

(Youth Bible School 2007) Christ Is the Believer's Strength

by John D. Martin

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a clear vision, conviction, and action, as well as unity and rejoicing in the Lord, to overcome anxiety and achieve victory.

Duration: 1:03:30

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 11:2-4, Hebrews 11:8

Topics: "Faith In Action", "Spiritual Strength"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of acting on one's vision. He uses the example of men in the Bible who took definite steps to show their belief in their vision. The speaker encourages the audience to not just talk about their vision, but to live it out through their actions and words. He also shares a personal story about being a school teacher and learning how to treat people with fairness and understanding. The sermon concludes with a prayer for the audience to have the spirit of a man who constantly praises God and lives out their vision.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. That's a wonderful song written by Joseph Scriven, who was a man who could have identified with the theme of Philippians, always rejoicing, and yet it certainly was not based on circumstances in his life.

Let me tell you a little bit of this story. He studied for the ministry and then was disappointed to find that he didn't have the nervous constitution to be a pastor, so he had to give up his chosen vocation. And then sometime later he fell in love with a young lady and she drowned the night before their wedding.

And then he, after a series of events, came to Ontario and lived in the little town of Port Hope, where again he fell in love and his fiancée got sick and died before they got married. And so then he decided to dedicate his whole life to the poor. He was an excellent cabinetmaker and his services were sought after by people who wanted to build beautiful homes and put in beautiful woodwork.

But they would inquire and they would find repeatedly he would not do it. He would not work for anybody that could pay him. He worked for the poor all his life.

And at the end of his life, somebody found this song among his belongings and they asked him about it. And he said, well, that's a song I wrote to cheer my mother up one time when she was very sad and very discouraged. And he said, the Lord and I did it between us.

And then the comment that I read just recently about this man was he was known in Port Ontario as the most cheerful person in that area. They said when you saw him going about the streets, his face just radiated the joy of the Lord. And some people thought he maybe was an angel.

He was such a beautiful person. And I think he was beautiful not in spite of his problems, but because of them. Because he chose to let God do that deeper work in his life that only such experiences can do.

Let's take out our song and sing one verse of it. I think we'll sing the first verse. So deeper and deeper before Thee I bow For Thy abundance of grace on me now Master in me, just before Thee I fall Lord in my life Thou shalt be Deeper and deeper, deeper in me Now out of this world Let's bow our heads for prayer.

Father, yes, we want You to pour Your grace upon us. And Lord, we know You'll do that. You said You are able to make all grace abound toward us.

The limitation is within us. Your word talks about resisting Your grace. Oh God, help us to remove anything in our hearts that would resist the abounding work of Your grace.

Lord, possess every one of these young people. Oh God, my heart just goes out to them. Thinking of the world that they have to live in with all of the pressures and all of the allurements and all of the things that Western civilization has generated that militates against the simple trust and faith and obedience to You.

Lord, I pray help them to make the hard choices. Help them to put away the things that they really don't need that are so sought after by all young people. Help them, Lord, to decide to declutter their lives so that they have time to seek You without distraction.

Bless us as we open Your word. And I pray open our hearts to receive whatever it is You want to say to us. And I pray that You would have a specific message for each person here.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I want you to turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 11 as just a little preliminary thought that I'd like to give since this is the last message from Philipians.

I don't know when I ever sat in a series of studies that were as consistently rich as the ones you've had this week. I just can't believe how rich these studies have been. In fact, I'm sure that unless you make a special effort, you're going to have trouble remembering most of what you heard.

But please, at least get the general concepts that we've been plugging away at all week. But I'm always blessed by the secret of these great men here in Hebrews chapter 11. And there's a verse that sort of is the theme of this chapter that explains why they were what they were.

And you've probably been sitting here this week and you've had some vision for some things that you never thought of before. And you said, that's wonderful. That's the vision I want to pursue.

And so I just wanted to give you the secret of making sure that you don't lose your vision. And you won't lose your vision if you do what these men did with their vision. It says in verse 13, These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.

That is what you call vision. To be able to see something afar off and to pursue it, even if, like these men, it doesn't even happen in your lifetime. But you have been a part of that vision and God's going to keep that on record and you will live to see the fulfillment of it even if it's after you're gone.

But to see something afar off. And you know, the successful people in life are the people who have a long-range goal. Most people settle for a short-range goal that obliterates the long-range goal.

You know what I'm talking about? And you need to be sure that you have a vision, a long-range goal that connects with eternity. And that's good. But that's not all they did.

It says, They saw them afar off and were persuaded of them. Alright? It's such a thing. There's one thing to have a conviction.

There's another thing to have a vision. There's another thing for the vision to have you. Alright.

To be persuaded of them, and I've already given you the word, that's conviction. You have to believe that vision to the bottom of your heart and get a hold of it. And make it yours.

Somebody said, Men hold opinions, but convictions hold the man. That's what a conviction is. It's something that you have latched on to, and you won't let it go because you believe in it.

But that's not all they did. If it just stopped there, it wouldn't ever come to fruition. It says, They embraced them.

Can somebody think of a T-I-O-N word we could put there? Yes. You have to act on that vision. These men took definite steps to show what they believed about that vision.

And they did some very strange things. But they acted. They didn't just go around telling people how excited they were about their vision.

I mean, there are lots of people like that. But these people acted on their vision. When push came to shove, they put their feet where their mouth was.

And they acted. And then the last part, of course, this will just happen automatically. I mean, it's okay if you say things about it, but we're not talking about talking about the vision.

We're talking about the fact that your whole life makes very clear to everybody what your vision is by the way you live, by what you do, and by what you say. So I just want you to go home you probably have experienced this. Make sure you experience this.

And then make sure you follow through to this. And then if I came and talked to someone in your community, they could tell me what this was in your life. About what they saw.

Let's turn to Philippians chapter 4. Christ is the believer's strength is going to be the message of the day. Dealing with the whole issue of anxiety. The secure mind.

Okay? This passage breathes all the warmth of the affection of the Apostle Paul for these dear people of Philippi. Of all his churches, they seem to have had the most special place in his heart. He dearly loves these people and he yearns to see them.

And he says, they are his dearly beloved. They are his joy and his crown. Now he's referring when you refer to a crown in the culture of his day, he's referring to that olive leaf crown within woven through with parsley leaves and I forget what else they used, but it had various kinds of leaves in it.

And it was a corruptible crown. Which that's referred to many times. You know about how long that lasted.

Just a couple days and it all dried up and that was the end of it. But people coveted that crown because it was the crown you got if you won the races. The Olympic Games.

And other games that the Greeks had. The reward was this crown. And it wasn't that the crown was worth so much, but the crown said to everybody that you were a very important person.

And the Apostle Paul said the only crown that I need is you people. And I don't know about you, I'd love to have a raise of hands, but I'm not going to do this so I don't want to embarrass anybody. How many of you have ever had the privilege of leading someone to the Lord? And that's wonderful, but then beyond that, being able to disciple that person and see that person grow and see that person develop the gifts and talents and potential that God has given them spiritually.

I just want to say to you, there is nothing in the world that compares with that. There is literally nothing in the world that compares with that. If I were you, I would make that a goal that I'm going to experience that.

To go out and win people to the Lord and not only that, but to mentor them, whatever you want to call it. And then years later, see them standing in all the strength of their God-given abilities with all the grace of God. That is the most exciting thing that ever happens.

That's why I wanted to be a teacher. Because I thought it was more likely that would happen in my life as a teacher than probably anything I could choose to be. And I've had that privilege.

And believe you me, nothing compares to it. Absolutely nothing. And that's why Paul is saying, these people are His joy and His crown.

When he thinks of them, it is the fulfillment of any and all the highest dreams he could ever have. Alright? Now, in the next couple of verses, we have the term, in the Lord. Three times in four verses.

And so we want to look at what it is he's talking about in these three different situations where he mentions being in the Lord. Now, I told you at the beginning of this study that the key to understanding everything Paul has to say is to realize that everything is predicated on the assumption that you are in the Lord. And to be in the Lord is the same thing as what the Apostle John wrote when he wrote in his epistle and in his gospel that we should abide in Christ.

Abide in Christ. And I always picture that, and some of you have heard me give this before, but just to remind you and to tell the ones who haven't heard it. I always picture that.

I'm living at Dean Taylor's right now. And he has a wood stove there, and that's what's keeping me warm when I keep it going. And sometimes I'm too warm, of course.

But anyway, if you're familiar with a wood stove, you have a good fire burning and you pitch a log in there with bark on it, and after an hour or two you come back. If you have a good hot fire going and you open that door and the log is there and you can still see the bark, you can see the rings. It looks like it did when you threw it in except it's all cherry red.

And my question is, is the log in the fire or is the fire in the log? And I always sit and look there and ponder that. And that's a picture to me of what it means to abide in Christ. Are we looking at John Martin or are we looking at Jesus or are they both the same? Now, it'll have some... You'll still see, like you see the bark and the rings, you'll still see some characteristics of John Martin.

I'm a unique person that God created and so is every one of you. But superimposed, or maybe coming from within, all that uniqueness and making it everything it's supposed to be should be the person of Jesus Christ. It should be His life.

It should be His mind. It should be His will. It should be His feelings.

It should be His passions. It should be... Everything that's represented in personality should be reflected in my life so that people see that it's Jesus that's being lived through me. And so Paul is saying, there are a couple things that I want to talk about in Christ or in the Lord.

So the first one is, he says here, Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. Stand fast in the Lord. We've been talking about that some this week.

In the shock of battle, all of you stand fast in Christ because then you'll win. Now, if a few of you start standing in your own opinions and your own ideas and your own desires, you're going to break the phalanx and you will not stand together and the church will lose its strength. And so he says, we're living in a world, he doesn't say this, but we know we're living in a world where we're up against principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness of this world.

There is a great battle going on behind the scenes in every one of your lives. And he says, if you're going to win, and I really appreciated Brother Denny's emphasis on being a part of a brotherhood. If you're going to win, you need to join forces with your brother and get in the phalanx and stand there firm in the Lord.

And lay aside all of your own preferences and opinions and ideas. If these people represent in a basic way what Jesus Christ represents, then go with it. And stand fast in the Lord.

And I don't care how you baptize, and I don't care how you organize your church, and I don't care about a whole lot of other things that have split people up and they say, I believe this. Forget all that. And stand fast in the Lord.

Alright? In vain the surge of angry shock. In vain the drifting sands. Unharm'd upon the eternal rock.

The eternal city. And a city isn't one person. Stands.

So the first thing he mentions about standing fast in the Lord is the reiteration of what we've been saying all along. You need to be part of a phalanx. Don't do this yourself.

I almost guarantee you, you will fail. This whole thing was never intended to be done on an individual basis. Alright? Number two.

We find that the Apostle Paul was concerned. We often mention that there were no problems in this church. And that's not quite true.

We find out here that there were two women, Eodius and Syntyche, who apparently were not getting along. And apparently Paphroditus came back to Paul in Rome, or came to Paul in Rome, and told him there was a problem here between these two women. And Paul wanted to head that off immediately.

And so he sends word in this letter. Maybe he thought his apostolic influence would help push this thing in the right direction. He sent in this letter advice on this subject.

And notice it says, I beseech you, Eodius. By the way, that word means odor. Or fragrance.

And I'm not going to comment on this particularly, but if you look over in verse 18, Paul loved to do plays on words. He just loved to. If you notice, he talks about an odor of a sweet-smelling savor.

This woman wasn't giving a very good fragrance. But her name was Eodius. I beseech you, Eodius, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Alright? Only as we find ourselves in the Lord. If you don't remember anything else I say, remember these phrases. That's the only way we're going to have unity.

It's the only way we're going to have unity. If we're going to base our concepts on our opinions and our little statements and ideas about things personally on a whole host of things that are neither here nor there, I'll give you another one. Prophecy.

I don't care if you're premillennial, amillennial, nonmillennial, panmillennial, you name it. Just leave that at the door. That will take care of itself.

And a whole host of other things. But when it comes down to practical faith in Jesus and a reflection of His life and a lifestyle that is clearly separated from that kingdom and some of those very important issues, there's where we can stand. Let's stand there together.

Alright? The whole church, this is so serious when this happens. In fact, let me say this. If there's a quarrel, it has to be that somebody is not standing fast in the Lord.

It just has to be. In fact, I sat across the table with a man here just a week before I came here where a huge difference had come up. And after I've heard everything, I said, well, all I can say is something is going drastically wrong here.

There's no way that you and I can be not in unity together and both of us be standing fast in the Lord. Now, I'm not saying it's you. Maybe it's me.

But it's obviously true that there can't be that kind of disunity and both parties be standing fast in the Lord. Of course, they're all going to point at each other. You know how that goes.

But the fact remains that when there are quarrels, somebody is not being in the Lord with whatever it is that's causing the quarrel. And so Paul saw this as very serious and he's calling on the whole church to

solve the problem between these two women. Alright? The next thing we notice, he says, rejoice in the Lord.

Alright? Rejoice in the Lord. Always. And again, I say rejoice.

You know, in Paul's day, the pagan cities had their great festivals to their gods and to their cities and to Caesar. They were a very festive culture. They loved their festivals.

And Paul is saying that if anybody has a right to celebrate, it's the followers of King Jesus. He is the true ruler of the world. So celebrate Christ.

And you don't know me very well, but the folks back home know me, and I love to celebrate. I love to think of anything I can think of to celebrate. Any kind of anniversary will do for me.

Or anything. I love to celebrate and I love to celebrate Christ. While we're doing it.

Alright? And he says celebrate Jesus. Celebrate Jesus. Alright, now we get into the real theme of this chapter, which is anxiety.

If anybody had any excuses to worry, Paul did. There were potential problems of Philippi. You had these two women having problems.

There was the potential problem of Judaizers, which he knew sooner or later they were going to arrive. And he was in prison facing possible death. And yet here he is saying, rejoice in the Lord.

Don't lose your joy. Continually celebrate King Jesus, no matter what your circumstances are. Alright, so the first thing he explains here, we're going to get the secret of victory over worry.

And I think we're pretty well going to cover the things that cause people to worry. The first thing we notice is right judging. Let your moderation be known unto all men.

Do you know that most of the worries that people have are the result of bad relationships with other people? That's what causes the most worry. Bad relationships with other people. People who can't get along.

That causes no end of anxiety and negativism and just downright discouragement and depression. And Paul says the solution to that problem is to show your moderation to all men. That means, be sure that in your relationships with people, you are moderate.

You are gentle. You are kind. You are soft.

I'm not talking about soft about sin. I'm talking about the way you relate to them. The way you talk and so on.

And the way you treat them. Forbearing. The Greeks explained this as justice and something more than justice.

You know, there are some people that have got to have justice. They're like the lady who went to the photographer and got her picture taken. And then she went to pick up the proofs.

And she was very upset. And she rushed back into the photographer's office and said, I demand justice. And he said, there's a mirror lady.

Take a look. What you need is mercy. But we don't think in those terms.

I just told Brother David Cooper, if I have any sorrow from my past experience, if I pass through this life again, I would be a lot kinder. I'm not too proud of some things I can remember in my life where I was not gentle and moderate and kind and easy to be entreated and forbearing. And a lot of the issues were not things where I had to be harsh.

But that just seemed to be my personality that I didn't overcome as quickly as I should have. You take the teacher who's grading papers to explain to you what it is to mean something beyond justice. Here's a student that makes a 90% on his paper.

And the teacher knows that that student is intelligent and probably spent 15 minutes studying for the test. He lives in an ideal home, has parents who give him all the encouragement he needs. He's in good health, had plenty of time to study, had good brains, and he makes a 90%.

Here's another student who took the same test. He made a 50%. He spent three hours studying.

He lives in a home that's poor. He hardly had a quiet place to study. His mother is sick.

There's trouble on the farm. He didn't have time to study. But he took the three hours and still made a 50%.

Now, what do you do as a teacher? What do you do? Well, after I had learned a few things about how to treat people, I really worked on this as a school teacher. I figured out all kinds of ingenious ways that I could give students grades that reflected what they did with what they had. I'm just telling you.

There's something more than justice. Justice is just, well, he made a 90% and he made a 50%. That's not the whole story.

In fact, that isn't even most of the story. And that's not fair. In fact, you know, the Bible talks about... There's a term in the Bible that I think we just sort of generalize to mean sin.

And it does definitely mean sin. But it's a specific kind of sin. Iniquity.

All you need to do is change one letter in that word to know what that word really means. And that's the first letter. Not the first letter.

Oh, I did spell it the way it wasn't supposed to be spelled. Okay. I gave it away.

Okay, good enough. That is the specific sin of iniquity. Inequity.

Not being fair. Not evening things out. Not being equal in the way you relate.

And this says, if you want to have good relationships with people, if you want to judge properly, make sure that you learn how to give equitable treatment with generous portions of mercy in your relationships with people. And you'll get along well. In fact, I don't know how many of you knew Jeffrey.

How many of you knew my son Jeffrey? Quite a few of you. He was miles ahead of his dad on this one. Jeffrey had a way of making everybody feel important and loved and forgiven for any faults that they had.

He treated people right. And people loved him. And he said, that's what Christians should be.

They should be known as people who are moderate. Their moderation is known to all men. You'll get treated right by that person.

Alright? So, know when to insist on justice. There are times when justice has to be insisted on. And there's times when there has to be pain and all of that.

That's all true. Scores have to be even sometimes. But, know when you can give something more than justice.

How many of you have ever read the story Merchant of Venice? One of Shakespeare's plays? One of my favorite ones to read. Don't go to the theater to see it. I don't believe in plays being put on the stage, but you can read them.

Shylock had loaned Antonio money because he wanted to give a big gift to his friend who was getting married. And he was a wealthy man, but he just invested his money in equipping his ships to go out to sea. And of course, when they came back, he would have lots of wealth, but he was cash poor.

And so he was forced to go to Shylock, who was a Jew, who he did not know hated him because Shylock had always treated him in a friendly way, but underneath he was jealous and he hated Antonio and he was looking for an opportunity to get even with him. But Antonio was totally naive about that and he went to borrow this money from Shylock and just as a joke he said, if you don't get it paid back in time, all I want is a pound of your flesh. And then he laughed and Antonio thought it was a joke.

But here he got word that his ships all perished at sea and it came time to pay this money and he had no money. And he went to Shylock and he found out that Shylock was serious. He wanted a pound of his flesh.

And so he finally went to court and Antonio, the judge said, there's nothing we can do. This is what the contract says. Everybody was sympathetic.

They were all pleading with Shylock. He would not listen. He was determined to have this man's life and in walked this lawyer.

It turned out it was Antonio's wife, Portia, who had gone to a very wise lawyer and had gotten advice as to what to do, but she walks in, pretends to be not a woman, she pretends to be a lawyer and she walks in and she said, I would like to see the contract. Yes, Shylock, it says you can have a pound of flesh, but it doesn't say you can have any blood and it must be exactly a pound. If it's more than that, you're going to forfeit your own life.

And furthermore, it doesn't say you can take this man's life. If he dies in the process, then you forfeit your life as well. And then Shylock is pleading for mercy.

And then she gives her wonderful mercy speech. And if you don't ever read anything else in that piece of literature, you should read Portia's mercy speech. And it ends by saying, then man is what man is like as God.

When justice, I'm sorry, then man is like as God. When mercy tempers justice. And that's how we all should be.

We should have tender, merciful, moderate, gentle, kind hearts. So if you're here today and you're like I was at your age, a strong personality that tended to be a little bit harsh at certain points, by all means, work on that. That's not right.

All right. Why? Why are we to be moderate to all men? The Lord is at hand. Christ is coming.

And what's going to happen? We shall be judged as we judged others. I want to be able to be judged with lots of mercy. I'm going to need lots of it.

And the Bible clearly says we will be given as much mercy as we gave. So, to deal with this problem of anxiety, first of all, work on your relationships to make sure that you're equitable and kind and merciful and gentle in your relationships with other people. There was a friend of mine that we often discussed with and it was sort of a joke.

People said, why do those people disagree? But they disagree in the most agreeable way. We didn't fight. We just disagreed.

And there is such a thing as disagreeing without being disagreeable. All right. The next thing we find is right praying.

Paul stresses that we can bring everything to God. Now, I don't think we appreciate the uniqueness of the true God of heaven. He is a benevolent God, as you've been told all week.

Did it ever occur to you that He's the only benevolent God that anybody ever talked about? All the other gods are angry, grouchy gods looking down over the balustrades of wherever they are waiting to pounce on people the minute those people displease them in any way. And that's why those people live in cringing fear and do all kinds of crazy things, even to the point of sacrificing their own children, at least in history. I don't know if that goes on anymore.

To appease these gods, they've got to constantly keep them happy. These gods are always upset and grouchy and frustrated and they have to keep them happy. In fact, I heard a missionary say one time that the thing that appealed most to the people where he was being a missionary was to find out, first of all, that there was only one God.

That was a relief. They had to juggle about 700 of them and keep them all happy. It was a relief to find out there's only one God and He's happy and He's benevolent and He's kind and He gave His only and He's put Himself to His extremity to bring us to where He wants us to be.

And He wants us to be part of His family. Now that was a revolutionary message. And so this is our God.

And He wants us to bring everything to Him. There's nothing too great for God's power. And there's nothing too small for His fatherly care.

He loves us. He loves us. He wants us to bring everything.

Just like we sang. Bring everything to God in prayer. A child.

Those of you, when you get to be fathers, you'll understand this. A child brings everything to his dad. His little joys, his little sorrows, his little stubbed toe.

Just everything. And somehow, even if dad can't help a whole lot, it's so comforting to know that there's somebody who cares and will kiss it and say, now it's okay. Paul didn't just say pray about it.

He got specific. He uses prayer, which is a general term for worship or adoration. And we should do that at the very beginning of our prayers, following the model of the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. The problem is we have to, in our own minds, before we even start saying much in our prayer, we need to expand our concept of God and make Him, you know, in our thinking, make Him large. Isaiah was praying one time.

And he said that the Lord's train filled the temple. Now, you know what the train is. It's the garment that's dragging on the ground.

And here was the temple. And up here was God. And all Isaiah said he saw in the temple was the tip of His train.

God was way high and lifted up. And the temple was filled with glory. And Isaiah said, that was just the train.

That wasn't even the garment. It certainly wasn't God's body. I mean, it was just the tip of His garment.

And so when we begin to pray, the first thing we should do is lift God up in absolute adoration and worship. Then we have supplication, which is earnest. It means literally earnest sharing.

There's no room for half-heartedness when we pray. James says, the fervent prayer of a righteous man. Fervent means hot.

And Elijah prayed fervently and God answered his prayer. You know, did you ever wonder why God wants us to ask when He already knows our need? And not only ask once, but repeatedly? Well, I'm a father and it's not that I don't want to give something to my children, but if one of my boys came to me and said, Dad, I want a bicycle. Well, I wanted to give him a bicycle.

In fact, I maybe even had it in mind before he even asked. But I probably won't do it. Then he comes another time and he says, Dad, I want a bicycle.

And maybe I still will. He says, well, let's wait a little. And after a bit, every day he'd say, Dad, I want a bicycle.

Ah. Now he's ready to really appreciate a bicycle. Because you see, prayer is a relationship.

God knows our needs before we ask. But He wants us to connect strongly with Him. And He wants that prayer to be part of building a relationship where we ask and He gives and we learn to know each other.

And that's why the prayer is to be fervent. Because that shows that our heart is really in that prayer and we are going to bless God when God answers that prayer. The second thing is thanksgiving.

The third thing, sorry. God is pleased with our thanks. He loves to hear us say thank you.

Remember the ten lepers that Jesus healed? And only the one came back? And Jesus said, where are the nine? And then He said something interesting to that one that came back. He said, Thy faith hath made thee whole. Weren't the others made whole? I wonder.

I think maybe they were all just cleansed of their leprosy. But you know when you have leprosy, you lose fingers and you lose noses and you lose ears. I kind of think that one was the only one that got His fingers and His ears and His nose back because He thanked.

And Jesus said, Your faith has made you whole. That means He was entire. God loves our thanks.

So, we should have adoration that lifts God high. To begin with, we should have fervency in our prayers and they should be heavily larded and laced with thanksgiving. And He says if you do that, if you do that, the peace or the shalom of God, and remember what shalom means.

It means well-being. It means prosperity. It means success.

It means calmness of heart and spirit. He says the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. What do we mean by the peace that passes understanding? Well, it means that the peace you have is not connected with the circumstances.

The circumstances dictate all kinds of anxiety and problems, but you have peace anyway. It's the martyr being burned at the stake and there he has peace which transcends the logic of being burned alive. And it says God's peace will keep your minds.

The picture of that is a walled city with an army around it guarding your heart so that your peace is not disturbed. Alright? This is tremendous. Peace is not the absence of conflict, somebody says, but the presence of God.

And you will have that if you pray correctly or you pray rightly and have the kind of right relationship with God in prayer. The third thing that he talks about is right thinking. And I quoted it the other day.

You are not what you think you are, but what you think you are. Did you ever hear this one? Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit.

Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny. But it all starts with a thought.

And my favorite scripture verse in the Old Testament, I already gave you my favorite one in the New. God is able to make all grace about you. My favorite one in the Old Testament is Proverbs 4.23. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

What is your heart? Your heart is the seat of desire. That's the Hebrew meaning of the word heart. The seat of desire.

Your desires, most of them subconscious, put there by conscious decisions, conscious actions, and conscious words. But they're down there. And every time you repeat those words and those actions, that desire is strengthened.

To give you an idea how desires are put there, there was a hermit on the top of a mountain one time who came down after refrigeration had been invented and bananas were available in the village and he had never seen a banana. He'd been up on the mountain most of his life. And somebody said to him, Here,

why don't you try this? This is a banana.

This is something new. And he said, No, thank you. I already have more desires than I can satisfy and I don't want to add another one.

All right. I don't know if the man should eat the banana or not, but you get the point. And so this verse is saying, Keep your heart with all diligence because once you open your mind, the beginning of desire takes place in your heart.

That's why we as parents guard our children's activities and acquaintances and so on because we know that if we're not careful, desires start to be created and they have to live the rest of their lives with those desires, but by the grace of God. And so it says you need to think right. All right.

Bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And now he spells it out in detail. He says you should think only about the things that are true.

There are many illusions and strange ideas that people have that are absolutely false. The choice isn't just between the good and the bad. The choice is between the false and the real.

I used to wonder why 1 John ended with this interesting little statement. My little children, keep yourself from idols. Well, the idol is the unreal.

And he keeps talking about the truth, the truth, the truth, and he says keep yourself from idols. And that's what he's saying here. Keep yourself from things that are false.

Don't believe everything that comes down the road. People become obsessed with false ideas like second work of grace. Boy, that's great.

I can have this experience. My old nature is eradicated. I won't sin anymore.

Boy, I wish. But it ain't true. And people who believe that kind of stuff and allow that kind of stuff to enter their minds and they take that in can live a whole life of delusion.

In fact, I can tell you one very sad story of a man who lived that way. And I'll just tell you this much of his story. When he died, they didn't even have a funeral for him.

They had a graveside service and nobody was there except some of his immediate family. It's a pretty sad ending for someone who was sinless. Health and wealth.

Healing in the atonement. And all of this stuff that people believe, plus you name it. All kinds of stuff.

When we believe a lie, Satan takes over. And so he says, concentrate on the things that are true. Forget the gossip.

Forget the story that's not well founded. Just forget that stuff. Concentrate on the things that are true.

Then he says, whatsoever things are honest. That means whatever is honorable. In contrast to the flippant and the cheap.

And here, I would just simply refer to all the styles that come down the road. All this stuff that's going to be here and it's going to pass and something else will take its place and then it'll pass, whether it's music,

whether it's clothes, you name it. It's just, I don't know what, I wish I had an awful word to say for it.

When I was a boy, the guys all jacked their cars down till the bumper practically was on the road. And then in a few years, the back ends were up. I honestly don't know where they are now.

But they'll go up and down the rest of the life of cars. And it's just stupid. And clothes are the same way.

I wore blue jeans to school because my parents couldn't afford to buy me dress clothes. So they bought me jeans so I could wear them on the farm when they became faded. I was the only boy in school that wore blue jeans.

The only boy. And my friends were nice. They didn't make fun of me or anything.

But you couldn't have caught any of them dead wearing blue jeans off the farm. Do I need to make any more comments? That's the way that stuff is. And there'll come a time when people won't be caught dead wearing blue jeans.

Now, you can't imagine that, but that's coming. Just give it another 20 years, maybe not that long. I hate to think of what might come next.

Whatsoever things are just. That means what we were just talking about. All right? Equity.

Whatsoever things are pure. This literally means something that can be brought into the presence of God. Now, I don't need to tell you, especially you guys, that a lot of the talk are people who can cleverly turn a word to make a pure statement into filth.

You all know what I'm talking about. That's a lot of the talk. My girls work in the nursing profession and especially when they went to school, they came home and said, Dad, you cannot believe how sex dominates everybody's thinking 24-7.

And this says don't have anything to do with that. Whatsoever things are pure. Listen, you put that stuff in your mind, you're going to live with that the rest of your life.

And you're going to have to deal with it, finally, by the grace of God and it'll be difficult. Better not put it there. In fact, there are other parts of the world that are even worse.

Stephan, who came to visit this country from Belgium, some of you know him, told me he came to this country because the factories were so filthy with the stuff they had on the walls and the words and conversation of the people that there was no place his children could work. He wanted to come to a better place. And he said, I know it's going to be hard for you to believe this because you think your country is rotten.

And it is. But he said, when we landed in the United States of America and walked through the cities, we thought we had landed in a Puritan country. So it's worse elsewhere and it's going to keep getting worse.

But you are called to keep your thoughts, words, and actions pure. And concentrate on those. Whatsoever things are lovely means whatsoever things are attractive and winsome.

The things which call forth love because, as I told you the other day, we were made to love. If you want to be fulfilled, love. If you want to be torn apart, physiologically, even with sicknesses and all kinds of

problems and arthritis and you name it, then put hate in there.

You were not physiologically made for hate. You were made for love. And so why don't you concentrate on those things that generate love in the hearts of people and generate love in your heart.

Make that the subject of your conversation and your thoughts. Whatsoever things are of good report, that means high-toned, gracious, fair, things that inspire courage. I just heard something since I'm here that has blessed me ever since I was told it.

And that is that one of the plain churches in our community was sort of headed the wrong direction that there's a revival taking place among the youth who want to reclaim some ground that that church has lost. Oh, I've been so excited about that. I'm going to go home and tell everybody.

I'm going to try to get in contact with those young people and encourage them. That blessed me far more than if someone said, did you hear? That doesn't bless anybody. If there be any virtue, the word means manly courage, if there be any praise, think on these things.

Alright? Right living. You can't separate outward action from the inner effect that it has on you. Sin results in a civil war where your feelings make you go one way and your mind knows you should go a different way.

Most people are walking civil war between their feelings and what they know they should be doing. So sin creates anxiety. Isaiah 32, 17 says, The work of righteousness shall be peace.

The effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance forever. So guard your right living. Then Paul says, Those things which you have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do and the God of peace shall be with you.

Verse 9. I like that. That's a pattern for teachers. If anybody here is a teacher.

It says learned. It means what they received from Paul. It's interesting.

The word received means a fixed tradition. Now I want to give you a principle. What you receive, don't take it into your heart until you are sure that it is a fixed and verified truth.

If it's something somebody says to you, especially spiritually, and you get the impression this is something new that nobody ever thought of before, it is false. There is a body of truth that you should be able to go back in history and you should find, oh, here was a group that believed that and they were a fine group. Here's a group that believed that and they were an outstanding group spiritually.

Here's a group that believes that today and their lives are exemplary and it's Christlike that this is a truth. When I first developed convictions on the whole subject of economics, there weren't people around me talking about that and I thought, well, you know, is this something that I'm wrong on? And then I turned to my Anabaptist forefathers and I kept seeing the term voluntary poverty, voluntary poverty. I found out the Waldensians believed in that, the Lollards believed in that, and I found out there was a whole host of other saints all through history that believed the things that God was showing me and then I was confident.

Paul says the things you received from me, they were a body of verified information and so we pass on a body of verified information and then Paul not only passed it on, but it says heard and seen, that means modeled. Paul modeled it and so he said, here I gave you this fixed tradition, you saw me live it, you saw

how this worked out, now you go do it and it'll bring you peace. Alright? The formula for peace, I want you to notice, we're just going to quickly review here what I said, it's right judging, it's right praying, it's right thinking, and it's right living and if you get those four things, discipline, in your life correctly, you will be at peace.

Let me give them to you again, right judging, the way you treat other people, right praying, the way you relate to God, right thinking, what you put in your mind, and right living, what you do, you will be at peace. Now I want you to see the opposite, would you turn to James chapter 4. James chapter 4. This is the formula for war and you have war pictured in this passage. Instead of right judging in verse 11, look what you have.

Speak not evil one of another, he that speaketh evil of his brother, judgeth his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. Alright, so the opposite, and you'll find there was real conflict here that James is trying to address. He says, whence come wars and fighting among you? Well, one of them is speaking evil of people.

Verse 3, right praying, ye have not, because you ask not, that's in verse 2, ye ask and receive not, because you ask amiss. You don't know how to pray. You don't know how to treat people, judge people.

You don't know how to pray. Look at verse 8. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. They don't know how to think.

And verse 4, ye adulterers and adulteresses. They don't know how to live. So you have the very opposite in this chapter.

You have wrong judging, you have wrong praying, you have wrong thinking, and you have wrong living, and you have wars among the people. And there's not peace. Alright, let's talk about God's power a little bit as a matter of having strength as a believer.

Let's just read these verses here. We'll finish up here quickly. Verse 10, But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again.

God had promised the Philippians to be concerned about Paul's need just when he most needed their love. It was providence that it happened just at the time when he needed it. Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.

I know both how to be abased, I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

So he's trying to show them that whether they would have sent the gift or whether they wouldn't have. He has learned to be content. And oh, I wish in the United States of America with all the advertisement, I get so sick of it.

All it is is trying to stir up discontent, make you unhappy with what you have and you need this and you need that and you need this. And you people are going to have to learn to withstand all of that. And be like the Apostle Paul.

If something wonderful comes my way, that's wonderful. If it doesn't and I'm hungry, I'm content. No matter what state I'm in.

Whatever he sends. Like Joseph. For 13 years that young man got nothing good.

Mistreated by his brothers. Sold by his brothers. Betrayed by Mrs. Potiphar.

Forgotten by the guy in the prison. And he comes into the prison one day and he says, why are you guys so unhappy? Joseph, you're smiling. And you're worried about us being unhappy.

Most people would have said, you guys think you have a problem. Wait till you hear my story. Joseph had learned.

I'll tell you what Joseph had learned. He knew Romans 8:28 several thousand years before it was written. He sold his brothers.

He said, it wasn't you that sent me here. It was God. For a good purpose.

And Paul is saying that's what he's learned. He's learned in every situation to be at rest in his spirit and be content and not to want or need anything. Alright.

Notwithstanding, verse 14. Ye have done well that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now you Philippians know also that the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving.

This is why he loved his church. They had repeatedly been sensitive to his need. Even though they were poor.

In fact, Paul didn't have to get set up shop and make tents till he got down to Corinth. These people had supported him the whole way down through Macedonia and Greece till he got to Corinth. Down through Thessalonica, down through Athens, and finally when he got to Corinth, I guess they couldn't get the help to him and so then he set up shop and made tents.

But he wants to make it clear that it's not because he wanted a gift. But the reason he's so happy with their gift is because of what it's going to do for them. Not what it did for him.

See, we're all happy. Somebody gives us the, oh we're happy with the gift. He wasn't thinking about himself.

He was thinking about them. He said, now that you've given me a gift, God is going to supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. And it says according to, not out of.

You see, if you give out of riches, if I were a millionaire and you had a \$50,000 hospital bill and I gave you \$10,000, you'd say, well John gave me a wonderful gift, but that would be out of my riches. But if I paid the \$50,000 hospital bill and gave you \$10,000 and said, here I just gave that just for, you know, just so you could enjoy it, that would give you some clue as to how rich I really am. And God gives us according to His riches.

This verse is not for missionaries going away. This is for the people who support with lavish generosity people in other parts of the world or people in their own community that have needs. They qualify then to

have God give them according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

That's what Paul was so excited about. This church has just qualified itself for a great blessing. So anyway, the Bible says, cast your bread upon the waters.

How many of you have ever thrown bread into the water? It just dissolves. What does Ecclesiastes say? Cast your bread upon the waters, Ecclesiastes 11.1, and you shall find it after many days. That's what Paul is excited about.

You know, giving is an investment. Did you know that? I don't think most people believe that. Giving is an investment.

And a person who gives, usually, people who really understand investments, they'll wear old clothes, they'll drive an old beat-up car, they'll sell things, they'll get every penny they can together to put into that investment because it's only then that it starts to increase. And Jesus said, sell that you have, give alms, get rid of the extras, and lay up treasure in heaven. It's an investment.

And that's what Paul is saying. You folks just made a quality investment and the return on it is going to make compound interest look thick.

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