

John 14:23-29 Continue in the Word of God! Easter 6 May 1, 2016

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You can be certain of God the Father's grace and peace, promised in His Word through Jesus Christ! Amen. We hear Jesus' words to encourage His disciples and us in John 14:23-29
These are Your words, dear Father in heaven. Help us trust in Jesus through the power of Your Word. Your Word is truth. Amen

Dear Followers of Christ,

Everyone needs God's Word. Yes, we're Christians. We've been baptized. We've been taught God's Word for years. But, but our need for God's Word remains! Without God's Word our faith cannot live. We live in a world that is deadly to Christians where God's Word is our only life-line. We are in danger on one side from turning to sins that choke out our faith. We are in danger from worldly blessings that tempt us to neglect the most vital blessing from that God. Jesus called it "the one thing needful!" In our verses, there are four blessings for us to hear and take to heart to nourish our faith. Our theme is:

Continue in the Word of God!

The first blessing of the Word is: the Father and Jesus will live in us. Jesus said, *"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. 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."* (v.23-24) Earlier, Jesus had told the disciples that He was going away and that later, only they would see Him. Judas asked: Why will you show Yourself just to us? He hoped that Jesus would appear to all people with great power and glory. Jesus replied that only those who love Him and obey His teaching (a better translation for "obey" is: those who pay close attention to details of His Word) will see Him. The original Greek uses two different words for "seeing." One means to view something, but the other means to see it with understanding. It's the second word that Jesus used for His disciples.

People in the world can't "see" Jesus in the sense of knowing Him because they don't have His Word. Many people think they have a right view of God. They make their own god who looks the other way when they sin; that accepts what they do as good enough no matter how they live or what they believe. But, the true God is holy. His standard does not change. He cannot accept people who live in rebellion against Him. He cannot change. If people refuse to believe God's Word: 1. that they must rid their lives of sin, and 2. receive Christ's forgiveness to be saved, they cannot "see" God. They cannot love the true God.

But, we are blessed by knowing God through His Word. We love God because He loved us and gave Jesus to save us. Through His Word we also know how vital is our relationship with God. We cannot allow any sin, no matter how appealing it is, to separate us from Him. When we think of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us through His suffering and death on the cross, we can't continue to sin that heaps abuse on Jesus and separates us from Him. Through Jesus' teaching we are blessed that Jesus and the Father live in us!

Every day the devil, the sinful world, and our old nature fight against our faith and try to drive God from our hearts. But, as we listen to the teachings of Christ, making them our own, we can be sure that Jesus and the Father live in us as witnesses that we are God's people now. They are like a down payment. For Jesus promised that when He returned to the Father, He would prepare much greater things for us in heaven, where we will see His glorious face and be filled with His love that can never be taken away.

The second blessing of God's Word is: the Holy Spirit will teach us. Jesus said, *"All this I have spoken while still with you. 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."* (v.25-26) Where would we be without Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit for His disciples? In Sunday Bible class we're talking about critics who say that the Bible is not God's Word; that it does not teach truths about Christ and that you can't be certain of it. We know from God's Word that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to inspire His disciples to write the truths of the New Testament. We know from His Word that Jesus completed His saving work. And He sent the Holy Spirit through His Word to all nations. He has blessed us with faith to know and believe the truth.

Yet, how often aren't we puzzled by things that happen to us in life? We ask, "God about a tragedy or an serious illness?" In this sinful world, we may never know why. But, the Holy Spirit is our Counselor: He stands beside us before God's court. He speaks to God for us and speaks to us that God declares us innocent in Christ! We don't need to worry or doubt if God loves us. The Holy Spirit teaches us it is true!

Third, God's Word offers us His peace. Jesus said, *"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."* (v.27) People living without Christ think of peace as a life with no problems. Peace is having no crisis or anxieties. They sleep like a baby, totally unaware of the problems or dangers around them. It's nice if we can do this! But, it's temporary. At best our world offers a wish for peace, but nothing to produce it long-term.

Jesus came into this world to do His Father's will: to win peace at a great price. Our nation pays billions of dollars a year to have troops in many parts of the world so that our citizens can travel, trade, and hopefully live at peace for a while. But money can't buy God's peace. Only Jesus did. The Bible states, *"God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"* *"Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Ro. 5:8-9, 1-2)

Our peace through Jesus is the foundation for a life of peace. Paul wrote, *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...."* (Colossians 3:15-16) There are many things which can disturb our peace: job loss, bad health, loss of friends or family, and loss of freedom. Yet, the Bible states of God, *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."* (Isaiah 26:3) There will always be times when we don't feel God's peace or forgiveness. But as we look to Christ, we'll know His promises so that we don't worry or fear, but trust in Him to guide us.

Fourth, God's Word gives us joy. Christ told His disciples that it was good He was going away. He said, *"If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I."* (v.28) This verse gives joy to Jehovah Witnesses, that Jesus is less than God. He is speaking as a humble man, who set aside His power and glory so He could live a perfect life of faith in God and die for our sins. Once His work was done, our Savior's human nature assumed the power and glory that He had as God's Son from eternity. Jesus is interceding for us. He is plotting a course by His Word that leads us to eternity!

What a blessing to continue in Jesus' teaching! Through God's Word we have the witness of Jesus and the Father that we belong to Christ. We have the Holy Spirit who counsels us to know the true meaning of who Christ is for eternal life. Through the Word we know we have peace with God through our Lord and Savior. Assured of these blessings in Christ we have a joy which nothing can take away! So, don't leave God's Word here at church. Take it with you. Read devotions and the Bible. You will be blessed! Amen.