

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Philippians
December 6, 2020

The Peace That Follows Belief
Philippians 4:4-9

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

Good morning, Harris Creek. It's good to be with you guys. It has been kind of a stressful year for some of us. What brings about stress in your life? What are stressors for you as you think through that? Is it school? Is it finance? Is it work? Is it marriage? Is it relationships? Is it big purchases? Is it family? Is it the holidays? Is it "Yes"? "Yes, yes, yes. Check, check, check." Different things. Right? Different things can bring it about.

For some of you, it's those little bubbles you get on your iPhone, the unchecked text messages or unread emails. You're just like, "Oh my goodness. I can't handle that." There are different triggers for all of us. One of them for me is just *this* thing. In our home, if I ever have to go to the filing cabinet, it's always a bad day.

It's like, I open the drawer, and I can never find the things in there I'm looking for. When it's tax season, and I'm having to pull these specific documents, or this week, I needed to pull a title for a vehicle, so I was thumbing through there. I'm like, "Which is the drawer for the title to the vehicles?" I'm just going through bills and whatnot. There are always stressors. There's always something. Life is always full.

The other day, I took a stress test. Not the physical one, but it was actually a written stress test. What it did is it ascribed a numeric value to life experiences. So, you'd audit your life, and you were to put this numeric value on specific events you've encountered over the past year. What the test was specifically measuring was your susceptibility to getting sick. It was measuring your immune system based on stress' impact on your immune system.

As I took this test, under 150 you were fine. You had a good immune system based on your stress level. Over 150 was concerning. Over 300 was dangerous. I scored a 500. I know some of you are like, "Oh no. Our pastor is not well. I'm going to go pray in the other room." Here's the deal, though. In reality, it was almost all things related to pivots concerning 2020. It was these

unavoidable events based on the fact that we're in a global pandemic. This test was developed way before the global pandemic.

So, I'm just answering the questions, putting the numeric value in. At the end, I run the total. It says "500." Basically, I'm going to die. I'll just read it to you. You can raise your hand if you would check this one. "A change in social activities." Parenthetically, it says, "Clubs, dancing, movies, visiting friends, etcetera." When's the last time you saw a movie in the theater? It has probably been a while. We would raise our hand on that. Right? Has anybody had a change to their social activities? Raise your hand if you've had a change to your social... Okay. Some of you.

"A change in usual amount of recreation." Yep. "A change to your religious activities, gathering less with others of your faith." Yep. "A major change in the number of family get-togethers. A change in the number of arguments with your spouse." Parenthetically, it says, "More or fewer," which is interesting. I'm going to go ahead and go on a limb and raise my hand. I won't tell you if it's more or fewer.

"A change in your health or the health of someone near you. A major change in working hours or conditions. A major change in responsibilities at work. Difficult decisions regarding your work." Then it says, "The death of someone near you," and it gave categories, and basically, based on how close they were to you, the higher the score. The reality of it is we are way more stressed in 2020 probably than any of us realize.

The irony of this test is it's saying your immune system based on stress, like your susceptibility to illness, and then there's this virus that has caused stress, which has lowered our immune system, which has made us more susceptible to the virus, which has caused more stress. We're stuck in this cyclical circle where we're just left stressed. But it goes on to say how we can deal with that. It basically says sickness follows stress but peace follows a right belief.

So, you want to be careful what you focus on. You want to think about what you're thinking about. You want to pay attention to what you're paying attention to. It talks about how we can deal with our stress. So, that's what I want to talk about today: *The Peace That Follows Belief*. From Philippians 4, the peace that follows belief.

If you struggle to find peace, you can have a hard time with that subject. You just sighed. You rolled your eyes. "Oh, great! He's going to tell me that I don't have peace because I don't have enough faith. I'm not believing enough. He's going to give me some Band-Aid, coffee-cup Scriptures to solve my clinical anxiety. Thank you very much, Preacher."

Here's the truth: prior to 2015, I would have. I taught on worry and anxiety for a long time, and prior to 2015, I would have stood up here and said, "Worry is a faithless waste of time." I would have gone to Matthew 6 and Philippians 4. I would have turned in Isaiah, and I would have given you some Scriptures and sent you out here. People love those messages, but they're not helpful to the people who need them the most.

What happened after 2015 was I got anxiety. I thought I had taught on anxiety. I didn't teach on anxiety. I had written a book, and that opportunity, in ways I didn't expect, created a very busy speaking schedule. It seemed like every time I turned around I was on an airplane going somewhere. All of my normal responsibilities were still there...family, kids, the full workload, but now a lot of travel.

Then in the midst of that, someone I love very much got sick, and they were in the hospital, and I began to care for them. It just got so much weight that something broke and anxiety jumped on me. Those Scriptures I had prescribed before, I was reading and coming up empty, but I found something that was helpful that I see in this text today that I want to show you. I hope you find it as interesting as I do.

I began to carry so much stress in my mind it essentially broke my heart. My heart literally started skipping beats. I broke my heart from the stress I was carrying. So, I love that the letter I'm going to read to you today was written 2,000 years ago and is so applicable to the year 2020. We get to learn how to deal with stress from an expert, a guy in prison.

Paul is writing this from a prison in Rome, most likely chained to a guard. He has no idea if he's going to live or die. He has made that clear in this letter. He doesn't know what the future holds. This could be the last letter he writes, and he is in a position where he's dependent on other people to help him for life, to live. He needs people to help him.

In chapter 1, by way of review, we looked at how he calls us to courageously contend for the gospel. He loved these people in Philippi. He planted this church. In chapter 2, he talks about the humility of Jesus, and he calls us to live humble lives, working out our salvation with fear and trembling. In chapter 3, he talks about the distractions to following Jesus, and in chapter 4, he's going to talk about the peace that follows belief.

As we move through this text, verses 4-9, we're going to look at how *behavior follows belief*, the *peace that follows prayer*, and the *peace that follows practice*, all under our subject of the peace that follows belief. Philippians, chapter 4, verse 4: **"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."**

He says, "The Lord is near." Now, there are two ways of understanding this. It could mean the Lord is here or it could mean the Lord is coming, like he's on his way. Which is it? I believe it's the latter, that he's not talking about "The kingdom of heaven is upon us." I think he's talking about the return of Jesus who's coming to take us home, which is a theme in this book of Philippians.

You have to remember he always uses this idea of citizenship because this was a big deal at this time. This word *citizenship* was loaded for these people. Here's why. Philippi is a part of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire has about 50 million people in it, but because of a battle that took place prior to Jesus showing up, the battle at Philippi, Caesar Augustus (we know that name from history) gave the people of Philippi, this military city, Roman citizenship.

Now, of the 45 million people who make up the Roman Empire, only 10 percent have Roman citizenship. So, when Paul says, "You're not citizens of this world; you're citizens of another kingdom," he's using this idea that's very applicable to them where they're at and saying, "You're not home yet. The Lord is on his way to take you home, but you're not there yet. You're going to be there."

With citizenship...the reason this was a big deal to them...you could vote, you could get married, you could enter into contracts, you had the rights to a trial. This is why Paul said he was a Roman citizen: so he could have a trial. There were all of these privileges that came with being a Roman citizen that the people of Philippi were tempted to find identity in, and Paul is saying, "No. The kingdom you belong to pales in comparison to the rights you have here on earth. You serve another King."

He says, "Rejoice. Be gentle." The "Be gentle" part seems kind of out of context. You have to remember he's writing this letter... He has just talked about Euodia and Syntyche not getting along, saying, "Hey, you guys help them get along." He's like, "Let your gentleness be evident to all because Jesus is coming." We say, "But when?"

Peter says, "**The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**" The reason Jesus is not coming back today is because he's patient with you. He's waiting for you to complete the task he has for you to do.

1. *The behavior that follows belief.* Here's what I mean by that. The behavior is rejoicing and being gentle, and the belief is that the Lord is near. If I believe that the Lord is near, then my response to that is rejoicing and letting my gentleness be evident to all. Here's my illustration for you. It's like if you tell your kids or when you *were* a kid and Mom says, "Grandma is on her way to pick you up" or "Grandma is coming to stay with us."

Let's just say you love Grandma. I don't know if you have an adversarial relationship with your grandmother, but let's just say you have a great grandmother, and she's on her way. You respond in two ways. That's how this goes down in *my* house anyway. I tell the kids, "Hey, Nana is coming" or I say, "Lala is coming." They have two grandmothers. There are two things that happen. It's "Yay!" Then I'm like, "Be on your best behavior. Y'all love each other. Be kind to one another. Nope, we're going to share today. No devices."

So, there's rejoicing, and then there's this sobering reality. "How must I act because Nana is coming?" "Let your gentleness be evident to all." So, this idea that she's on her way... I have two responses. You say, "Rejoice!" like you're telling me how to feel. How do I just turn on joy? Joy is an emotion. *Rejoicing* is the verb form of that noun.

Joy is the noun. That's the emotion. *Rejoicing* is a verb. It's a choice. You can, at any moment in your life, choose to rejoice regardless of how you feel. He's saying, "Rejoice. The Lord is near. Understand. Believe that Jesus is coming back for you to take you home, to repair this world, to fix what is broken. Rejoice. Renew your minds around that truth, and let your gentleness be evident to all."

Do you know how we like to deal with worry and anxiety? Almost everyone, at some subconscious level or conscious level, believes the solution to our worry and anxiety is control. If we could just control the situation... Often, when people get stressed, they begin to control more. They start to think, "What is in my control?" and they cope with control.

Gentleness is almost the opposite of control. It's trusting that I'm not lord. I'm not in control. Even the word *lord* speaks to lordship, control, reign, king, kingdom. I'm not in control. He's in control, and my response is to be gentle, to be loving, to be peaceful, to be kind, full of joy, caring, compassionate, truthful. Let the fruit of the Spirit overflow from my life. Jesus is on his way.

What do you want to be doing when Jesus comes back? I don't know how you'd fill in that blank, but you want to be trusting. You want to be believing that he's coming back. It should not be like "Oh!" It should be like, "Oh, you're here finally. I've been waiting for you. I've been longing for you. I knew you were coming for me. I knew you were coming back. I've been living and thinking and believing like you were coming back." Which is different than being anxious.

Verse 6: **"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."** It's interesting that the ancient world understood the connection between our hearts and our minds.

Today we know... Science, modern medicine, teaches about the vagus nerve that runs along the neck connecting our brain to our heart, that they are linked. Keep in mind in my own story my stress broke my heart. There is a connection there. So, the peace of God which transcends all understanding guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.

Again, it seems like God is telling us to feel something. "Don't worry. Do not have that emotion." It's like, "Do not commit adultery." Okay. I get that. Right? I can put some restraint in my life not to commit adultery, but it sounds like he's saying, "Don't catch a cold." I'm like, "But sometimes a cold catches you. How do I control not catching a cold?"

Here's the truth. Here's the reality. There *are* some things I can do. I can wash my hands. I can keep distance. I can be careful about who I'm around and how close I get. There are some things within my control as it relates to catching a cold. It doesn't mean I'll absolutely not catch a cold, but if I catch one, there are also some things I can do to pursue healing and wellness. The Greek word for *anxious* here is *merimnao*. "Do not be *merimnao*." It's like, how is he telling me how to feel?

It's interesting that he uses this word in the same letter. He's talking about Timothy, and he uses it in a positive form. He says, "I have no one like him. There is no one like him." This is Philippians 2:20. **"I have no one else like him, who will show genuine [*merimnao*] for your welfare."** That word in and of itself is not bad. I don't think he's saying, "Never, ever, ever be anxious," because right here he says, "The best thing about Timothy is that he's anxious for you."

He's not saying, "Do not be anxious." He's saying, "Do not be anxious without prayer." He says: "...by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." He says *pray* four times there. "Do not be anxious, but pray, pray, pray, and pray some more." "Do not be anxious, but by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Do not be anxious, but pray, pray, pray, and pray some more.

2. *The peace that follows prayer.* It takes the same amount of effort to worry as it does to pray. Same energy. Same headspace. In fact, I've said this before. Keep in mind I taught this text earlier this year, this exact text. I love it, and it's so applicable to where we're at in history. Christians have this supernatural ability to turn worry into prayer.

We have a worry... "But what about the kids?" And we just have to put a "God, help me with..." on the front of it. "God, help me with the kids." "But what about my finances?" "God, help me with my finances." "But what if we get sick?" "God, help us not to get sick." You can just throw a "God, help us with..." on the front of it and you have this supernatural ability... Because through Jesus you have a relationship with God, you have this supernatural ability to turn your worries into prayer, which sounds crazy.

It doesn't sound helpful. It sounds a little trite. It's kind of neat, but it's actually really, really powerful. It's a very powerful idea when you put it into practice. This is the essence of what Paul is saying. When you wake up at 3:00 a.m. tomorrow morning and you can't sleep, you have a choice. You can worry or you can pray.

You can worry, and the piles of the next day can come to you, and you can start reliving experiences and planning conversations and thinking about all of the things you have to stress about, or you can start saying, "God, thank you. Thank you for this time, for nudging me in the middle of the night or early in the morning in the quietness and the stillness of my home, meeting me in my bedroom. God, I'd love to just talk with you for a minute about all of the things I'm tempted to worry about. I hope I can stay awake long enough to give them all to you." That's a different perspective.

"God, I'm so glad I'm up. Thank you for your Holy Spirit who nudged me while I was dreaming, that we could spend the time together in the stillness of the night. God, can we spend 30 minutes or an hour in prayer? God, as we do that, I'm going to need you to supernaturally give me some energy tomorrow. But while we're talking, why not ask for that too?" That's a different game. It changes everything.

If you suffer from anxiety and you go see a therapist, they're going to prescribe or maybe they might practice something called *cognitive behavioral therapy*. I'm a fan. Personally, I study this. I use it in my pastoral counseling. Cognitive behavioral therapy. If you go see a therapist, you'll probably pay about \$200 to \$250 an hour, if they're good, and what they will prescribe is meditation. Kind of step one of cognitive behavioral therapy: meditation. Not medication. Not a psychiatrist, but a therapist will prescribe meditation.

Two thousand years ago, in a letter written from a prison in Rome to a church in Philippi, that is what he is prescribing: meditation. The Scripture says (Joshua 1:8), "**Keep this Book of the**

Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night..." Psalm 119:15: **"I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways."** About 21 times the Scripture calls us to this idea of meditation. People ask me all the time, "Is meditation biblical?" It quite literally is biblical. Yes.

I find it fascinating that this is what he is prescribing here. Here's particularly why it's fascinating to me. Apple actually released a list of their top apps this week. Did anybody see that? The number one trend in 2020 in a time where stress is high... We're seeing anxiety rates at the highest they've ever been, depression rates at the highest they've ever been.

People are stressed, and 2020 is not helping. The number one trend in apps is self-care apps, and if we focus a little bit more on that, we're going to see meditation apps, like Shine, like Headspace, like Calm, like Glorify, like Dwell. This is what Apple learned in studying the app trends of 2020: their number one best-selling apps were those that help people meditate.

Two thousand years ago, there was a guy in prison, inspired by the Holy Spirit to write instruction for us in dealing with anxiety, and he stumbled upon what now modern medicine, the most cutting-edge practice in therapy, would prescribe to you in 2020. I find that fascinating. I find that incredibly interesting, when he says, "Pray, pray, pray, and pray some more." Our meditation has a mentor. As we focus, we're talking to the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

We can ask him for things. We can listen. We can learn, memorize, meditate on the Scripture. He says: **"...will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."** That phrase *in Christ Jesus* is always a statement of identity. He's reminding you who you are. He starts his letter, Philippians, chapter 1, verse 1: **"To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons..."** You are in Christ Jesus. This is who you are.

To expound on this, in Galatians 3:26 he writes, **"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."** So, remember who you are. Fix your mind on who you are and whose you are as you seek wellness. Then he says in verse 8:

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

It's so great. Earlier he said, "And the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Then he says, "I want you to think about these things, and the God of peace will be with you." I want to be careful, because I don't think that's an *if/then*. He's not saying, "If you do, then God will be with you." He's talking about truths, things that are real right now for the believers. "Think about these things."

"The things you've seen me do, put them into practice." That's discipleship. "I modeled it for you. Live as I live. As I follow Christ, follow me. And remember that the God of all peace, the one who controls all things, is with you." There's a list of eight things, all positive here. I could

do an eight-week series on this one verse. As a reminder, I taught it a year ago in *A Peace of Heaven*. You can go back and listen to that. He says, "Practice what you've seen me do, and the God of peace will be with you."

3. *The peace that follows practice*. This is not a one-and-done sermon. This is not like I'm going to give you the magic pill, and you're going to leave here, and for the rest of your life you can shift into cruise control, and you're never going to have anxiety or worry or stress again. There's not a therapist worth their salt who would tell you something like that. A snake oil salesman maybe, but not a therapist.

So, practice. What is practice? *Practice* is an opportunity to apply what you've learned. A doctor has a practice, a medical practice where they practice medicine. They take all of the things they've learned, and daily they're practicing on patients. They get better at their craft because of what they learn along the way. There's value to experience in a practice...a law practice, a medical practice. You apply what you've learned.

There are two instructions here: "Think about these things" and "Practice these things." Here's the truth: anxiety is contagious. You hang out with anxious people, and you can get more anxious. This is why it can be a spiral. Typically, when you are anxious, you want empathy, and a lot of times, empathy or sympathy comes from someone who also struggles with anxiety, and then you have two anxious people getting more anxious together.

So be careful of whose practice you're following. You want to find someone who is well and confident and has overcome this. Paul is a great example of this. He's a great teacher. He has every reason in the world to be anxious. Everything in the world right now is trying to make you anxious. Candidly, people are spending billions of dollars on advertisements to create an angst in you, and they say, "Our product will solve that. You just need to buy it." They're trying to make you anxious.

Our brain responds to drama, so we watch cliffhangers, like *Lost* or *24* or whatever you watch, and you get more and more anxious. It begins to consume your mind. You're thinking about it. This idea that you're thinking about it is central to what Paul is saying. Your mind is a storage container. You put things in there and you pull things out...thoughts, memories, ideas, things you've learned, knowledge. It goes up here. You store it, and then you grab it later. You can pull it later.

Think of it like a filing cabinet. I can go in here, and I can pull stuff out. If in the day I'm thinking about worries and stress and anxiety, then that's what goes in my filing cabinet. It looks like... Politics. "Well, what if my guy doesn't win? What if our country collapses or our economy collapses or we lose power? What about interest rates and China?"

Or school. "What if we have to go back to virtual learning?" Don't hyperventilate. Calm down. "What if I have to homeschool? What if I get lonely? What if we can't pay for school? What if I can't graduate? What if I let my parents down? What if I lose my scholarship?" All of these things, these worries that come up in the day.

Then work and finances. "What if we can't pay bills? What if we lose the house? What if our 401(k) takes a hit?" And COVID. That's a whole other stress. "What if I get sick? What if my kids get sick? What if someone I love gets sick? What if the world shuts down? What if I lose my job? What if there's no cure? What if they make me get a vaccine? What if they don't make me get a vaccine?"

You put that in there. That's what you've been spending your day doing: feeding those thoughts. When you feed something, it grows. It gets bigger. Then you wake up at 3:00 a.m. Little nudge. "Oh, I'm up." You make the mistake. You pick up your phone. "Oh, it's 3:00 a.m. I was hoping it was 6:00 a.m. or 7:00 a.m."

You make the mistake. You look at the time. "Well, now I'm up, I have to think about something. Let me open my filing cabinet. Okay, I can think about my anxiety. Oh, I could think about COVID. Yeah, there's a good list of things right here. This is good. This is good entertainment in the evening. What if I have to work from home forever? What if nothing goes back to normal?"

You know, I don't really like COVID right now. Oh, this is a better one: work. That's always good. What if I never get promoted? What if I'm stuck? What if I have no career path? What if I have to start over? What if I can't get a job? What if I'm not good at my job? What if my boss doesn't like me? I don't really like that." Then you can grab another one, and all you have to choose from are the files you placed in there.

This is different when Paul says, "No, I want you to think about what is true." What's true? God's Word is true. It's true that he's a shelter and a shield, a mighty fortress, that he's your shepherd. *That's* true. You can take that and file that away. You can think about what is noble. What's noble? "How will we do the right thing?" That's noble. The marriage covenant is noble. You can celebrate the things.

I can think about what is right. I can think about what is pure. I can think about what is lovely. What is lovely? Jesus is lovely. The gospel is lovely. He died for my sins and raised from the dead. I can dwell on these things. I can think about what is admirable. I can think about what is excellent. I can think about what is praiseworthy. I can't sleep. I wake up at 3:00 a.m. The Holy Spirit nudges me and says, "Hey, I want to spend some time with you." What file do I want to open? Well, this is the one I've been storing around.

"Yeah, God, why don't we just spend some time thinking about what's praiseworthy. God, if you'll just keep me awake for a few minutes, I'd love to just spend some time praising you. God, you're powerful. You're mighty. You're sovereign. You've chosen me. You love me. You protect me. You guide me. You lead me. You see me. You show me. You know me." You can just go down that. "You're holy. You're true." That's such a better way to spend your time. I can't get more practical than this. Whatever you file away is what's going to be available to you in that moment of anxiety.

Some of you are saying, "Yeah, but COVID. I've got to think about that. Are you telling me to just not think about it?" No, I'm telling you to wrap it in what is true. "But what if I get it?" That's not true. What's true is "God, thank you I don't have it. God, thank you for the health I

have." You focus on what is true, on what is noble, on what is right, what is pure, what is lovely, and what is admirable. If anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things.

Then you begin to think about, "All right. Who is my role model, and how do I follow the example they've placed for me? What would *they* do, the person in my life who is most following Jesus?" You say, "Man, are you teaching me Bible or are you teaching me cognitive behavioral therapy?" I'm teaching you that this 2,000-year-old letter taught the most cutting-edge psychiatry of our day, and I like that. **"And the God of peace will be with you."**

What impacts what you think about more than just about anything else is who you're with. When I'm with my wife, I'm thinking about my wife. When I'm with my friends, I'm thinking about my friends. When the God of peace is with you and you realize that...you renew your mind around the reality that you have access to the God of all peace, that he's with you...that's going to change the way you think. Jesus is coming back indeed, but we have access to God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, right now. Fix your minds on that.

In summary, our behavior follows our belief. Because Jesus is coming back, we rejoice, and we let our gentleness be evident to all. Our peace follows prayer, and our peace follows practice. The reality is Paul would have failed the stress test way worse than I did. He would have been like 700, 800, 900, or something. We can't avoid stress. Stressors are going to come, but we have to know what to do in that. He tells us how stressed he would be. He says a list in 2 Corinthians 11.

"I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely..." That's good, because I've never been flogged. **"...and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move.**

I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?"

None of those things he can control. Shipwrecks happen to you. These are all circumstances he has been victim of, yet from prison he gives us instruction to not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present... Are you not anxious? What he *can* control is what he puts in the filing cabinet, and when he wakes up at 3:00 a.m., or whatever it is, he starts pulling this stuff out, and he just has this endless truth of God's Word. "Jesus is coming back. To live is Christ, to die is gain." He has the truth.

If a worry pops up, he wraps it in God's truth. That's what he has been dwelling on. That has resulted in a peace that transcends all understanding. That's reality. You don't even have to pay

\$250. It's free. It has been in your Bible the whole time. Don't hear me say I'm anti-therapy. I'm not. I'm pro-therapy, especially good therapy. But I'm more pro-Bible, and I'm more pro-the peace that transcends all understanding. I've done it. It works. It's true. This is the same way I found healing. It's the same way I found peace, and that's my wish for you. Let me pray.

Father, we cannot control what happens to us in this world, but we can control what we do with it. I just ask you, Lord... You're sovereign. Would you remind us in those moments that Jesus is coming back for us, but the God of peace is with us now. We have access to you right now. At the end of a sermon and at a moment's notice during the sermon, at any time, we can stop and begin to talk to the one who controls all things.

God, we're not in control, but you are. We have no control, but you do. Father, as we move to worship, as we move to singing these songs, would you remind us of those realities? Would you help us, God, remember what is true, what is noble, what is right, what is pure, what is lovely, what is admirable, what is excellent, and what is praiseworthy? Would you help us to think about these things? In the name of Jesus, amen.