

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Leave Me Alone; I Can't Cope

Scripture: Philippians 4:1-9

Code: 1216

Turn to Philippians, Chapter 4. Philippians, Chapter 4, and we'll be looking at verses 1-9. And I've entitled this "Don't bother me, I can't cope." or "How to get rid of tension headaches." or, "How to be an adequate Christian."

E. Stanley Jones said that, "The art of living is the least learned of all arts." In his book entitled "Mastery," he went on to say this, "Man has learned the art of existing, of getting by somehow with the demands of life, of escaping with half-answers, but he knows little about the art of living with all its demands."

It's for sure that most people can't cope with life - that is for sure. For many people life is a very horrible experience if they really carefully examine it. Many people don't like their families, they don't like the one they're married to very well, at least they think they like somebody else better. They don't like their jobs, they don't like their income. They live a kind of a situational misery that really is personal misery [sic] imposed on every situation because it doesn't matter if the situation changes, they seem to remain about as miserable.

And the reason is that inside, they really don't know how to live life. And if you really get down to it, it isn't the circumstances at all that's the problem. It's the person that's the problem and he imposes upon every circumstance his own inadequacy. And there are so many things that monitor this but perhaps the best monitor is television. And if you watch television you see all of the problems of coping with life. If he kissed you once, *(Laughter)* will he kiss you again? *(Laughter)* Are your floors yellow? *(Laughter)* Or your teeth? *(Laughter)* Is your coffee making your husband nauseous each morning? *(Laughter)* Are you desiring to be a man among men, strong and attractive? Grow a mustache and smoke. *(Laughter)* Winchester.

After offering us these kind of stupidly simplistic answers that real happiness is found in good breath produced by Certs, clear floors produced by Johnson's Wax, white teeth according to Crest, coffee made by Mrs. Olsen *(Laughter)*. And manliness produced by stuffing leaves in your mouth and setting them on fire *(Laughter)* which immediately necessitates that you go back to Certs and start all over again *(Laughter)*. After having said all of that, we haven't really gotten anywhere, have we?

And yet these super simplistic answers are offered to us and the commercials are invariably couched in the most blissful situations. If you do all of this, you will be happy, beloved, wise, winsome,

moderately wealthy, with well behaved children and personal charm. And life becomes a gentle breeze, a happy-go-lucky experience thanks to Right Guard (*Laughter*).

And when you really get down to it, nobody's kidding anybody. Because it is the same media that also produces the fact that they know that all of this doesn't work. Because the same people go right about, after these commercials, selling you a list of products to get rid of the tension that mouthwash and all the rest of it doesn't relieve. And the next step in the line is to tell you about all of the little things you can get at the drug store so that you will be able to cope with life.

And I listed the ones I saw at the drug store that I go to to buy shaving cream. Aspirin, orange flavored for kids; Anacin; Excedrin; Tegrin; Zeramin; Measurin; Ascriptin; Aspergum; BC; Bufferin; Empirin; Dissolve; Tylenol, Persistine; Miles Nervine; Quiet World (*Laughter*); Compose; and if all of that doesn't work, there's one called Cope which says it's a unique formula for the relief of tension headaches. And if you haven't gotten it together by bedtime there's Sleepeze, Sominex, or Nytol (*Laughter*). If none of that works you can go to the doctor and the doctor will invariably give you a prescription that involves Valium, Miltown, Compozine, Librium, or Thorazine and you can go home and take those and then you'll be able to cope.

But none of it seems to work. And everybody's psychosis and neurosis seems to be multiplying. Somebody said in one area of Hollywood there's so many psychiatrists that it's called the mental block (*Laughter*). If that doesn't do it, there's alcohol, usually combined with drugs, marijuana, heroine, cocaine, morphine, LSD, and so it goes. And it's just another level of trying to live life. If that doesn't work, kill yourself.

The number four cause of death in the high school campus is suicide and it's now number one on the college campus. People can't cope, let's face it. They don't know what life's all about. They haven't got the foggiest idea. E. Stanley Jones is right, "Man doesn't know how to live."

I think of the account of Ernest Hemmingway, the well known author. Playboy Magazine, at one point, featured an article on him as a man who really learned how to live. And the article had a by-line that said that, "Hemmingway had proven that you could, you could beat sin." The old antiquated, Victorian, Puritanical concept of sin could be done in very easily and Hemmingway was living proof. It went on to say that he had done everything possible, traveled everywhere, fought in revolutions, tumbled women, and so forth and so on, and he was living proof that you can cheat so-called sin and get away with it and really live life to its fullest.

Ten years to the very month later that article came out, Hemmingway took a gun, put it to his head, and blew his brains out. As always, Playboy was wrong. He never learned how to live and he paid for it a high price.

Now everybody's got problems. Job said, "Man is born into trouble." Everybody's got problems. The question is not who's got problems, the question is who's got victory over problems. That's the question, who can cope with it?

Now there are only three ways to handle problems in life, only three ways to live life. You either break out, you get a rash or a panic or you get angry; or you break down, you go inside and silently withdraw and eat your insides out and get all kinds of psychosomatic illnesses; or you break through in victory. You either break out, break down, or break through.

And to breakthrough is the only way to live. That's the only way, there is no other way. To be really alive to the fullest in the richest sense is to break through the trouble and come out victorious. You say, "Yeah, I understand, how?" Well, in order to see how, and I'm not going to try to be a oversimplistic, I do want to give you what the Word of God says as a basic answer. I think to see how, we look at the Apostle Paul. If ever a man lived in adverse circumstances and broke through incessantly, it was Paul. And he becomes the pattern in our text, Philippians 4, look at verse 9. "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do." Stop there.

Now Paul says, if you're gonna live life, look at it as you see it evidenced in the way I live it. Now boy, you gotta be confident of your Spiritual life to be able to set yourself up as the pattern. For a Christian to be able to say to the rest of the Christian community, "If you want to know how to live life, look at me." You say that's the height of egoism. Not necessarily. It is if you're not really the best one to look at. The Apostle Paul even went further than that, he said, "Be followers of me." You say, "Paul, no, that's not right." "Yes it is because I'm following Jesus Christ. I'm translating the Life of Christ into my life in order that you might pattern yours after mine."

And so Paul set the standard up there. This is not pride, this is Paul saying, "I've learned how to cope with life and I want share it with you." It's not pride, it's being desirous of communicating what he's learned to everybody else. It's generosity, dear ones, not pride. He's learned the secret of coping with life. He's learned the secret of victory and he says, "Now you watch me and the way I do it, you do it." And he was adequate, he was so adequate that he could sing in jail. He was so adequate that he could stand boldly before the Greeks on Mar's Hill and declare his faith without flinching. He could stand nose-to-nose with Felix, Festus, and Agrippa with his life in their hands and do so fearlessly.

The adequacy in the life of Paul allowed him to be prisoner in his own house and never complain. It finally allowed him to lay his head on a chopping block and somebody severed it from his body. And all of that because Paul was adequate. And he says, "What you've learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, you do it. Pattern your life after me. I know how to meet life, I've learned the secret." This is not pride this is generosity, sharing with us.

You say, "Well, what was it that brought about such adequacy?" All right, we're going to back up now from verses 1-8 and we're going to see the keys to real adequacy. There are many keys to adequate living. Key No. 1, an adequate stand, an adequate stand.

The first thing that comes into my mind when I think about this is that, if you don't know where you are, if you don't understand your place in the universe, as my dad used to say, "If you're nothing but a piece of protoplasm waiting to become manure, and that's your philosophy of life, then you're in real trouble." If you only exist for Boxing Day to be slapped in a pine box and dropped in the ground and have somebody throw a lily on you, you're in real bad shape.

There must be a reason, there must be something upon which I can plant my feet and firmly stand. I've got to have a reason for living. There's got to be a rhyme for my existence. And, I think, in a sense, this is what we begin to see in Chapter 4:1. At least it's alluded to and we're stretching it a little bit in its initial sense but let's look at verse 1. "Therefore my brother and dearly beloved and long for my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Now that's the first principle of adequacy. A firm stand, an adequate stand. Adequate living begins with being firmly grounded.

Now notice it says, "Stand fast IN the Lord." Now this adequate stand is in Christ. There is no other adequate stand. The term, "in Christ" is all over the place. One hundred and thirty-two times in Paul's Letters he talks about being "in Christ." The Christian lives in Christ as a bird lives in the air, as a fish lives in the water, as roots of a plant live in the soil, so the believer lives in Christ. He is in a union, his whole existence is pervaded by the presence of Jesus Christ. He is in Christ.

And what it means is simply a total union with Christ. Paul goes so far as to say we are -- he says, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live." What's the next line? "Yet it isn't even me that's living, it's Christ in me." I am indissolubly linked in a common life with Christ. And we read about it in the text it says, "Christ in you." In some places, the hope of glory. In other places it says, "You in Christ." We are connected to Christ. Jesus says in John 15, "True branches abide" where, "In Me." And so there is a sense in which we are in Christ.

Now that is the basis of a firm stand. If a man attempts to live in the world apart from Christ, he has nothing to stand on. Everything is shifting sand. So, to begin with a man must be in Christ. You see, existence. It's like the ancients said, "You know, man is restless until he finds his rest in God." Existence is a floating thing. It's a great, mysterious, variable, until a man meets God. And then all of a sudden, he knows why he exists and he knows what living's all about. And he knows what loving's all about. And he knows what time is all about and what forever is all about. And he knows what purpose is.

But he doesn't know it until he meets God. And the only way a man can ever meet God is through Christ. "'No man cometh unto the Father,' said Jesus," what? "except by me.'" And the only way you can ever know Christ is to hear about Him, read about Him in the Gospels, see what He did, and believe it with your whole heart.

And so, to begin with, an adequate facing of life demands an adequate stand. Adequacy begins with a personal relationship with a living God, through a living Christ, by faith. Now I wanna illustrate this to you from one of my favorite people in the Bible, Habakkuk. Turn to Habakkuk.

Habakkuk was having a problem. He looked at Israel, Chapter 1, he looked at Israel and Israel was messed up. And so he said, "God, you gotta do something in Israel. Israel is going down the drain, there is iniquity and there is all of this." And, Verse 4, he says, "The law is slack and justice doesn't go forth and the wicked compass the righteous, and justice is perverted" and, ahh, it's terrible here in Israel. God, bring revival, do something. And God says, "All right, I'll send the Chaldeans to wipe out Israel." And Habakkuk says, "That's not what I expected. The Caldeans." And he can't figure - the Caldeans are worse than the Israelites. How can God use somebody worse than they are to judge them? Why doesn't God just come down and give them a spiritual revival? Why does He wipe them out like that? And he doesn't understand it.

And you say, "Uh, oh, he's on the border of not being adequate." And you're right, he's beginning to waiver, see, and he's on, he's on what we call the soft soil. You see, he's standing out there where he doesn't know the answers. But he's smart. And immediately he jumps back on solid rock and plants his feet and says, "All right, all right, now I gotta go over this thing right."

And this is where we begin in Verse 12, look at it. "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God?" Stop right there. The first thing he says is, "God, you're eternal. Okay, I got that down, that's good. In other words, God, you're outside the flux of history. That's good. You preceded history, You created history, you'll be here when history is done. You're above the world, you're outside time. Therefore this little picky thing, you can handle that. I feel better already, God. Just knowing you're eternal."

So you see what he's doing? He's gotten off the soft soil of what he doesn't understand and he's standing on the rock of what he does understand, you see? That's the only way to handle your problems, is to firmly stand on what you do know. God is eternal, He reigns in eternity. Hum, good. The second thing he comes up with, God is self existent, "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One." The word, Lord, Jehovah, from the Hebrew word Yahweh, from the verb, to be, I am, that's self existence. God is self existent. He is the Eternally Existing One.

There's a second vital fact about God, Habakkuk says, "God is not in any sense dependent on what happens in this world. He is self existent within Himself and this world doesn't affect Him." So God is Eternal and He's self-existing. In other words, He's outside the flux of these petty little things and He's

in control.

The third thing he comes up with is, God is Holy. He says this, "Mine Holy One." And, in Verse 13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity." He says, "God, you're Holy, what does that mean? God, you won't make a mistake. God, you always do what's right. Hey, God, I'm feeling the rock under my feet, see." He says, "God I know You'll do right." God always does right, "God is light," said John, "and in Him is no" what? "darkness at all." Always does right.

And he comes up with this, "God is almighty." He says, "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment, and Almighty God, thou hast established them for correction." You see, he's getting his answer. "God, you're so strong and powerful. You're sovereign and you're at work."

And then, lastly, he says, God is faithful. Look at it, middle of verse 12, "We shall not die. God said of Israel, "I'll be their God and they shall be my people." And Habakkuk says, "Hey, God made a covenant, God made a promise, and God doesn't tell lies. God is faithful."

And so Habakkuk feels so terrific and he just takes off and he just starts praising the Lord. I call it PTLA, praise the Lord anyhow. He doesn't understand the issue, he doesn't even understand why God's doing what He's doing, but he does understand God. And he knows that God is powerful, and self existent, and outside the flux of history, and does what He wants to do and never does wrong, and takes care of his own.

And having established that in his mind, he is believing what he believes and he's standing firm. And when you get to the end of Chapter 3 he makes this great statement in verse 17, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," boy, that'll be the day won't it? "neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, the fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I'll rejoice in the LORD, joy in the God of my salvation."

You say, Habakkuk, you've come a long way. That's right, and God still hasn't changed the situation. He came a long way because he got off the soft sand of what he didn't understand and stood on what he did. Now there's only one way to handle problems of life, there's only one way to live with life and that's to back up and stand on what you know is true. That's having a firm stand.

Now go back to the end of Philippians. And this is such a basic point that we're spending a little more time on this than we will on the others. The word, interestingly enough, to stand fast, in verse 1 of Chapter 4, is staketa. It even sounds like driving a stake - staketa. And it means to stand - it's used for a soldier, standing firm in his position in the midst of battle. With the enemy all around him and he never moves. Now I say, if you're frustrated and if you're not able to cope with life then you're letting your practice get messed up. If your practice is consistent with your position, you're adequate, you got it?

Listen, positionally, you're adequate because God's on your team. But if you want to wander away from your position and practice out here, you're gonna mess up. What you need to do is line up your practice with your position and you can stand firm. The first key to adequacy then, is an adequate stand.

Second one, an adequate love. An adequate love. You know that not loving makes unhealthy, miserable people. Let's look at this adequate love in verse 1. Watch how it just gushes out of Paul. "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for," can't you just read love, he just loves these people, "my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Now, if my English grammar teacher had been looking at that and I had written it, she'd say, "You're redundant, you don't need to say, 'dearly beloved' twice in the same sentence." You know what, grammatically, she would be right.

But in the sense of the heart of the Apostle Paul, she's wrong. Paul says it because he means it. And says, yeah, but, I mean, you know, those are wonderful people. Oh really, let me have you meet two of them. "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." You know who he loves, those two women that are bickering. You say, yes, that's real love. That's the real thing. It's not just loving the lovely, it's loving Euodias and Synthyche.

The Apostle Paul loved two ladies that weren't helping his work one bit. That's the test of love, isn't it? That's an adequate kind of love. An adequate love loves the unlovely. Euodias means sweet fragrance and Synthyche means pleasant. And they were anything but. And Paul says in verse 3, "I entreat thee also, true yokefellow," In the Greek the word yokefellow was Syzygus and it's very likely that it's a proper name and that it shouldn't be translated into yokefellow, it should remain Syzygus. That he is saying, "Syzygus, help those women." In other words there's a guy in the Philippian church names Syzygus, and he's saying, "Syzygus, will you go get those two ladies together?" "Syzygus help those women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." So Paul sends a man named Syzygus, very likely, to get them together.

And, so you see, that's the kind of love He's talking about. He's talking about loving the unlovely. He's talking about loving the people even that are problematic. And that kind of love, as we've said so many, many times, only springs out of humility, doesn't it? And, you know, this has a great effect on your mental health. Dr. McMillan in his book, "None of These Diseases" says this, "For centuries, scoffers have ridiculed the advice of Jesus, 'love your enemies.' They say it is impractical, idealistic, and absurd. Today, psychiatrists are recommending it as a panacea for many of man's ills. When Jesus said, 'Forgive 70 times 7,' He was thinking, not only of our souls, but of saving our bodies from ulcerated colitis, toxic goiters, high blood pressure, and scores of other diseases."

You know there are people who are sick in hospitals because they have been eaten apart by bitterness and animosity and hatred toward other people? Paul put it this way in Colossians, this is Moffett's translation, which is very good. He said, "So put to death those members that are in earth. Off with anger, rage, malice, and slander." Those are all things that come about as a result of the lack of love. You have stripped off the old nature and its practices. Be clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and good temper, forbear and forgive each other and above all, you must be loving, for love is the link of a perfect life." You can't really live life adequately unless you love people. You'll eat yourself alive.

Running around with bitterness. It's disastrous, not only spiritually but physically. Real living is real loving. And if there's somebody you don't love, you need to spend some time on your knees and ask God to help you love that person. And then you need to go to that person and ask their forgiveness for not loving them and see if you can't build a relationship of love. It's the healthiest thing you'll ever do in your life. Apart from knowing Christ. The love of Christ is yours, yield to it's flow in your life. You don't even need to generate the love, it's there, just let it get out.

So, adequacy then is an adequate stand and an adequate love. The third thing that makes for adequacy in life - and we're hurrying a little - is adequate joy. You know happy people are healthy people. And happy people are people who really live life. Voltaire, the atheist, once exclaimed this, "Men are tormented atoms in a bit of mud devoured by death, a mockery of fate, this world, this theatre of pride and wrong, swarms with sick fools who only talk of happiness." Well, that is a really lousy outlook. You know what? He's right. He hit that thing right on the nose, "This theatre of pride and wrong, this world swarms with sick fools who only talk of happiness." He's right.

People are inadequate and they're unhappy and miserable. Over ten million Americans suffer emotional and mental illness. As many hospital beds are occupied by the mentally ill as by all medical and surgical patients combined. And according to some statistics, the majority of the medical and surgical patients have their illness directly as the result of emotional stress. One out of every 20 Americans will have a psychotic disturbance severe enough to confine him to a hospital for the insane. Now that's the number one health problem in America.

And the funny thing is, this is the land where we have all we need to make us happy. You gotta have an adequate joy, look at verse 4, "Rejoice in the Lord, always." You're saying, oh, that's impossible. No, "Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say" what? "Rejoice" just in case you didn't get me the first time. And again I say rejoice. You say, "Well I don't have anything to rejoice about. It's easy for you to say, you don't have my problem." What did He say? He wasn't talking about problems, He said, "Rejoice" what, what are the next three words? "In the Lord." I'm not - I don't rejoice in my problems either, Paul said, "I have continual sorrow and heaviness of heart for Israel." I cry a lot. And he said, "I'm sick of my physical infirmity, I'd like God to take it away. But he won't. I'm not real happy

about that either."

And I can't honestly say that I just love getting beat up all the time everywhere I go. I mean, from a physical standpoint it's not really a lot of fun. But I rejoice in the Lord. You see God? Always I'm rejoicing in the Lord and my circumstances I can't always rejoice in. The Lord I can. That's how the same guy can say, "rejoice always" and the same guy can say "I have continual sorrow and heaviness of heart." In my circumstances I have sorrow, in my relationship to Jesus, I have constant joy.

So whenever your circumstances get heavy, who do you rejoice in, you rejoice in the Lord. The Apostle Paul is in a jail. That's bad circumstances. He's singing, that's rejoicing in the Lord. You always can rejoice in the Lord. It's interesting, it's 70 times in the New Testament we're told to rejoice. You know what rejoicing is, watch this for a thought, it's reckless abandonment to Jesus Christ in any circumstance. It's just constantly saying, "Hey Lord, I'm yours and I don't understand what's going on but I'm so glad I belong to you." That's rejoicing.

Now, let me give you two things about it. This kind of Christian joy has two qualities. One, it's incessant, always, always, always. Why? Because it's in the Lord, it's not in the circumstances. Got it? It's in the Lord. And I don't mean it's some kind of a stupid grin on your face all the time. I mean the kind of, the kind of, the kind of joy that comes because of your relationship to Jesus Christ. Have you ever gone through those times of real sorrow and just begun to turn and put your thoughts on Jesus Christ and all of a sudden sense some joy? And so, consequently, there can be joy in the midst of sorrow. It's incessant, it abides over the circumstance.

Second thing about it, it's independent. It's not joy because of, it's joy in spite of. It's PTLA, praise the Lord anyhow. The circumstance is immaterial.

So, adequacy. Adequacy involves an adequate joy, as well as an adequate love, as well as an adequate stand. Let me take you to the fourth one. This is good. An adequate gentleness. An adequate gentleness is in verse 5, let your moderation be known unto all men. Now that's a - the wrong word, of all words to choose is probably moderation. It means gentleness. Let your gentleness be known unto all men.

You know there are some people who just go through the world like a bull in a china closet. No wonder they've got ulcers. No wonder they're always upset. No wonder they've got coli - they're just, boom, leaving a trail of strewn people, you know, as they go. They don't even have - they don't understand how to adjust themselves to people and be gentle and loving and tender hearted, you know? Ahh, it's such a rich quality. One of the fruit of the spirit, you know, is gentleness isn't it? Gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and so forth.

I like 2 Timothy 2:24 which says, Paul's wisdom to Timothy, "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle" be gentle. And, oh, I love so much 2 Corinthians, if, pray God that this could be so in my life some day in God's grace and timing as He refines me, but listen to this, "Now I, Paul, myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Ahh, there's something about Christ that is just desirable in terms of being gentle. And yet he was firm. He wasn't Casper Milk Toast, you know? He wasn't always condescending and watering down His message. He was firm and when it needed to be, He was a lion. But somehow there was a kind of pervading gentleness about Him that drew women and little children to His side. Oh, that's the beautiful relationship.

I think of David, you know, who was a great warrior who slew Goliath and, you know, Saul has killed his thousands, David his ten thousands, great warrior. And yet it was David who could sit down with a harp in his hand and soothe the savage breast. Yeah, there was something gentle, as well as something vigorous and bold and brave about the man. And I think this is the kind of thing it's talking about. There needs to be expressed in the life of a Christian a gentleness.

Now, it's illustrated by Paul as are all of these things. 1 Thessalonians 2, I love this. When Paul had gone to Thessalonica with the Gospel, it had been with a very, very certain attitude and he explains what that attitude was. Verse 3 of Chapter 2, listen to this, it's so beautiful. He says, "Now we came to you guys and gave you the Gospel some time ago, let me just tell you how we did it." Verse 3, "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor uncleanness, nor in guile" we weren't trying to deceive you, "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who tests our hearts.

We didn't give you the flattering things, "verse 5, "as you know, nor with a cloak of covetousness;" we didn't do it for money, but watch this, number 7, "But we were" what's the next word? "gentle" isn't that good? You say, well, how gentle were you Paul? We were "gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." "We were gentle" watch this one, "like a nursing mother" that's what it means. Now there is nothing more tender in terms of expressing relationships than that nursing mother and that little infant. Oh what a gentle picture. And Paul says, "that's the way we were with you." Ahh, that's something admirable.

Paul had a great gentleness in his heart. You know the old song said, "try a little tenderness." That's good, instead of crashing into every situation, instead of always asserting yourself, try a little gentleness. Oh, we need to be reminded of this so often. Learn to treat everybody like a nursing mother treats that little precious life in its arms. Oh, that's gentleness.

Paul was a lion of courage, Paul fought violently tooth and nail against sin. But Paul was like a lamb when it came to being gentle. And you know these are the kind of people who are healthy people. Because these are the kind of people whose fire and whose fury is not out of their personality, but it is

in response to something that is evil and something that is wrong. And at that point they have a right to show some fury, you see? But in their hearts there is a basic kind of gentleness. That's a healthy person.

And so adequacy involves an adequate gentleness. An adequate stand, and adequate love, and an adequate joy. Fifth, an adequate security. And I love this, as well. It says, watch it, verse 5, in the middle, "The Lord is at hand." Now, what's the next one? "Be anxious for nothing." Now stop there. Is he talking about the Second Coming? That's absolutely foreign to the text. There's nothing in this thing about the Second Coming at all. You say, what does it mean, "The Lord is at hand." He means this, don't ever forget the Lord is near, don't worry about anything. Did you get that? That is so good. What have you been worried about, the Lord's right here. What is he saying, practice His presence.

Years ago, under Stalin a group of 30 Russian peasants were met in secret to worship Jesus Christ. Suddenly it was - their worship was halted by the arrival of Stalin's agents. The soldiers marched in and ordered the name of every person taken down and one of the other men came up and started taking names. And it all was finished, and an old man spoke up. And he said, "There's one name you don't have." "I have them all." snapped the soldier. The peasant said, "No you don't." And a little argument began. Finally the soldier says, "Who is it then?" To which the man replied, "Well, it's the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, He's here too." You know, he was right, and he was conscious of His presence. Practicing the presence of Christ.

There was an old Indian who would come to church and sit on the front row and, always a half an hour early. He'd sit there. Kind of face set, you know. And after he'd come early, finally somebody said, "Why is he doing that, every week he just sits there." One of them said, "Tonto," or whatever his name was. Can't remember his name. "Why do you come early like this and just sit there?" And this is what he said, I love this, he said, "Me come early, me sit down, me think Jesus." It's good, isn't it. Me think Jesus. He became preoccupied at the presence of Jesus Christ. And that became his security. That's everybody's security. I am so secure when I rest in the presence of Jesus Christ.

Paul Reese tells a story of a man on a ship being torpedoed during the Second World War and eventually the ship was sunk and the people were in a little life raft and they were picked up by a freighter that was piloted by the Germans. They were all thrown in a big hold area and it was kinda dirty and it was a terrible thing and they were fearing for their lives. And the strain on their nerves was terrible and all this. And one of these men who was in that situation recounted the story, apparently, to Dr. Reese with these words, "I began to commune with the Lord. At first I couldn't sleep, then He reminded me of the 121st Psalm, which says 'My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth. He that keepeth thee will not slumber, behold he shall neither slumber, nor' what 'sleep.' So I said, 'Lord, there's no use both of us staying awake. If you're gonna keep watch, I'll thank you for some sleep.' And I got it."

That's security. What do you have to fear, the Lord is here. Manmade securities are never more than tissue paper towers. Money, fame, friends, bombs, armies, medicines, hospitals, are just little expediencies to postpone the inevitable. But we have a real security, the presence of Jesus Christ. God promises that I'll be a friend that sticketh closer than what? Is it true? It sure is. Practice His presence. Oh, Christ-conscious living. You say, but, oh, I'd like to live that way, how do you, how do you just constantly have Christ in your mind?

Practicing the presence of Christ is having your mind saturated with His thoughts. And there's only one way to do that and that's to study the Word of God. The more you study the Word of God, the more God's thoughts are in your mind. The more God's thoughts are in your mind, the more the presence of Christ is in your mind. The more His presence is in your mind, the more secure you are.

So, an adequate security, the Lord is near, what do I have to worry about? Sixth, and lastly, an adequate knowledge. And this is so important. Verse 8, "Finally brethren, whatever things are true," Oh, that's important, "whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," do what? "think on these things."

What are you supposed to spend your time thinking on? Things that are true, first of all. You say, "I'm supposed to always be thinking of the truth, the truth, the truth. Pilate said, "What is truth?" Jesus said, "Thy Word is truth." John 17:17. Wanna think on the truth, get this book and make it your own. Make it your own. Thy word is truth.

You're going to think on true things, and honest, that means nobly serious. Just things, that means things that are right. Lovely, things worth of being loved. Of good report, things with good reputations. If there is any virtue, if there's anything in being a Christian, then think on these things.

Well, it's a simple thing, you know, you are what you think. Pump garbage in and the garbage will pump itself right back out again. Whatever you feed your brain is what'll determine the way you live.

Kids will say to me sometimes at camp and stuff, they'll say, "John, I don't know why, I want to live for the Lord, and I can't seem to live for the Lord. I have all these evil thoughts in my mind and all. I can't get rid of these things. I'd like to get out of the gutter once in a while. I don't know what to do about it." I say, "Well tell me something, what do you read." "Well, I don't know..." They always get these silly looks on their face. "Well, what do you do in your spare time?" "Well, I go to the movies." "What do you look at?" "Well, I don't wanna say..." "Well, what do you expect?" Feed garbage, you're gonna pump garbage out. Put the Word of God in and you're gonna find that you begin to live of the Word. Saturate yourself with the Word of God.

I've shared this with you before, I'll give it to some of you because you're new. It's just a little thing that I learned. When I wanted to really learn the Bible, I developed a little pattern. And that was to read the same book over repetitiously because you learn line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little, etc., as Isaiah said. You learn by repetition.

And so I began a little study that helped me. I started in 1 John, which is a good place to start. Sit down and read it straight through. For some people that would be a first time they ever read one book straight through. But it's written in flow and context and so I sat down and read 1 John straight through.

Second day sit down and read 1 John straight through. Third day sit down and read 1 John straight through. Fourth day sit down and read 1 John straight through. Then the fifth day, that's the key, you sit down and you read 1 John straight through. Thirty days. You know what happens at the end of thirty days? You know 1 John. You've got it. And you've hidden away the words.

And then you move around, you go to the Gospel of John and you do the same thing. Only it's 21 chapters so you divide it into three sections of seven chapters each. In 90 days you've got the Gospel of John. And somebody says to you, "I'd like to ask you some questions about the Bible. Do you know where it talks about, 'I am the vine, you are the branches.' Yes, John 10, left hand page, halfway down the left column..." (*Laughter*).

See, you're beginning to, you're beginning to saturate yourself with the Word of God. And you begin to talk about all these things, somebody says, "Where does it talk about God - the love of God?" "That's 1 John over here, so forth, 'confess our sins.' Chapter 1 and all this and the characteristics of a Christian, Chapter 2" and all the various things we can - fall in line. You do this through the whole New Testament and you say, "It'll take forever." Two and a half years, in two and half years you can do the whole New Testament and really know something.

And you'll begin to say, when you're reading through one, "Hey, I remember that's over there." And you can cease being a Concordance cripple and really be a student of the Scriptures (*Laughter*). Because you can begin to relate these things back and forth.

But, you see, you must read to retain. You must read at the level of saturation reading so that you're really learning what you read. Otherwise, you're just wasting your time. Don't read the Old Testament that way. Just read it through in the narrative fashion.

But you see, you must establish priorities. Think on these things. What do you spend your time thinking? We've got a book store here with things that you can enrich your life with. The Bible in your hands, there are tapes here, there are tapes put out by Bible teachers all around the world that would

be so good. What are you saturating yourself with? It will reproduce itself in your living.

If you really want to be adequate, you put the right stuff in, the right stuff will come. Adequacy climaxes in an adequate knowledge. Feed the new man, see, feed the new man. And then I like this, he makes a little contrast, in closing, in verse 7 he says, "The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." And then in verse 9, he says, "And the God of peace shall be with you."

An adequate Christian has the peace of God and the God of peace. A marvelous promise. Not only is God with us but His very peace pervades us. We have the peace of God for our guiding and the God of peace for our going.

Listen, I believe we can cope with life, I can. I really can. And many of you can too. And it's because we have these priorities.

Somebody's written this, and I close with it, "I cannot know why suddenly the storm shall rage so fiercely round me in its wrath. But this I know, God watches all my path, and I can trust. I may not draw aside the mystic veil that hides the unknown future from my sight nor know if, for me, awaits the dark or light, but I can trust. I have no power to look across the tide to see where here the land beyond the river. But this I know, I shall be God's forever, and I will trust.

Let's pray. God, whatever it be we pray tonight, that all of us might commit ourselves anew and afresh to the principles that can bring about real adequacy that we might live lives that will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. That we might shut the mouths of the critics who would condemn our faith because our lives don't match what we say. God help us to be able to live what we preach and to make Christianity believable because it works. We'll give you the praise for what you can do and desire to do as we yield to you in Christ's name, Amen.

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