redida in her December sermon quoted this verse in **Acts 16:25 (New Living Translation)**, **"Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. And the other prisoners were listening."**
- Paul and Silas had been severely flogged and were thrown into prison – all this was illegally done because they were Roman citizens.
- So, how did they react to all of this?
- Well, it's obvious without having asked for and then given divine peace, they humanly couldn't have acted this way – singing hymns to God, which were, undoubtedly, hymns of praise after being beaten and illegally put in jail with their feet chained to the prison walls.
- This is quite an example for us to follow.
- No dire consequence happening to us should ever deter us from seeking God's peace through a prayer of thanksgiving and praise.
- That's what Paul and Silas did, as a powerful example for us.

The example of Horatio Spafford:

- Moving along, let's look at another example.
- This remarkable incident occurred in the late 1800's.
- Horatio Spafford was a prominent American lawyer and Presbyterian Church elder.
- He is best known for writing the now famous Christian hymn "It Is Well with My Soul".
- The circumstances surrounding this writing are truly unbelievable.
- He and his family planned a vacation trip to Europe.
- But, late business demands kept Horatio from joining his wife and four daughters as they sailed their way to England.
- On November 22, 1873, while crossing the Atlantic on the steamship Ville du Havre, the ship was struck by an iron sailing vessel killing 226 people, including all of Horatio's daughters.
- His wife, Anna, survived the tragedy.
- Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to Spafford that read "Saved alone."

- Later, as Horatio sailed to England to join his wife, he wrote "It Is Well with My Soul."
- So now, let's look at some of the lyrics of this song, which, without a doubt, were the result of his prayers asking for divine peace to comfort his aching heart over the loss of his four daughters.
- There are 6 verses in the hymn. Let's look at verse 1 and 4:

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

*For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.*

- That's quite an amazing background to this now famous Christian hymn.

A modern day example:

- We have time for one more story illustrating this point about the awesomeness of God's peace. About 25 years ago, Larry meet this gentleman at a Christian conference in the Midwest.
- Several of us members of the Plain Truth Ministry had a display booth featuring the Plain Truth magazine, our booklets, and our recent videos that we had produced.
- This gentleman came up to our booth in a battery powered wheel chair.
- And Larry got started talking with him. He told him that he had begun a ministry devoted to helping crippled and disabled children discover Jesus and become believers.
- Larry asked him how all this came about.
- With tears in his eyes, Steve told him his amazing story.
- He and a few of his buddies flew out from the Midwest to California to go surfboarding.
- This had been their dream for a long time.
- While they were surfboarding one afternoon, a huge wave came unexpectedly upon them and Steve was flipped upside down.
- He came crashing down on his buddy's surfboard and injured his back so severely that he eventually became a paraplegic and could no longer walk.
- He was devastated, but fortunately doing his rehabilitation, several of the helpers were Christian and through their loving example Steve, too, became a Christian.
- Even though he became a believer, he was still bitter about what happened to him and that he could no longer walk.
- He told one of his new Christian friends that he couldn't spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. He'd go nuts. He was beginning to get severely depressed.
- And that's when he was introduced to the concept of asking God for His divine peace to emotionally heal his angst and bitterness.

- And then Steve told Larry, that by the grace of God and the peace of Jesus, he became a new person and could move forward in his life, once he received the spiritual peace from Jesus.
- And interestingly enough, he was motivated to start a ministry to help disabled children both physically and spiritually.
- Later, after Steve started his ministry, he was asked by one of his uncles, how he could ever believe in God, because it was obvious God didn't exist, because he wasn't healed
- He told Larry that he answered his uncle with a smile on his face and said, "I believe in God because He did heal me, not physically, but spiritually."
- Steve was quite an inspiration to talk to.

Concluding comments:

- So, in conclusion, human examples who have received the spiritual peace from Jesus should be very encouraging to us – even at times when we when we struggle through various ugly issues in our lives.
- When we seek spiritual peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus, our joy is made complete.
- At life's difficult moments, we need to remember Paul's encouraging words:

2 Thessalonians 3:16, "Now may the Lord of peace (which is Jesus) give you peace at all times and in every way."

- So, with all of this in mind, let's go to our closing prayer.

Closing prayer: