

“Keeping Your Cool Under Pressure”

There is a saying used by some young people (and some old people too) that goes “be cool”. This expression can have two meanings. The first is when someone is encouraging you to be hip, sophisticated, “with-it” or groovy. The second meaning is when you are being exhorted not to lose control of your temper. This is the meaning I want to address today.

Jesus was ushered into a pressure-packed situation almost immediately upon leaving a time of intense prayer. A crowd of angry, hostile people appeared out of nowhere, led by Jesus’s own disciple, Judas Iscariot. Even under these volatile circumstances, Jesus did not lose His “cool”.

Matt 26:55-56: “Then Jesus spoke to the crowd. “Am I some dangerous criminal that you had to arm yourselves with swords and clubs before you could arrest me? I was with you teaching daily in the Temple and you didn’t stop me then. ⁵⁶ But this is all happening to fulfill the words of the prophets as recorded in the Scriptures.” At that point, all the disciples deserted him and fled.”

How could Jesus stay so calm under all this pressure? It was late at night, antagonistic people were confronting Him, waving clubs and torches. It was a stressful time for Him and his disciples. Jesus here is clearly speaking to the angry mob in a very calm voice. How could he do this? How do we usually respond if we are confronted by angry people, when we are in a tough situation or when we are trapped with no way out?

Matthew 26:51 “Suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.” Peter used the sword, causing pain and conflict. Jesus said, (Matthew 26:52). “Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword” Jesus knew that Satan had inspired the mob. How often do we take our “swords” and try to do like Peter did by taking things into our own hands? Maybe we give people a “piece of our mind.” Maybe we give them a good “tongue lashing”. Maybe we try to “hurt them by our actions.”

Not living “cool” means we are low on God’s spirit. Jesus was able to stay calm in this extreme situation because he was not low on God’s spirit. He had told the disciples earlier in Matthew 26:41: “Watch and pray, lest you enter into

temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.” You need inner resources when you are faced with pressure. Peter, you will remember, fell asleep. He was not ready for the strain of this confrontation. Maybe he wanted to pray, but he was not able to stay awake. He was running on empty.

Ephesians 5:18 tells us to be “filled with the Spirit”. Why? Because the Holy Spirit gives us the spiritual strength needed to hold up under difficult circumstances. The early church was filled with power after they received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Picture a water-saturated sponge. If we lightly push down on it, water runs out onto the table. We know what fills the interior pockets of the sponge. This is also true of us—what fills us on the inside will come out under pressure.

We may not appreciate the power of the Holy Spirit and are running on empty concerning the things that really matter. We might think we are too busy to take time to pray or gain spiritual strength by studying God’s word. After all, we live in a fast-paced society, so something has to give. It is not wise to run low on God’s spirit. When you feel the pressure building up, ask yourself: “Am I running by myself?... am I trying to cover up my spiritual weakness?”

We need spiritual weapons to combat Satan’s attacks. Jesus knows ordinary weapons will not work.

In II Corinthians 1:8, Paul said: “We do not want you to be uninformed about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. On Him we set our hope.”

What do we do!

We pray and seek God’s will on the issues that are causing us concern.

We ask God for more of His Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are equipped with power and strength to handle anything.

We acknowledge that the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, so we call on God to intervene powerfully for us.

We take time to allow His peace and wisdom to cover our hearts.

All of the foregoing can be summed up in

Ephesians 6:12-18:¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. ¹⁴ Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. ¹⁵ For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. ¹⁶ In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. ¹⁷ Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.