

## **Six Steps to Spiritual Stability (Part 2)**

### **Philippians 4:1-9**

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Well, it's our joy this morning to return to the book of Philippians in God's providence. As we approach the week of Thanksgiving, we come to a couple of verses that are more than appropriate for this season, Philippians chapter 4, verses 6 and 7. You know, I've been reading recently a number of articles about the growth of a particular industry in our country. I've been amazed by the fact that what began when I was a young person—that little mesmerizing ball bouncing back and forth across a monitor called “Pong” has grown into a multi-billion dollar a year industry, as people rush to the computer stores to buy the latest edition of some computer game. And it hasn't stopped there. It's now become a frenzy, a feeding frenzy I understand, on the internet. People gaming in various ways with different kinds of games on the internet itself. And if that isn't interesting enough, what's really bizarre, to be honest with you, is, I read recently that there is a man in New York who started a—some kind of a business—and I don't understand all I'm about to tell you—but started some kind of a business to allow video fans online. So now, if you don't want to play the game, you can watch others play the game on the internet. As I thought about the computer gaming industry, and sort of felt myself raising an eyebrow about it—just sort of the unusual nature of the growth of such an industry—I realized that really it's not a new thing. In fact, there's a sense in which computer games are ancient. As old as mankind itself. It's just, in the past, people played them in their minds. As I thought about it, really, worry is nothing more than a sophisticated computer game of the mind. I mean, think about the similarities between worry and computer games. They both act in an imaginary world. They both contemplate dangers that are not real, and probably will never happen. They're both costly in time and in energy, and in many cases money as well. They can be destructive to productivity. In fact, I read an article this week about the fact that it's costing employers millions of dollars as employees play these games during work hours. And they can also—both worry and computer games—be costly in relationships. And in the end, both accomplish absolutely nothing. As one person said, worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere.

The English word for “worry” comes from the Old German word *wurgan*. Interestingly enough, that word means to “choke” or “to strangle.” You see, worry is essentially nothing more than mental strangulation of the mind with whatever is the object of your worry. It’s not surprising that worry has, I think, only intensified in the days in which we live. Because our culture actually breeds worry. And if you need proof of that, just watch the nightly news. It’s not news anymore. It’s all the fantastic things that are going on that could give people cause for worry. You don’t even have to watch the news. Just watch the advertising for the news. The hook is always something to make you watch because you need to be worried about it. You know, you’ve heard the teasers: “Five children die from drinking area tap water. Are your children at risk? Watch the news at 11.” You know, a thousand years ago, all people had to worry about was what was happening in their little lives and their little village. But then came the printing press and the telegraph and the telephone. And then radio and television and then satellites and internet. And today, we live in literally a global village. And we have plenty to worry about. Not just our problems, but problems all the way around the world. The war on terror. The civil war in Sudan. The value of the yen. The problems of our culture from crime to drugs to the decline of public education. And that’s all before you add the regular pressures of life that each of us have to deal with. The issue of putting food on the table and paying the mortgage, keeping the cars running. And then there are the people problems with bosses and fellow-workers, and family, and children, and parents, neighbors. This week, of course, is the week of Thanksgiving, but for many, the holidays simply bring another reason to worry. In fact, conventional wisdom says that there are more suicides during the holiday period than any other time of the year. How can a Christian deal with this onslaught of anxiety and worry that’s a part of our culture, and actually cultivate a thankful heart in the middle of that? Well, Paul tells us how in Philippians chapter 4. We began to look at this passage last week.

Let me just remind you. In verse 1 of Philippians 4, Paul begins with the word, “therefore.” He says in light of what I’ve just told you, as a practical consequence of what you have just learned, I want you to do something. And I want you to stand firm. To stand firm, as we saw last week, means “to be stable”; “to remain steadfast.” Not to be moved in what you believe or how you live, by circumstances. I told you that it’s often used of a soldier who stays at his post regardless

of what comes. Paul's desire for each of us is to have that kind of stability. To be spiritually stable. But how can we have that kind of stability? How can we as Christians sort of grow into a spiritually stable environment, in which we can grow and be nurtured? Well, in verse 1 he tells us how. He says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, stand firm in this way."

You see the imperatives that follow verse 1—the string of imperatives there—outline the path to spiritual stability. In verses 2 through 9 Paul identifies for us six specific steps to spiritual stability. You want to be stable as a believer, these are the steps that will get you there. We looked at the first three last week. The first we found in verses 1 through 3 and it's simply this: Resolve to live in harmony with other Christians. If you want to be stable and spiritual as a believer, it starts with your relationship with others. It starts in committing yourself to living in harmony with your brothers and sisters in Christ. The second step we saw last week was in verse 4: Determine to face life's circumstances with joy. In verse 4 he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I will say, rejoice."

You've got to learn that joy is not tied to what's happening to you. You can rejoice regardless of the circumstances, and we talked last time about how we can do that. The third step we saw last week was, make it your ambition to be known for a gentle spirit. Make it your ambition—desire your reputation to be—there is a person who is gracious, who is gentle. In verse 5 he says, "Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near."

Now that brings us to verses 6 and 7, and what is the fourth step to spiritual stability, and it's the one I want us to examine today. Let me put it to you this way, this is the fourth step: Talk to God about everything. Notice verse 6.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God,

which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

You probably have that memorized. It's one of the most succinct and profound statements about the role of prayer in the Christian life anywhere in the New Testament. Notice, if you will, that Paul basically breaks down his instruction in verses 6 and 7 into three parts. First, you have a prohibition: "Be anxious for nothing." And then you have a prescription: "but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." And then finally, in verse 7, you have a promise: "And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Now, let's take a look at each of those and see if we can unpack what Paul has concluded here for us. First of all, notice the prohibition: "Be anxious for nothing." Literally, stop worrying. The Greek word for "anxious" is an interesting word. It can refer to a positive concern. That is, a kind of concern that isn't sinful. It's used that way a number of times in the New Testament, and even in the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. There are some things that you and I ought to be deeply concerned about. For example, look at Psalm 38. Psalm 38, verse 18. David says, "For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin."

Listen folks, you and I should worry, in the positive sense—we should be deeply concerned. We should be filled with anxiety because of our sin until we deal with it, until we, as he does here in this verse, seek God's forgiveness, confess it unto the Lord. It's right that that would cause us to worry and be concerned.

We also should be concerned for the welfare of other Christians. Back in Philippians chapter 2. You remember when he was talking about Timothy, in verse 20 he said, Timothy is someone who there's no one else like. "I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned." Same Greek word that is in chapter 4 verse 6. He's going to worry about you. He's going to be deeply concerned about you, in the positive sense. First Corinthians chapter 12

makes this same point, that you and I should be concerned about other Christians. First Corinthians 12:25, he says I don't want there to be any division in the body, but I want the members (that's each of us) to have the same care (there's our word for worry or anxiety) to have the same care for one another.

You and I are to be deeply concerned about our sin. We're to be deeply concerned about other Christians. We're also to be deeply concerned about our spouse and our family. You see this in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, just a few pages back. Paul is commenting about the situation in Corinth and how it may be good for them, because of the potential impending persecution, for those who are single not to get married because of that. And he makes this interesting comment in 1 Corinthians 7 verse 33. He says the "one who is married is concerned about [there's our same Greek word—is anxious about] the things of the world, how he may please his wife." Verse 34, the same thing is true of the wife. The end of the verse "the woman who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband." It's right, men and women, for us to be concerned about our spouses—to exercise a deep level of concern about them.

It's also right for us to be deeply concerned about our worship. Turn to Luke chapter 10. In Luke chapter 10 our word is used both negatively and positively in the same context. The end of the chapter is the little vignette about Martha and Mary. You remember how the Lord comes to their house and Martha is scurrying about. Verse 40 says Martha was distracted with all her preparations. Verse 39, Mary was sitting at Jesus's feet in worship, listening to the Lord. Verse 41, the Lord says this. He says to Martha, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things [There's the negative use. But then He says]; but [only] one thing is necessary." In other words, it's okay to worry about one thing. And that's the thing Mary has chosen, which is focusing your worship and adoration on Me. It's okay to have a positive concern—to be deeply concerned in these ways.

But, interestingly, the same Greek word is also used in the New Testament to speak about a sinful concern—an anxiety. Anxiousness. It refers to an anxious harassing care—attempting to carry the burden of the future on yourself—unreasonable anxiety, especially over things which

you have no control. Lloyd-Jones translates this word anxious as “harassing wearying wearing care.” Does that sound familiar? In scripture, this word crosses from legitimate care to sinful worry when it is about the details of your own life and your own personal needs. What are the things that we worry about? What are the things that so deeply concern us? Well, a recent survey, I was interested to find, identifies what people worry the most about. See if you find yourself in this list. Of those who were surveyed, 28 percent said they worry about money and financial issues; 17 percent about job and career; 14 percent marriage issues; 12 percent social relationships; 9 percent personal appearance and weight issues; seven and one-half percent said family and children was sort of the constant pre-occupation of their worry; percent said it was health. What is it you worry about? You know, worry isn’t one of those sins we take too seriously, is it? We kind of joke and tease about it, and at one level that’s understandable, but at another it’s not. Worry is a potentially damning sin. I don’t know if you’ve ever thought about that or not. You remember the parable of the soils? Turn back to Luke chapter 8. In Luke chapter 8, Jesus describes the various condition of men’s heart when the gospel is sown into that heart. And He describes one as soil that was thorny. And He explains it this way in Luke chapter 8 verse 14. He says, “the seed which fell among thorns,” that is, the gospel was sown into this heart, and this heart was a thorny heart—here’s what I mean, He says, “these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way, they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and they bring no fruit to maturity.”

Listen, there are those who receive the gospel and because of a sin no more serious than the worries about this life and the pleasures of this life, the gospel is choked out and never comes to fruition. They never come to true genuine faith in Jesus Christ. You know, this issue of worry is a very serious issue. And it’s one that Jesus Himself dealt with on a number of occasions in His ministry, but nowhere more clearly and directly than in Matthew chapter 6. You remember, during the Sermon on the Mount, He addresses this issue of worry. In Matthew 6 verse 24 He makes this overarching point, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.” You’ve got to choose. You cannot serve God and wealth. You can’t be a slave of God’s and a slave of wealth at the same time. Therefore, He says, “For this reason, [stop worrying. He says] do not be worried, [verse

25] about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" Literally, it says, who can add a cubit—18 inches to his lifespan? Can't be done. In fact, if you worry, you may end up subtracting several cubits.

And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow. They do not toil, nor do they spin, and yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. If God so clothes the field—the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you, you of little faith! [Jesus says] Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. Seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

And we sit in twenty-first century America, and we say, well I'm off the hook for that message because I never worry about what I'm going to drink. I just turn on the tap water. I never worry about what I'm going to eat. I've got a refrigerator and a freezer in the garage filled with food. A pantry. I don't worry about what I'm going to wear. I walk into my closet and I've got a bunch of clothes I can choose from. Well look at the next verse. You're not off the hook. Verse 34. "So do not worry about tomorrow." Listen folks, every time we worry it's about what? It's not about the past. It's about the future. It's about maybe what effect something that happened in the past will have on the future, but it's always about the future. It's about tomorrow, so nothing we worry about is legitimate, Christ says. That's what Paul is saying back in Philippians chapter 4. "Be anxious for nothing."

Let me ask you a simple question. Do you worry about anything? Well, let me give you something else to worry about. If you worry about anything, Paul and Christ both say, that every

time you do, you're sinning against God. You say, "Why? I don't really understand that. I mean, it doesn't really hurt anyone but me. Why is worry a sin?" Because when we worry, in effect we are saying, "God, listen. I understand that You've said that nothing happens outside of Your control, and I understand that You said You'd use everything in my life to my good and to Your glory, but God, I have to say, I just don't think You can pull it off." That's really what worry says. If you struggle with worry, you're sitting there thinking, "You know this is fine for Paul to say, but in the real world it can't be done. I mean, I've tried all kinds of methods and gimmicks and I just can't stop worrying." Well, that same survey I quoted a few minutes ago, they also asked these people how did they try to cope with their worry. What things did they do to try to keep them from worrying? They could choose more than one answer. Here are the answers: 62 percent said they distract themselves with other activities; 55 percent said they listen to music; 53 percent sleep; 52 percent discuss it with a friend; 46 percent watch television—well now there's a solution; 40 percent eat; 40 percent also try to talk themselves into a calmer state of mind; 39 percent just ignore it. I don't know how you ignore worry. Worry, by definition, is not something you can ignore. Thirty-three percent go to physical exercise; 27 percent—here's a good solution—fight with the people in my life, was the answer; 26 percent use some form of drugs; 22 percent shop or buy themselves a present; and 20 percent use alcohol. Let me tell you, folks. Not one of those solutions is a permanent one. But Paul tells us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit how to keep from being anxious. Notice the prescription. Second half of verse 6. "But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Here's another one of those sweeping absolutes—"in everything"—in every detail and event of life. In anything that causes you to be anxious, respond this way. He tells us to respond with prayer. Now, there are various kinds of prayer, as you know, in the scripture. There's the prayer of praise, the prayer of adoration, the prayer of worship, the prayer of lament. But here the focus is on petitions—asking God for what we need. Paul uses two synonyms in verse 6—prayer and supplication. Prayer is just the general word for prayer, usually refers to a petition, asking for something. And supplication is a word that stresses a sense of need. Coming with a request because of an urgent, pressing need. Sometimes for yourself and sometimes for others. In this context, it's for yourself. Now, notice what our responsibility is. It's caught up in the main verb of this



sentence. The verb is, literally, “let it be made known to God” or “let it be known to God.” Now that doesn’t mean that God doesn’t already know. We just read Christ said your Father knows what you need before you ever ask. So, it isn’t to inform God. Instead, this expression “let it be known to God” is kind of a colloquial expression in the original language. It’s kind of a personal expression. We would say something like “just talk to God about it.” “Just tell God.” “Let it be known to God.” You see, the cure for anxiety is simple: Talk to God. As R. Raney said, “The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything.”

What are you and I to make known to God? Paul says, “Make your requests known to God.” I love the picture of this in 2 Kings. I want you to turn back to 2 Kings chapter 19. There’s a picture of exactly how to do this in the life of one of Judah’s kings, a man by the name of Hezekiah. Let me set the scenario for you. Second Kings 19. The scenario is this. Israel is besieged by Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and they are threatening to destroy the city of Jerusalem, the people of God, carry them off even captive. They write a very threatening letter. In verse 14 of 2 Kings 19, Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and he read it. Now, folks, here is cause for worry. We’re going to kill you. We’re going to kill your people. We’re going to destroy your homeland, and we’re going to carry what’s left off into captivity. There’s something to worry about. But how did Hezekiah respond? I love this. He went up to the house of the Lord, verse 14 says, and he spread it out before the Lord. He just took the letter and he spread it out before the Lord, and he said, here Lord, look at this. Look at what I find myself in. Look at the mess I’ve got. And “Hezekiah prayed before the Lord,” verse 15, “and said

O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim. You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made the heaven and the earth. Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire.

He says, listen, look at the mess we're in. Look at what we're facing. But they were the "work of men's hands, wood and stone." And they were not gods. "So they have destroyed them. Now, O LORD our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand." There's his request. Let your requests be made known to God. "Deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD are God."

That's what you do. You take your request and you spread it out as it were, before God. You lay the situation out before God. Notice God's response in verse 20. "Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard you.''" And God answers and miraculously delivers the people of Israel from this threat. That's what it means.

Or as Peter says in 1 Peter 5:7, it's "casting all your anxiety on Him, knowing that He cares for you." It's rolling off onto God everything that's a burden to you. Everything that causes anxiety to you. You see, there's no such thing as a chronic worrier with an exemplary prayer life. The two do not go together. This command by the way, to pray about the things that make us anxious, this command provides us with clues as to the real purpose of prayer. You see, prayer isn't to inform God. We've already seen that. Prayer isn't to change God's mind. It isn't to alter His eternal plan. Instead, prayer is for us. Prayer isn't about changing God. Prayer is about changing us. Why does God command us to pray? Because of what it produces in us. It produces humility in us. "God," like with Hezekiah, "there's nothing I can do about this." It produces dependence on God. "God, You have to act. I can't resolve this." It produces trust. "And God, I know You can. You're capable of doing it."

There's another amazing thing about our prayers. Although they don't change God's eternal plan, that is, eternal in the heavens, God delights—and listen carefully to this—in using our prayers as the means through which He accomplishes His eternal plan. That's what happened with Hezekiah. Could God have delivered the people of Israel without Hezekiah's prayer? Well, of course He could—He's God. But instead, in the marvelous reality of His providence, He uses Hezekiah's prayer as the means through which He accomplishes His eternal purpose and

plan. And every time you and I pray, and God responds, that is what happens—an amazing reality.

Prayer is also the believer's cure for worry and anxiety. Now, you may be sitting there thinking, look, I've heard all this before, and it doesn't work. I've tried it. Why is it that some Christians pray and still don't experience peace? Well, notice back in Philippians chapter 4 verse 6. Paul adds a brief prepositional phrase, and I am convinced that these two words make all the difference—"with thanksgiving." You see, the real emphasis in this sentence is not so much even on praying, but on praying with thanksgiving. And that's not merely saying "thank You." Instead, it's speaking of deep heartfelt gratitude. Paul regularly associates prayer with thanksgiving. You can see it in a number of places. Turn over a few pages in Colossians to chapter 4 verse 2. You'll see one of them. "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving."

And he talks about this issue of thanksgiving in so many places. You can look at Ephesians 5:4, Ephesians 5:20, Colossians 3:15 and 17. Of course the familiar "give thanks in everything" in 1 Thessalonians 5:18. And you'll notice that even in Revelation, in eternity, in the future, we'll still be giving thanks to God. You can look at Revelation chapter 7 verse 12. So why is it that thanksgiving in prayer is so important? You see, if you thank God before you know how God's going to answer your request, what does that show? It shows that you have confidence in God's goodness and in His sovereignty and you submit yourself to it. You're saying, "God, I thank you regardless of how You choose to answer, because I know You. I know You're good, and I trust You."

John MacArthur, in his commentary on Philippians, says

People become worried, anxious, and fearful because they do not trust in God's wisdom, power, or goodness. They fear that God is not wise enough, strong enough, or good enough to prevent disaster. It may be that this sinful doubt is because their knowledge of Him is faulty, or that sin in their lives has crippled

their faith. Thankful prayer brings relief from fear and worry because it affirms God's sovereign control over every circumstance, and that His purpose is the believer's good.

You say, how can I develop that kind of confidence in God? The kind of confidence that will allow me to, as I present my requests, also thank Him regardless of what the outcome is. Well, we read it in Psalm 100 this morning. The children sang about it. In Psalm 100, notice verses 4 and 5. "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name." Here we're commanded to thank God, why? "For [verse 5, because] the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting. And His faithfulness to all generations." Listen, folks, the foundation of our gratitude is in the character of God. That's how you learn to pray with thanksgiving regardless of how God chooses to answer your prayer. Because you find your hope and your confidence in the goodness, the lovingkindness, the faithfulness of God.

So, we've seen the prohibition. We've seen the prescription. Let's take a look for a moment at the promise. Verse 7. "And the peace of God which passes all comprehension will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Here's the result of talking to God about everything with a thankful heart. And notice, the promise isn't conditioned on your getting what you asked for. It comes to all who follow the prescription, whether they get what they ask for or not. The promise, notice, is for the peace of God. Now this could be describing a sort of inner peace—this feeling of peace. And certainly, it does involve that. But I think it's better translated: You get the peace which God Himself has. The same peace and calm that characterizes the God of the universe. You get as a gift, as it were, the serenity in which God lives. You and I are invited to share in God's peace. He adds that this peace surpasses all human comprehension. In other words, it totally transcends the human mind. It's not human. It's supernatural peace. The natural mind can't begin to understand it. Paul says, that's the peace that will guard your hearts and minds. The word "guard" is used in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 32 to describe a detachment of soldiers guarding the city of Damascus. That's the picture behind this word. It would have been very familiar—the metaphor would have been very familiar to the citizens of Philippi, because there was stationed in Philippi, as an outpost, a garrison of Roman soldiers, there to preserve the Pax Romana—the Roman peace. You talk to God about the things that

trouble you. And if you're able to thank Him in advance for whatever He decides to do, then Paul says the peace of God will be like a garrison of soldiers guarding your heart and mind. And that's the trouble spot, isn't it—our hearts and minds. Anxiety—listen to this—is never in your circumstances. Anxiety starts in your heart and mind. Two people can face the same circumstances, and one will be anxious and the other not. It's because the real issue is what's going on inside—in our hearts, the center of our person—in our minds, the place where our thoughts are conceived. But I don't think Paul is differentiating here. I think he's trying to say this: The peace of God will comprehensively guard your entire inner person. It's like Psalm 55:22: "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you." Isaiah 26:3: "The steadfast of mind [that is, in God] You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You."

Now, don't misunderstand here. God is not promising to answer your prayer the way you want. He's not promising to remove all the trouble that you're praying about. Nor is God promising that the things you've been worrying about won't happen. They may. What God has promised—is promising here—is something far more amazing. He's promising that if you will talk honestly with Him about your struggles with a truly thankful heart for whatever He brings, He will do something supernatural in your heart. You will enjoy the same kind of peace that God Himself enjoys as He sits on His eternal, unshakable, untouchable throne.

I think the best illustration of this is one that you've probably heard of before, a man by the name of Horatio Spafford. Horatio Spafford was a successful Chicago attorney. But around his early forties, his life just started to unravel. His only son died. A few months later, his extensive real estate holdings were destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871. And a few months after that, he booked a cruise to Europe to go over with his family. At the last minute something came up with his business, he wasn't able to go. He was going to join his family. On the way, the ship sank. And his wife survived, but his four daughters—the rest of his family—died. As he was sailing to Wales to comfort his bereaving wife, he asked the captain to pause over the spot where his children had died. And it was there that he penned those words that we sing "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul." That is supernatural peace. If I were to paraphrase

what we've learned from this passage this morning, it would go something like this. Stop worrying about anything. Instead, in every detail and circumstance of life, by prayers and petitions, let God know what you'd like Him to do. But even as you're telling Him your desires, tell Him that you trust Him and that you thank Him for answering in a way that's best for you, even if it isn't what you asked for. And if you'll do that, then the very same peace that God Himself enjoys will stand guard over your entire inner being.

Who can benefit from these amazing verses? Notice how Paul concludes verse 7: "Those who are in Christ Jesus." Those who are inseparably united to Jesus Christ. Listen, Paul wasn't talking here about the generic value of secular prayer and meditation. If you've never become a follower of Jesus Christ, it saddens me to tell you that you may close your eyes, and you may think you're speaking to God, and you may feel better when you're done, but it's not biblical prayer. In fact, Christ says, God isn't listening. John 14:6 says He who would come to God comes only through Christ. "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me."

If you're in Christ Jesus, then you have every reason to be thankful today. You have every reason to praise God this week. Not merely for homes and family and food and health, but for the amazing spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ. Express your gratitude to the Lord for the death of our Lord Jesus Christ who made all these spiritual blessings ours.

Father, we do express to you our great gratitude for the death of Christ, and Lord, we thank You that He didn't stay dead, but He is alive, and even at Your right-hand interceding for us who know You. Lord, we thank You for this season when we can express thanks to You and we pray that you would help us this week as we gather with family and friends to express our gratitude for who You are and for what You have done for us in Christ. We pray it in Jesus's name. Amen.

