

Lookout mtn.conference 1973-07 the Apostle Paul

by Stan Ford

Stan Ford's sermon emphasizes the Apostle Paul's call for unity, support, and joy within the Christian community as essential for spiritual health and growth.

Duration: 38:04

Scripture: Job 1:21, Matthew 6:33, Philippians 2:17, Philippians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, James 1:27, Revelation 3:5

Topics: "Joy In Suffering", "Christian Perseverance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of rejoicing in the Lord always, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. He uses the story of Job, who lost everything, to illustrate this point. Despite his losses, Job was able to find joy in his relationship with God. The preacher also emphasizes the need to focus on positive and virtuous thoughts, as outlined in Philippians 4:8. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to find joy and peace in their faith, even in the face of adversity.

Transcript

The four of this very wonderful letter that Paul wrote to the Church of Tel Aviv. The Lord will help us, we will consider together the first eleven verses, maybe the first nine verses of this wonderful chapter. Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

I beseech Odius and St. Titchie that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other, my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always.

And again I say rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard, and singingly do. And the God-peace shall be with you. The Lord will add his blessing to the reading of his word.

Just one little word about tonight. As I've been saying, we're going to have a good old-fashioned sing. Sing some of the choruses that we all enjoy.

And we've been able to secure this machine. I don't even know what they call it, but you know one of these things you put a piece of paper in and the words get drawn up on the wall, you see. Now the difficulty is, if I was to write the choruses out and you were to shine them on the wall, you'd never be able to read them.

You see, I write in English, so, you know. So if there's someone here... Oh, by the way, that brings me to another point. Some of you people have been picking up my notes.

Well, most welcome. But if you do, and I've been hearing that some folk are duplicating them out, if you do, you'll check them over, won't you? You see, they were typed on a typewriter that was made in Germany, live here in Australia, typed by an Englishman in America, so you would expect a few mistakes, wouldn't you? Please, I'm no typist, so do check them over for that sort of mistake, won't you? But if there's someone here who can, you know, print nicely, because it needs to be put on a fair size sheet so we can have all the words in front of us, and if you've got a favorite chorus you'd like her to sing, well, let us know, will you? And afterwards, we'll be sorting out what choruses. We'll sing some old ones, we'll sing some new ones, and I'm going to jump, it's not only going to be me, you know, I'm going to jump on a few of you brethren tonight for a little short word of testimony.

I'm not going to tell you who, or she'll prepare a sermon. That won't do. But you'll be jumped on just to tell us what Jesus means to you in about a minute, and if you take any longer, we'll start up a chorus.

So there it is. We're going to have a real good get-together tonight, so please, let's remember this. Just a word of prayer.

Dear Lord, we bless thee together for thy word. We thank thee for all thou hast given to us within the page of Holy Writ. We ask that tonight, today, we might know thy help and blessing for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Hardly necessary, really, for me to remind you of the different views we have had of the Apostle Paul as we have looked together into this lovely letter. Remember, first of all, I suggested that he was as one who was a pastor in the church, reflecting.

And then we saw him as a prisoner, rejoicing. And then we saw him as a preacher, requesting. And then you remember yesterday we saw him as a pilgrim, as there he reviewed the pathway that he had and would yet take.

In the verses that we have read together, it seems to me that the Apostle is brought before us now as a position. No longer the pastor, no longer the preacher, no longer the prisoner, no longer the pilgrim, but now he looks at this church as a body in Christ. And he sees in the body that there are certain things that will bring pain to the head.

And so is the position in these verses and in these verses alone, it seems, as though he comes to correct that which is wrong. There as the position, here he stands, resolving the problem that has come there to the church of Pentecost. I sometimes tell the story that you all know, for it originated, I believe, from this

particular area of America.

And I tell the story of the colored preacher who was always able to gather a great crowd. And on one occasion he was asked what the secret of his success was. And he said, well, first I tell the people what I'm going to tell them.

And then I tell them, and then I tell them what I told them. And I'll let you into a secret. I very frequently have to speak to young men on homiletics, and I know of nothing better in sermon preparations than to remind a young man, a young woman, in the preparation of her five-year-old Sunday school class.

I can think of nothing better to remind them of than that. Tell the folk what you're going to tell them. And then tell them.

And then when you come to the close, bring it up quickly to a head and tell them what you've told them. So let me tell you what I'm going to tell you. Let me say my own advice this morning.

As we look together at this wonderful chapter, we're going to see Paul as the physician, first of all, as the trouble in Philippi is diagnosed. That sounds a good physician's word, I hope it is anyway. I never go to see one.

But then, after the trouble has been diagnosed, then the treatment is prescribed. And the wonder is this, that in these two sections, God seems to put his finger upon most of the problems that come to the church of God even today. As, first of all, he diagnoses the trouble, the apostle Paul dares to say that there are three things that have marred the testimony there in Philippi.

First of all, they have not been holding their ground. And so he says to them, stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. And then he says they have not been keeling the breach.

There in Philippi there have been two sisters, and they have not been of the same mind one to another. And the church had done nothing about it. The elders in Philippi had not corrected it.

So the apostle, waking from his prison-like kingdom, and he says, I beseech, holy absence and pity, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And there, as he diagnoses the trouble in Philippi, he dares to suggest they have not been holding their ground, they have not been healing the breach, and they have not been helping the women. Fancy having to write the great distance from Rome to Philippi, and saying to those saints there, I entreat thee, true yoke-fellow.

That's an interesting word, isn't it? It's in the singular, you know. True yoke-fellow, and yet he's writing to a church. He sees them as the responsibility, these women of the whole of the church of God, all the saints.

He says, I entreat thee, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel. Now, here are three things I suggest would bear some careful and kindly consideration. Now, I use that word kindly, for have you noticed he starts off by daring to say, my dearly beloved, when he deals with the matter of healing the breach, he says, I beseech thee.

When it comes to the matter of helping the women, he says, I entreat thee. Isn't that lovely? You know, there's no big stick taken. He didn't stand upon the dignity of his apostleship.

He didn't say, no, you must do this. Brethren, sisters, is it not true, that when there arises, and the church of God is a family, and in family there sometimes arises difficulties, that's to admit. Just the other day, I

saw a little boy running out of the chapel, and as he was running, his mum called him back, and he didn't come back, and she said, come here, I'll give you something.

Ooh, you know, I don't think it was going to be a Christmas present. Really, I don't. But, oh, her love for her child, for she realised there were cars in the roads, and the child was in danger, and she had to chastise that child in love.

And yet it was in love there sometimes arises in families little difficulties. When we arise in the church of God, don't let me down, heart brethren. We're a family.

But let's seek to deal with these troubles as those who love one another. First of all, they had not been holding their ground. Oh, we're not told what happened.

I only know this, that the apostle dares to say to them, stand fast in the Lord, my deary beloved. There are too many temptations. The waves of sin and iniquity will try and beat themselves against that little church in that great city.

He dares to say there's only one ground of safety, there's only one place where one can find safety. We've got to stand fast on that rock that has endured the waves of hell and the great winds and billows of temptation. It is stand fast in the Lord.

You see, I don't know about you, but I find it impossible, utterly impossible, to stand in my own sense. When everyone has tried to stand, then all I must do is bow my head in shame and say, Lord, I've not been able to. But praise God it's possible to stand fast in the Lord.

Praise God it's possible to cast our burdens upon Him and know that He will sustain me. Oh, the wonder of it all. The wonder, the wonder of it all.

You know, I have a strong feeling that it is a deep appreciation of Christ as a person that most of us need. To realize that He's there and we live and move and have our being in and through Him. As we were reminded so wonderfully by our dear brother that it is only when we reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God that we really know anything of real victory.

I was speaking to the teenage young folk just the other day, you know, and I whipped out a piece of chalk and on the board I took for my little text those lovely words, What is your life, you know. And there on the board I whipped out a piece of chalk and I said, When I went to school they told me there were three signs in arithmetic that if I ever had them wrong then all my arithmetic would be wrong. You know, sometimes it was.

And then my boy came home once and he said, Dad, my teacher loves me. She puts lots of kisses by my mouth. So there it is, you know.

First of all I put up a little dash and then I put two dashes and then I put a horizontal line and a perpendicular one. And I asked the youngsters what it meant and they had it right. The first one meant minus and the second one meant equal and the third one meant plus.

And I asked them, What's your life? Is it minus? Equal? I'm as good as someone else. Or plus. The wonder is this that the Christian faith dares to tell us that it's possible for our life to be a plus life and to use the words our brother quoted from Galatians 2 and 20, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me. And if that's not a plus life, I don't know what a plus life is. But praise God it's me and he.

I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me. And this is the only way you and I can stand fast amidst all the objection that men and women have to the teaching in schools of the Christian faith, to the teaching indeed in public buildings of the Christian faith, in this world where the very ways of sin seem to beat against them. Let's stand fast.

Then he suggests to them not only they've not been holding their ground, but they've not been healing their breach. Or I beseech, he says, I beseech these two ladies to be of the same mind. I think that's loving credit.

Isn't that great? He doesn't tell us what they quarrel about, you know. He doesn't tell us anything about the problem. He just says, I beseech thee, be of the same mind.

Maybe they quarrel as to who goes through the tribulation. I don't know. He just says, I beseech thee, be of the same mind.

And I think that's wonderful. You know, one of the great problems today in the Christian church is that we are so very apt to uncover the faults of other Christians. We're so apt to speak about others.

And if all we could tell very quickly, things would have gone. So it's not necessary for me to come here and remind you that it's not necessary. God placed the curse on the sons of man.

And you know why? Because they uncovered the nakedness of their father. That's why. They uncovered the nakedness of their father.

Brethren, if there's a problem that does something you don't see eye to eye with, better you tell the Lord about it than anyone else. There are too many of us uncovering the nakedness of our brethren. I beseech you, be of the same mind.

In love let's deal with it, my friend. In love let's deal with it. All those elders in the church, they had said, well, this should be ignored.

Is it not better to deal with it right at the beginning in love than allow it to flame up into a great fire that will spread and then indeed much sorrow comes? I beseech you. He said, oh, brethren, sisters, I know nothing about you. No one said a word to me about you, but dare I say this, that you are best to heal the breach.

I don't know about you, but I think it will be a lovely testimony when we get home to glory to hear the Lord say of us, well, they were breach healers, wouldn't that be grand? Remember to notice he not only suggests they have not been holding their ground and they have not been healing the breach, but they've not been helping their women. Oh, he says, I entreat thee, true yoke fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel. Help those women which laboured with me in the gospel.

And I think that as far as you and I are concerned, there is this side of the Christian faith that we ever need to remember. If there is one thing that I cannot say, and if there are some brethren that do it, I don't apologise for saying it. If there is one thing I can't stand, it's to hear a brother stand up in the pulpit and say, we don't preach religion.

I hope, brother, you never think in your ministry to make a statement like that. Do you remember what the Bible said pure religion is? It's the visiting of the fatherless and the widow, and the keeping yourself unspotted from the world. And if you don't preach that, it's about time you did.

Oh, of course, we don't preach religion, please, because it doesn't. You can visit the fatherless and the widow, and you can keep yourself unspotted from the world, and let it be found amongst the custody of the redeemed. But if you are found amongst the custody of the redeemed, we ought to preach religion.

The visiting of the fatherless and the widow. Help those women which laboured with me in the gospel. Christianity does not just consist of singing hymns.

It does not just consist of reading our Bible, but as we have been reminded every day this week, it does consist of reading our Bible and applying it to our living. Help those women which laboured with me in the gospel. There are many of God's dear folk today in tremendous need.

Oh, brethren, sisters, in the pastoring of our assemblies. And remember, if we're not left to one man, in the pastoring of the assembly, never let us forget that brethren and sisters together can move in this sphere of Christian service. And what a need there is.

Oh, help those women. Sometimes it does mean financial help. Sometimes it does mean material help.

But sometimes it just means sitting down and talking. How many times have I gone to a home and they've said, oh, you know, Sam, I haven't had a visitor for weeks. Now, I know this, you know, especially among older folk, that they forget, because two weeks ago, I visited in a certain place that will mean nameless.

I visited a dear lady, and she said, you're the first visitor I've had for a month. And I know that the day before I fell upon the meeting of God. But you see, she was getting a bit old and forgetful.

Maybe then they should be visited a bit more, shouldn't they? I only know, brethren, that we need to help those that labour in the gospel. But Clement also, whose names are in the book of life, that's why we should help them, because their names are in the book of life. They're our brethren and sisters.

Ah, he diagnoses the trouble. Is this our trouble? Are we not standing fast in the day where there's so much declension, so many things coming into assembly, like the ones we never knew? Is it God to stand fast? I say, is it wonderful to seek to heal the breach, to be a helper and a healer in an assembly? And is it glorious to help those that are in need? But having diagnosed the trouble, then he prescribes the treatments. You see, now I must be very careful because the doctor is here, isn't he? But I believe, he will put me right afterwards, you see, but I believe when you go to see a doctor, you have a cough.

But he's not really infected in the cough. He does all sorts of queer things. I mean, the cough comes out of your mouth, but he taps your back and your chest and the same 99 and all sorts of queer things, doesn't he? Because it's not the cough, it's the cause of the cough he's infected in.

As many a person has an outward symptom of that which is an inward disease. This is the whole matter of sin, isn't it? A man does not become a murderer when he commits murder. He's a murderer before he commits it.

It's what he is when it comes out. We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we're sinners.

And having diagnosed the trouble, then he prescribes the treatments. And the treatment goes deeper, and it doesn't, so it seems, always deal with this particular matter, but these are the symptoms of that which has been wrong, and so he deals with the trouble. He prescribes the treatment.

He deals, first of all, but he not. He deals with our spirit, and he dares to say this, that the spirit of a Christian should be a cheerful spirit. He deals with our strife, and he dares to say the answer to our strife is not cheerfulness as it is to our spirit, but it's selflessness.

He deals with our soul, and the answer to our soul is cheerfulness. And he deals with our mind, and the answer to our mind is peacefulness. And he deals with our life, and the answer to our life is godliness.

He deals, first of all, with our spirit, and this is what he dares to say, that there is an answer to the dark darkness that comes upon one's spirit, and it is this cheerfulness. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. Isn't it wonderful to be able to rejoice? And by the way, did you notice that? He doesn't say rejoice, and again I say rejoice, he says rejoice in the Lord.

The story of Job, isn't it? Well, he's lost everything. He's lost everything. Seven thousand sheep, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses, three thousand camels, ten children.

He's lost everything. No wonder he's passed, and was silent day after day. But when he broke his silence, he could cry.

The Lord has given, the Lord can take away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. He couldn't rejoice in the loss of his family, he couldn't rejoice in the loss of his wealth, but he could rejoice even in the mystery following the Lord.

Isn't it the great story of the Old Testament party? When he said, there's no herd in the stall, there's no food, there's nothing that you and I will need for our life, and yet he said, when these things happen, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. Oh God, make thyself so real to me.

For a spirit that sometimes becomes heavy, thou would enable me to rejoice in the Lord. It is this surely that Isaiah spoke of when he said, for the spirit of heaviness, the garment of praise. Most of us say, for the spirit of heaviness, the garment of prayer.

No, no, for the spirit of heaviness, the garment of praise. And then he says, if for our spirits there is cheerfulness, for our strife, the answer to that is selflessness. Verse 5, let your moderation be known unto all men.

And this is the reason, presently you're listening, this is the reason, the Lord is at hand. Oh no, no, no. Not the Lord is coming.

This has nothing to do with the Lord's coming. This means what it says, the Lord is at hand. He's right there with us.

Oh come now, would I be right, would I be right, brethren and sisters, in saying this, that there are some things we don't do in front of some people. And if you and I really were conscious of the fact that the Lord's at hand, he's right there, as we converse one with another, he's there. Would I not be right in saying then, strife would soon disappear, as we would realize that as far as we are concerned, we are nothing.

We would cry as John did long ago, he must increase, but I must decrease. The Lord is at hand and I'm going to let my moderation be known unto all men. Then he dares to say, for our souls, or he hath something for our soul.

And verse 6 says it is prayerfulness. Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your request known unto God. Oh here it is, this will make the soul glad.

This will enable us to live with ourselves. We were reminded this morning the difference between the spirit and the soul and the body. We were reminded how the spirit makes us God-conscious, the soul makes us made at worship, and he shall worship me in spirit.

And the soul makes us self-conscious, he said to his soul. And the body makes us world-conscious, and I recognize you, not by your spirit or not by your soul, but by your body, makes us world-conscious. I even look at the mirror and fight myself sometimes, but when I do, I recognize, well that's me.

Makes us self-conscious. The soul's God-consciousness, the spirit world-conscious, the body. Isn't that lovely? Isn't it tremendous? God has something indeed for our soul, and it is this, be careful for nothing.

I like that. Years ago, one of the elders in our fellowship used to say this, and I sort of scribbled it down in the Bible and I've never really forgotten it, but he used to say, careful for nothing, careful for everything, and thankful for anything. And I think that's good counsel.

I do, I think that's good counsel. Careful for nothing, prayerful for everything, and thankful for anything. It's not always possible to be thankful for anything, is it? But that's what he said.

And this surely will give us a soul that's at peace with God. He used to say that terror may be destroyed. Terror must be employed that peace can be enjoyed.

You know, that's nice, isn't it? Not my place. He's home with the Lord now, he knows the truth of it now. The dear old brother Pengelly used to say, and may I repeat it again, that, says he, that, I've got to look up the notes again make sure I've got it right, ah, here we are, that terror may be destroyed, terror must be employed, that peace shall be enjoyed.

Here, then, he diagnoses, and then he treats, and for the soul it is prayerfulness, and for the mind, peacefulness. How many times do we find ourselves aforementioned of mind, and this isn't the mind of God, for us, is it? But God has an answer, and it is there, peacefulness, that the peace of God, with possible understanding, says verse seven, shall keep your heart and mind to Christ Jesus. I'm glad of that.

I'm glad that when I commit myself to him, there is peace of mind, peace with God, and the peace of God, because I know the God of peace, the God of peace. And then he goes further, and he speaks indeed of our life, and he dares to say, for our life he hath a remedy. Oh, bless God for this.

He says for our life there must be godliness, verses eight and nine. But whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, then think on these things. Is it good to think on like this? This is the only answer, brethren, to like godliness, to think on things that he would have us think on.

Whatsoever things are true. For I know this, that every one of these things were attributes of Jesus Christ. If I were there to tell me of him, he said, I am the way, the truth.

Whatsoever things are true, we can think of him, can't we? As we ponder and think of the Saviour, and we realise how true was everything of God's wrath that we might occupy our mind with the things that are true. I get amazed sometimes, you know, at some of the things I see. You go into some of these bookstores, don't you? You feel you want to turn round and come out.

You just go in to buy a decent magazine, a gardening paper or something like that, or go in indeed just to get something that you need in stationary and sometimes you almost blush as you try and pass by quickly some of those yellow-packed novels that are there. Yet you know they're there. I'll tell you why they're there, because people buy them, that's why they're there.

It's all very well for us to say, fancy a publisher publishing that, but I'll tell you why he publishes it, because he can sell it. I wonder, brethren, if God could come to my bookshelves and run his finger over the books that are there and say of every one of them, that's worth reading. That's worth reading.

That's worth reading. For I've seen many a young man who's come to me tormented with the pain of the flesh. Then I look at his bookshelves and I don't wonder that he's tormented with the pain of the flesh.

If you read some of these yellow-packed novels, then you will be. Whatsoever things are true, let's think on those things. Let's think on those things.

He says, why, whatsoever things are not only true, but whatsoever things are honest, let's think on those things. Let's get our mind up, you hybrids. Was it not Bishop Taylor Smith, who summed things up so beautifully when he dared to say, you are, now would you please remember this, you've heard others quote it, I know, but Bishop Taylor Smith, I believe, originated it, and this is what he said.

You are not what you think you are, but what you think you are. Is that right? You are not what you think you are, but what you think you are. You've heard it quoted a hundred times, but let's remember it.

If we are what we think, and if we think honest things, we'll be honest. If we think true things, we'll be true. And if we think just things, oh how wonderful that is, to think just things.

It affects our business, doesn't it? It affects our home, it affects our assembly, it affects our living, thinking just things. And if we think pure things, and lovely things, and things of good reports, as he says, if there be any virtue in any praise, let's think on those things. Don't let's get occupied, brethren, sisters, with things that are so black, you know, again and again, I've been asked, and I'm sure you are asked, and if you came to my country, you'd be asked again and again, but I'm asked when I come here amongst you, what is assembly life like in Britain today? Well, let's turn it to you.

What's assembly life in America like today? I mean, where do you go, Bob? Do you go by a little company that's full of stripes, or do you go by an assembly of gods? Well, not necessarily a big company, but filled with love. I could... I already know this, that I would rather look at an assembly doing something god than one that's not. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, let's think on these things.

Don't let's allow the evil one to come in and give us that spirit of depression. Let's think on the things we can praise God for. And we can praise God.

I mean, can't we praise God that here about 200 folks have gathered during a holiday for a week's ministry of the word? I mean, frankly, giving up your holiday to hear me? Oh, I can understand you giving up your holiday to hear Brother Harry, but, you know, it's precious. Thank you for coming. It's a grand or a total desire of the word of God in a prepared to gather like this, and we'll rejoice in that.

We'll think on the things that are good. Let's have a remember to thank God for what we have in Christ Jesus. Ah, here he prescribes the truth.

You know, in this chapter, it seems to me that the very principle of life is brought before. I wonder if I could ask you, as I draw to a close, I wonder if I could ask you, as we look at the few verses we've read, is your life like this? Seems to tell me of the Christian life. It seems to tell me that the Christian life is a resolute life.

Verse 1, stand fast. Is our life like that? It dares to tell us that a Christian life is a regenerated life, whose names are in the book of life. It's written there.

Do you remember what Jesus said to those disciples when they came back? Their faces were shining. Oh, they see wonderful things. They said, even the spirits are made subject unto us.

Jesus looked at them kindly and said, Hey there, rejoice not that the spirits are made subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your name is written in heaven. Is it good to have a regenerated life? I say, is it wonderful, not only to have a resolute life, to stand fast, to have a regenerated life, to praise God, to have a rejoicing life. Verse 4, rejoice in the Lord always.

Again I say, rejoice. And isn't it glorious, brethren, to have a restful life and the peace of God, whose parcel of understanding shall keep your hearts and minds to Christ Jesus. God's grant that our lives may be like this.

Shall we pray? Oh God and Father, for all Thou hast, and all Thou hast given to us, we pray Thy name. We are not unmindful that there is enough in the bank of heaven to meet any check we may draw. We ask Thee by faith that we might be able to lay hold of the things of God, and in the respective assemblies that we represent, in the respective companies of Thy people that we represent, God grant, that we may be found as those who will heal the breach, who will help the women, and who will stand fast in the Lord.

We pray Thee that we might be those who might go forth and deal with every sphere of our life in the light of Thy Word, and in the light of a Christ who wishes to shine His light out to us. Grant it, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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