

New Covenant Lifestyle: Lesson 9 – Living Stress Free

Stress is one of the greatest problems facing people today. The hustle and bustle of today's society and the expectations it puts on people, generates a lot of pressure for performance. This is all part of Satan's plan to destroy people because he knows that if people accept stress it will lead to sickness and premature death. A medical study was done at Baylor College in the 1990's to determine if stress played a role in heart attacks. Two subject groups of pigs were given high fat, high cholesterol diets. One group was subjected to relaxing, soft classical music and the other to high tempo, loud rock and roll music. The result was all the pigs in the high stress group died of heart attacks. None of the pigs in the relaxed group died. The conclusion was that it is not the high fat, high cholesterol diet that kills; it is stress that kills. A poor diet just helps stress kill people faster.

One of the greatest blessings of the New Covenant is that we get to live free from stress. Jesus' most common statement to his disciples was "fear not". He still says the same thing to us today. The words "fear not" mean relax, don't stress out, don't worry about this. Some people have made worrying an art form and that is playing right into Satan's hands. Remember Job's comment "that which I feared came upon me". Living in fear opens the door to the curse operating in our lives.

In this lesson we are going to look at some scriptures that teach us how to live stress free; how to live in the divine rest that Jesus has provided for us; how to be relaxed in the middle of the demands and stresses of life. We covered some of this in New Covenant Principles Lesson 7 on Rest. I suggest you read this lesson again. It highlights that God has a rest for each of us and it's found in the completed work of Jesus. Entering into it involves three things: Knowing what you have in Jesus, believing God has already given it to you and letting Him work it out in your life. This is a challenge to our thinking because our human nature, education, and training have us thinking that we have to perform for anything to be successful. Living stress free is the opposite. It is living each day being led by Holy Spirit, which results in us being diligent to enter into God's rest (**Hebrews 4:11**).

Jesus says many things about resting in him. Every time he said "fear not" he was telling us to live in rest. In this world the only way to live in rest is to have total confidence in our God. That's why so much of this Bible Course has been laying the blood covenant foundation that guarantees you what Jesus' death has provided. Perhaps the most basic of Jesus' teaching about rest is found in **Matthew 6:33**. Write out this verse: _____

Since you have been made the righteousness of God, seeking it first means that is how you see yourself. Seeking the kingdom is seeing yourself seated with Jesus at Father's right hand. From there you know that everything of the enemy is already defeated. We already live in victory, success, joy, peace, freedom; we are not trying to get those things. Thinking this way enables God to implant wisdom into us and lead us successfully through all trials, tribulations, temptations and persecutions.

We are going to look at passages from Ephesians through to Thessalonians. From the first two verses of each of these books, what is Paul's declared impartation to the saints? _____.

Who does this impartation come from? _____.

Grace and peace are the two things you need to receive to live stress free. God is able to impart both of them to us because of what Jesus did on the cross. It is up to us to receive them. That is done by our agreeing with God.

Read **Ephesians 1:3-6**. What have you been blessed with (v3)? _____.

Where are these blessings found (v3)? _____.

The KJV uses the words “heavenly places” both here in verse 3 and also in verse 20. This Greek word is ‘epouranios’ which comes from two root words meaning “superimposition of abode of God (happiness, power, eternity)”. 2 Peter 1:3 tells us we have already been given everything needed for life and godliness. Stress free comes from the total assurance that you already have everything that you need, want and desire. It has been provided by Jesus death and resurrection and released for you in the real world. If you’ve asked for it, God says you have it (**John 16:23**). Resting in Jesus means entering into a life of thanksgiving where your words agree with God’s words. Grace and peace are given to you to walk each day in rest and refreshing, not in worry and stress.

What has God already determined for you (v5)? _____.

How is God’s will for you described (v5)? _____.

According to **Galatians 1:4**, what is God’s will for you? _____.

The Greek word that the KJV translates as adoption in **Ephesians 1:5** is ‘*uiothesia*’ and is from two words that mean ‘son’ and ‘place’ (commit, conceive, make, ordain). The reality of the Greek is that you are not adopted as we understand it to be today by a piece of paper and name change, but that you are actually made into children with the DNA of the parents – real sons. When you were born again you were literally changed into direct descendents of God. That is what the New Covenant blood did for you. It’s time to change your thinking to the reality of having ownership of everything your Daddy has. All His wisdom, power, protection and provision are yours to use at Holy Spirit’s direction. Believing and resting in this reality is the stress free living that we enjoy.

Why did he make us children (v6)? _____.

What has His grace made you (v6) _____.

The Greek word translated as ‘accepted’ in the KJV is ‘*echaritosen*’ and also means endued with special honor; highly favored; objects of grace. It is in the Aorist tense and Indicative mood. It is a certainty that happened at a point in time. The Greek word translated ‘beloved’ is ‘*egapemeno*’ (root is agape) and it is a singular noun, referring to Jesus. We are objects of grace in Jesus. As Jesus is, so are we (**1 John 4:17b**). **Ephesians 1:7** tells us that we have this status because of the price Jesus paid with His blood, providing forgiveness of sins to the full measure of His grace – His divine favor and power. Let the reality of your favored status renew your thinking. In **Ephesians 1:15-23** Paul continues to reinforce this reality by commanding our understanding to be opened to the revelation of Jesus and the exceeding greatness of His power (*dunamis*), which has placed us in Jesus.

Now read **Ephesians 2:4-10** and answer the following:

Why is God rich in mercy (v4)? _____.

Where did His mercy find you (v5)? _____.

What did He do to you in this place (v5)? _____.

When did this happen (v5)? _____.

What does Grace do to you (Gk ‘este’ - present tense) (v5, v8)? _____.

What does this present tense verb mean for you? _____.

This act of grace is the Greek word ‘*sesosmenoi*’, which is the perfect tense, passive voice of *sodezo*.

From your Greek Tense sheet, what does Perfect tense tell you? _____

What does the passive voice tell you? _____

Who have you been raised with (v6)? _____

Where are you now seated (v6)? _____

Why are you seated here (v7)? _____

The last phrase of verse 5 is repeated at the beginning of verse 8 using exactly the same Greek words. Paul is underscoring the essential truth that living in the New Covenant is all about God’s grace working in and through us every day. There can be nothing of our performance in our living. The root of stress is the belief that I am the one who has to perform; make things right; solve issues; deal with problems and make my life successful. When you grasp that God has already done it for you and you choose to let Him live through you, life becomes stress free. In **Ephesians 2:10** Paul uses the phrase “created in Christ Jesus unto good works”. The Greek word translated ‘unto’ is ‘*epi*’ which Strong’s (G1909) defines as “*A primary preposition properly meaning superimposition (of time, place, order, etc.), as a relation of distribution [with the genitive case], that is, over, upon, etc.; of rest (with the dative case) at, on, etc.; of direction (with the accusative case) towards, upon, etc.*” The Greek word for works is ‘*epgois*’ which is the dative case. This means that the phrase “unto good works” literally means “superimposed (of rest) good works”. It is not us doing the works. God has designed it so that we get to rest in His grace through Jesus and He superimposes His good works on us. We get to follow Holy Spirit and see the anointing and power of God change the curse around us into blessing - that’s living stress free.

Now let’s look at the Greek for **Philippians 2:12b**. KJV says “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”. The literal Greek, with tenses and moods added, is “*meta (with) phobou (fear – GEN/SING) kai (and) tromou (trembling – GEN/SING) ten.eauton (your own) soterian (salvation – ACC/SING) katergazesthe (work out – PRES/IMP)*”. Strong’s defines the verb *katergazesthe* (G2716) as “*to work fully, that is, accomplish; by implication to finish, fashion.*” Completing our salvation is a daily activity we live in. It involves rejecting the curse, agreeing with God about our real state, renewing our minds to righteousness and son-ship and following Holy Spirit. Recall that Jesus defined fear as worship (**Matthew 4:10**) and trembling is to be seen the New Covenant way as described in **Jeremiah 33:9** – fear and tremble because of God’s goodness and the prosperity He gives us. That is the description of a stunned, amazed, speechless and awestruck state. Are you there yet? Then renew your mind to what God is saying you get to live in when you “complete your salvation”. If you think this requires effort on your part, then change your thinking because Paul’s next statement addresses exactly this temptation to self-effort. Write out **Philippians 2:13**: _____

Who is responsible for doing the work? _____

What is He working according to? _____

What two things bring this about in your life? _____

What part do you have to play in completing your salvation? _____

We see that living stress free is about rejecting the temptation for self-effort and resting in Jesus – letting God do in us His good pleasure. Get ready to fear and tremble for all His goodness and prosperity manifesting in you.

Read **Colossians 1:12-14**. What is the only thing Paul tells us to do (v12)? _____.

What are you a partaker of (v12)? _____.

What did God deliver you from (v13)? _____.

Where did he place you (v13)? _____.

What did you get through the redemption of His blood (v14)? _____.

The Aorist tense is used for both verbs (delivered, translated) in verse 13. Your new covenant status was paid for when Jesus died and rose again and it became real in your life at the point in time that you were born again. You are no longer subject to the powers of darkness who operate the curse in this earth. That means you get to live free from the curse and stress is part of that curse. It's past time for you to let go of guilt and condemnation, the need for self performance and all feelings of inadequacy. You are resting in Jesus and God is working in you.

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:23-24**. Here is verse 23 from the Greek with key tenses/moods included. *“Now Himself, the God of peace may sanctify (AOR/OPT – physically pure, morally blameless, perfectly innocent) you wholly; and your entire spirit and soul and body may be preserved (AOR/OPT – guarded from loss or injury) blameless (faultless) in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Everybody wants what this verse offers – perfection and preservation in every area of life. The multi-trillion dollar health and beauty industries are geared to attempting to provide people with these things. We already have it provided for us, in what Jesus did. However, the verbs in this verse and verse 24 are all in the Optative mood, meaning it's optional whether you get it or not.

Where do the benefits come from (v23-24)? _____.

What confidence do you have that God will give them (v24)? _____.

What do you think prevents people from getting it? _____.

How do we actually get it? _____.

The final passage about living stress free is **Matthew 7:13-14**. The traditional religious teaching says this is about either passing from this life to the next or being born again. It says that the way to hell is wide and many choose that path (reject Jesus), while the way to heaven is narrow (accept Jesus) and not many find it. I see at least two problems with this teaching. First, God never loses, so there will be more people in heaven than in hell. Second, having both a gate and a way associated with each choice does not fit with natural death or being born again, as both of these are instant events (i.e. just gates) not paths that must be followed.

Jesus is actually talking about covenant choices made by men in this natural world. The straight gate and narrow way is choosing and living in grace, whereas the wide gate and broad way is choosing and living in mixture. The choices and lifestyle of self-effort (both Christians and non-Christians) are the wide gate and broad way. The resulting destruction is the operation of the curse in their lives. They reap sickness, poverty, failure and premature death in many areas of their lives. The straight gate and narrow path are the choices and lifestyle of resting in the completed work of Jesus and letting Holy Spirit work out God's plan in us. This life in grace is what leads to the life of Jesus being manifest in us – letting us live long and strong on this earth. That is the stress free life that we have the privilege of enjoying as we walk with Jesus.