

98-10-09b Colossians

And everybody straightens up when I turn the tape back on, don't they? We're ready now to resume our study in Colossians chapter 1, in looking at the subject of Christ in you, the hope of glory, that we find in Colossians chapter 1, verse 27. We're looking specifically in the Scriptures for the evidence, or the measure, the manifestation, that this is in fact taking place in our lives. It has to make a difference.

If Christ is being formed in us, if the Word of God that's alive and powerful is taking up residence in our soul, and if God the Holy Spirit is picking up that sword and using it to lay bare the thoughts and intents of our heart, it's going to make a difference. We will fulfill Romans chapter 12 and verse 2. We will be less and less conformed to the world. We will be more and more transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Take a look at Romans 12 again. It's been a little while since we looked at that. Paul says in Romans chapter 12, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.

You can't make a stronger statement in Greek than what Paul makes right here. When he says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, whatever kind of freighted language you want to use here, I beg you, I plead with you, it's very, very strong. He says, I cannot tell you how much I want you to pay attention to what I'm about to say.

He says, I beseech you therefore, brethren. When I used to hear the word beseech, I thought, well, it sounds like this sort of wimpy, pleading, sort of on the knees, crawling up. Oh, I beseech you, have mercy on me.

This is a very powerful term in Paul's language, especially someone of Paul's stature and understanding. When he says, I beseech you, you want to pay attention because it's a desire of his heart in the strongest terms. By the mercies of God.

Can you think of something greater or bigger to invoke in a request than the mercies of God? It's the biggest thing in the universe. There's nothing greater than the mercy of God. And the mercies of God, everything that God does as an expression of mercy, Paul says, I'm asking you by the mercies of God to present your body a living sacrifice.

And that means submit it for transformation. When someone would bring an offering, a burnt offering in the Levitical system, they would take the best of the flock or the best of the herd, a bullock or a lamb without spot and without blemish, and they would bring it to the priest who would slay it before the Lord, and it would be consumed. Pieces of it might be taken off, depending on the kind of sacrifice.

But it was completely transformed. It started out that morning being a living, breathing animal, grazing, mating, whatever it's doing out there. Now it has been brought and completely

transformed.

It has come before God, it has come to a holy place, and it has been taken out of the realm of the mundane and into the realm of the holy. And it has acquired spiritual significance and is a means of expressing various things in relationship with God. Something that was just four hooves and a tail out in the pasture has suddenly become an issue in the eternal things.

Paul says, I beseech you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. Submit yourself for transformation. That's the exhortation.

Holy, acceptable to God. This is your reasonable service. When we read that phrase, we think, well, this means it's expected, it's required, it's something you ought to do.

But reasonable also means it's doable. There are so many things that we think, I could never be a missionary to Afghanistan or Botswana or some far off place. I could never sell everything and go off into an itinerant ministry of some sort.

I could never do what I see this person over here doing. I could never battle through cancer and stand up and give testimony to God, or whatever it may be. We look at a lot of things and we think, oh, I don't have a role to play.

There's not any big significant part I can play in the plan of God. Bigger people, grander people, people with more faith and so forth. This is a reasonable service.

All of us can do this. It's a doable, attainable thing. And that's why God expects it from every believer.

Because you don't have to be Billy Graham. You don't have to be a big missionary. You don't have to be David Livingston or David Brainerd or any of the other great missionaries of the past.

You don't have to be Billy Sunday. You don't have to be Dwight Moody or anybody like that. It's a reasonable service.

You just submit yourself for transformation. That's what this is. It's a reasonable service.

Verse 2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that... And there's a purpose for this. If our minds are transformed, this is what we can expect. This is what we can look for as a result of the presence of God.

So that you may prove... Isn't it interesting? It doesn't say no. It says prove. What is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God? How many of us have wished, Boy, I wish I knew the perfect will of God in this circumstance.

Well, not only can you know the will of God, you can prove it. You can demonstrate it. You can pin it to something.

You can say, Boy, I know that the will of God in this particular situation is this because... And you can document it. You have the Word of God. You know what the Word of God says.

You know the principles, the doctrines, the promises. You know what God's desire is in the grand scheme of things. And because you know God's strategy and you know God's overall plan, you know what specifically needs to happen in this circumstance.

We tend to measure or we tend to use as a criteria, Well, I want to do the thing that will make this turn out the best. It may be God's will that we do something that turns out badly. I was in a situation once where the right thing to do called for resigning.

Actually, not me personally. It called for somebody I knew to resign with no prospect of other employment and no other visible means of support. But the particular circumstance at that time, it was clear that to remain and to continue in that job and that employment was to involve oneself in sin and to associate with evil.

It was just that simple. This organization was engaged in illicit activity, in illegal activity, in deceptive things involving theft and so forth. And to remain there would be a compromise of integrity.

And you say, oh, but there's no, where will we, how will we live? There will be no income whatsoever. Well, measuring from the standpoint of how things are going to turn out, you'd say, well, I'll just have to stick it out in this situation until something better comes along. And you compromise.

If you take the promises of God at face value, God says, I will honor those who honor me. And if you do this, not because you're self-righteous, not because you're going to try to punish someone or you're going to do some vindictive, spiteful thing, well, I'll show you, I'll just quit. But you're leaving because you can't conscience remaining in that situation.

And to remain, you know, is a compromise. Then you leave and you just throw yourself on the provision of God, which is the best place in the world to be. It's far better to be relying on God than to be relying on unreliable people who have demonstrated themselves to be unworthy of trust.

Other people are trusting them and they're deceiving them. They're doing underhanded, terrible things. And so you pull out and you say, well, this is the right thing to do.

And it looks, everybody else is looking and saying, you're nuts. Look at this big check that you're not going to get next month. Well, I'm sorry, but I can't be a part of what's going on in this place.

If I stay, it's a compromise. And you just let God handle the details. This is the kind of thinking that we want to cultivate.

We want to start measuring with God's measure. You think God is worried about a believer who pulls out of an organization that has no integrity and that is engaged in illegal and wrongful things? You think God is worried, you know, if that believer leaves there, I won't be able to provide for him. I mean, it's laughable.

You know, God up in heaven thinking, oh, how am I ever going to sustain them? I mean, he can sustain Elijah by the brook chariot. He can sustain the Lord. He sustained the entire nation of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years.

Their sandals never wore out. They never ran out of the manna that he provided for them. They faltered.

They got tired of manna and wanted other things, but God's provision never failed. He gave them water from the rock. If he can do that, how hard is it in a wonderful, prosperous country like America where there are many other believers and a great network of support? God has so many different options and so many different ways to provide for us, but fear can set in and experience can set in.

You say, oh, I know it can take weeks and months to get another job and how will I ever find? How will we do this? What about these bills? What about this and the other? Well, this is just an illustration. Everybody has situations and decisions to make in life, and God will bring these. He knows that we're supposed to come to them and we're supposed to find out in that situation, in that circumstance, what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God.

Not only should we be able to discern it, we should be able to prove it, to document it, to pin it to something and say, I'm doing this because look at this promise in the Word of God. God has said, and that's why I'm doing what I'm doing. And if it looks like it's nuts to the rest of the world, I'm sorry, but I don't think it's nuts in the eyes of God.

And it may be the hard thing. It may be fly in the face of what the world would call common sense to sever relationships with people who have influence, to not enter into agreements that might look like they will prosper and flower and get us way down the road in a business sense or in a personal sense or whatever by maintaining contact or compromising and looking the other way at something. Well, if I just tolerate this, everything will be great.

And yet there are other times when you apply the Word of God and it is the time for forbearance and endurance and turning the other cheek and returning good for evil. It's not always the time to separate. It's not always the time to bail out.

Sometimes it's the time to endure and be the light shining in a dark place and to be the calm at the center of the storm. Well, how do you know which it is? Well, don't worry about solving that problem. Concentrate on Christ in you.

Concentrate on the Word of God in you. Concentrate on presenting your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Concentrate on being sure that there is no spot or wrinkle or any such thing in your operation and in your priorities.

We check ourselves to see if we're in the faith. We pray to God. We ask and seek and knock for wisdom and understanding, looking to please God whatever it may entail.

And these other things will follow and we will suddenly see what the resolution is. Oh, I see that this staying here really is bearing fruit. It does make a difference.

People are starting to think about Christ because I'm still here. Somebody is asking questions. Somebody is starting to wonder, how can you be so calm when you see these things going around you? How can you not get pulled into these things that surround you? How can you maintain love and joy and peace in the face of these things that you're in? And God will give us those affirmations that we're in the right place and doing the right thing if we set the priority of wanting to please Him first and we're not just looking to solve the immediate problem.

So, how do we know that we're making progress with Christ in us, the hope of glory? We watch for this. Is any of this in our thinking in day-to-day life? Do we recognize problems and circumstances and decision points as opportunities for these things to take place? Or do we just think, boy, this is an inconvenience. I wish this would go away.

Oh, this is a problem. This is an annoyance. This is a slowdown to my momentum here.

I had really hoped to get this and so done and now this obstacle is in my way. Do we just see it as an obstacle to get out of the way or get around or do we see it as an opportunity that God has put there to exercise our senses, to discern good and evil, to discern the better things, to learn to document what we think and what we do from the Word of God, promises, principles, doctrines. We have to get ourselves into this mode of thinking.

God is not going to club us on the head to do this. You have to want it. We have to be seeking the hope of glory.

So Romans 12, verses 1 and 2 is a great summation of this same principle. So one of the two things that we can look for is evidence of the Word of Christ dwelling richly in us. We've seen it in Colossians 3.16. We've seen it in Romans 12.

We've seen it in John chapter 14, verses 21 and 23. You can see this throughout the Scriptures, even in the Old Testament, the idea of the Word of God. Remember in Deuteronomy chapter 6 when God said, bind it to your forehead and on your hand, have it on the door post of your house.

The Jews took this literally and made the phylacteries and the little compartments in the doors to put little scrolls with the Ten Commandments or something on there. Even archaeologists will find

these little phylacteries with tiny fragments of Scripture which has been helpful to us for textual criticism. Here's another early copy of the Scriptures we can compare with the Masoretic text and see if it's the same or if it's different.

But it misses the point. To write it down and wrap it on your hand isn't the idea. We know in the Scripture that your hands are symbolic of something.

Your hands are symbolic of what you do. Your brain is back behind there. The Word of God ought to be in your head.

It ought to be in your thinking and it ought to be on your hand. It ought to be in your actions. It ought to be reflected in what you think and what you say.

It ought to be reflected in what you do. If somebody says, why are you doing that? Well, I think this is the right thing to do. Well, what makes you think that's right? Can't you see that this terrible result is going to come from it? Well, this is the Word of God.

God has promised. So, the Word of Christ in Deuteronomy 6, Deuteronomy 11, 18-20 talks about it should be with you when you get up. You teach it to your children when you get up and when you sit down, when you are at the table, when you walk in the way.

Parents are to teach their children this way of thinking. One of the most overlooked areas of child training anymore is not just to teach children Bible stories and memory verses, but in the course of living life. Unfortunately, some people say, well, we're going to model this in front of our children.

It's not a matter of modeling it. It's a matter that it ought to be so much a part of our life that when our children look at their parents, they see that the Word of God makes a difference in the household. There used to be a plaque that my mom had on the wall when I was a little boy that I always liked.

It had a little saying on it. It said, Christ is the head of this house. The unseen guest at every meal.

The silent listener to every conversation. And when you think about that, Christ is the head of this house. The unseen guest at every meal.

The silent listener to every conversation. You remember that our lives ought to be conditioned by the example of Christ. By the presence of Christ, if you will, the character of Christ.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. And that ought to be an example that our children can see and learn from. Well, when mom and dad, when the chips were down, what did they do? They didn't cop out.

They didn't compromise. They didn't take the easy way. They didn't panic.

They didn't fall apart. They didn't argue and fight and scream at each other to release tension. They spent time in prayer.

They kept up with their attendance at church even though maybe you could earn some overtime and solve a financial problem by working on Sunday. No, church is more important. We're going to take the family to church even if it costs gas, even if it means time.

We don't compromise our spiritual priorities in the face of pressure and adversity. We're not going to stop family time spent in thinking about the word of God and so forth. That's what Deuteronomy talks about for parents and it's an example that still applies today.

Children ought to learn not from just what we tell them but from how they see us live. We're setting an example because we have that as a priority. It's so sad that people talk about, well, you've got to go set a good example for your children.

We ought to concentrate on pleasing God and that will be fulfilled without even trying. There are many other passages, Psalm 1 verses 1 and 2. We quote that all the time. The man is blessed who doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful.

His delight is in the law of the Lord. And he meditates on it day and night. You sit down at the end of a long day.

You recline back on the pillow and before you nod off to sleep, review the day. Does any thought of Christ or God or identity in the plan of God and the purpose of God, the future glory to be reflected, does it ever cross our minds to review and say, you know, a lot of times we go to bed thinking about what we're going to do the next day. Does any thought of the spiritual perspective cross our minds? Because it should and it will if we are pursuing these things.

We'll think, you know, am I just running the treadmill trying to get it to spin a little faster or am I keeping in mind that as I walk this treadmill, it needs to count, it needs to reflect the character of Christ. The final passage in this regard I'd like to look at is in 1 John 2. We've sort of spanned the Bible all the way from Deuteronomy to 1 John here. You can find it in practically every book.

But these are some of the more prominent. 1 John 2, verse 14. I have written to you... I hope we get to do 1 John sometime.

This is one of the most fascinating parts of 1 John 2, verses 12-14. To figure out why he says what he says here. He says, I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His namesake.

I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you,

young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. Then he addresses the same three groups again.

I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. The first time he says he writes to the little children because their sins are forgiven for His namesake. Now he's writing to them because they have known the Father.

That's different from verse 13 where the fathers know Him who is from the beginning. Anyway, I don't want to get way off into this. But if you look at verse 14, I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning.

I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you. If you want to change from being little children to young men in the faith, as far as growing from childhood to adulthood, to vigorous activity and accomplishment in spiritual life, young men, this is one of the characteristics. The Word of God abides in you.

You are strong. The Word of God abides in you. And you have overcome the wicked one.

People say, you know, I don't have victory over sin. I keep stumbling. I keep failing.

I can't seem to shake patterns or certain areas of failure. Some people call it the area of strength of the old sin nature. Whatever you want to call it, everybody has their, it seems like it's the spiritual Achilles' heel.

No matter how great you seem to do in other areas, some areas it seems like it just always winds up tripping us up. Well, one of the great things about the Word of God abiding in us is we can overcome the evil one. We can finally get a grip on the sin that so easily besets us and put it in its place.

It's one of the markers. It's one of the signposts that we pass in progress in life. It doesn't mean we'll never sin again, but it means that we're no longer dominated.

We're no longer beset. Even if you still fail in that same area from time to time, it's not the frustrating pattern that it used to be. It's not the, you know, now you just kick yourself because you know you know better rather than feeling helpless in the grip of something you can't control.

That's a sign of the power of God entering into our lives because of the indwelling presence of the Word of God, which is alive and powerful. I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you. When we cultivate that thinking by everything we saw in Proverbs 2 and what we've seen in these other passages, Romans 12, this is one of the markers.

Do you want to know if Christ is in you? Do you want to know if Christ is formed in you? Do you want to know if you're making progress in the hope of glory? Here's one of the things to look for. Overcoming the evil one. And if we haven't yet reached this point, it's a great hope.

It's going to come. There's light at the end of the tunnel. Just keep doing what you're doing and victory will come.

Don't get discouraged and throw up your hands and quit and say, well, the Word of God may work for everybody else, but it doesn't work for me. Besides being blasphemy, that's just not so. There's a great promise in the Word of God, and this is one of the things.

When you become a young adult in the faith, you overcome the evil one because the Word of God dwells in you. So it's a great promise. It's a great thing to look forward to or to enjoy once we attain it.

You can also see in verse 24 of this same chapter, Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you will also abide in the Son and in the Father. We saw last time that there's a lot of interchange between Christ in you and you in Christ.

If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you go back to John 14 and 17 and so forth. Jesus uses these almost interchangeably. That abiding in Him is Him abiding in us.

And if the Word abides in us, we're abiding in Christ. They're almost synonymous. They're two sides of the same coin.

If that which you heard from the beginning abides in you, you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us, eternal life. Anytime we see eternal life, we think, well, if we're not going to hell, we're going to heaven.

But why does verse 25 follow verse 24? Because this is life now. This is eternal life in the Spirit now. Your life today is going to have eternal fruit.

A living tree bears fruit. It puts out leaves. It has growing branches.

Anybody that's got a hedge they have to trim knows this. If it's alive, it grows and you have to keep trimming it back. If it's a fruit tree, it puts out fruit when it's alive and healthy.

Our lives will bear fruit and that is eternal life. That life, it's always amazing to me when you go to barren places. I went up in the Arbuckle Mountains near Wadden and it's dusty and barren and dry and so forth, but you go in the tiny cracks of the rock and there are these little living things.

They have volcanic islands in the middle of the ocean. It comes up out of nowhere from the ocean. It's hot lava.

There's not a spark of life anywhere on it. Within a few weeks, all of a sudden these little green things start growing on it. There's the divine power of God, the spark of life that He put on the planet.

You just can't hardly extinguish it. It grows up in the cracks of the sidewalk and the cracks of buildings. Life just has this momentum of getting there and thriving in places you would never expect it.

When the eternal power and the eternal life of God gets inside us, that same thing happens in our soul. There are just odd little places where it bears fruit. Things we weren't even looking for.

We thought we knew where our area of ministry was. We thought we knew where our area of weakness was that God could fix. We find completely new and surprising areas where the divine power of God that's in our soul is bearing fruit.

Little plants are popping out in places we never thought there would be one. That's why verse 25 follows verse 24. Let that that you heard from the beginning abide in you.

This is not talking about salvation. You don't have to have the Word abide in you for salvation. You express faith in Christ and you're saved and it's a done deal.

But to establish a pattern where the Word of God abides in us, we abide in the Son and the Father and He's promised us His eternal life. Our life is going to start to bear eternal fruit day by day. So it's a wonderful hope of glory that we have.

Another few verses down in verse 27. He says in verse 26, These things I've written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. You are believers.

You're like the ones in Colossae with these philosophies and views of the Christian life that are off base. People are trying to deceive you. John says, I'm writing you just like Paul wrote the people in Colossae.

The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you. This is the presence of the Holy Spirit. And you do not need that anyone teach you, but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

And what this means is that you have the ability to discern. It's just like animals. When they wander in the forest and graze, they don't eat poisonous things.

You don't find deer and cattle and things typically that have gone and just eaten poison vegetation and fallen over and died. They know. They can smell it, they can taste it, and they don't eat it.

They know what's good for them and what isn't. They graze and find what's nourishing. The anointing of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Holy Spirit that we have tells us.

It's just like the nerves in our body that tell us when we've had a good nourishing meal and when

we've eaten junk food and we get a bellyache and our digestion doesn't work right and we don't feel good after we eat. There are some of these hamburgers that you get. I don't know, maybe avoid places where I've gotten hamburgers, but some of these places, it tastes like cardboard when you're eating it and it just sits like a lump in your stomach afterward and you say, you know, that was not good food.

Your body tells you. You just have a built-in ability to know whether or not you're allergic to a food or you're being nourished by it or you're being made sick by it. That's what the presence of the Holy Spirit does.

He gives us discernment. He leads us into the truth. We say, well, there's so many pastors, so many points of view, so many denominations, so many different ways of taking all these different interpretations.

How do you know what's true? How do you know what's right? John says don't worry about it. You don't have to worry about somebody trying to be your guide and tell you this is right and this is wrong. You just listen to the teaching of the Word of God and God the Holy Spirit will tell you whether you're being fed or not.

If you're nourished, if you find that you have more peace, more love, more joy, more patience, if you find that you have a better ability to discern what you need to do in a given situation, if you find that word returning to your mind when you need it, you're getting fed. Stick with that. If you don't find any additional power in your life, if you're really asking and seeking and knocking and you say, you know, I go to church and I listen and I just don't feel like I'm getting fed.

I'm not coming away with anything. I'm not enhancing my understanding. I'm starving.

You know you're starving. All of us here, I know, have been in that situation. You say, I'm just coming away empty here.

I'm running on fumes. That's God the Holy Spirit. You don't have anybody that's going to come and tell you, go to the guru.

Go to Billy Graham and he'll tell you who you should listen to. Go to Charles Swindoll. Go to one of these other prominent people on television and they'll tell you who you should listen to.

Go to Jerry Falwell and he'll tell you the right road. Go to Dr. Wolvard. He's got it nailed down.

Go read Schaefer. God the Holy Spirit will tell you. If you're interested in growing and if you're interested in being fed and nourished up, you will know when you're getting the truth and when you're not.

And if you're not getting what you need, then move around. Look around. Ask.

Seek. Knock. Dig.

Lift up your voice. Cry out. Go back to Proverbs 2. God has promised and just wave that promise in His face.

Say, Lord, You have promised. I need it. Show me where it is.

And He will. It's a promise of God. It's more certain than the movement of the planets.

So that's what John is talking about here in 1 John. And if you go over to 2 John 2, he's greeting the people here. He says, The elder to the elect lady and her children whom I love in truth and not only I but also all those who have known the truth because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever.

The one thing we can take with us from this life is the truth of the Word of God. The Bible says you'll keep it. Every single thing you've ever learned in Bible class, you're taking it with you.

It's going to be fresh in your mind when you see the Lord Jesus Christ. You will know every fact you ever learned about Him from the Bible in this life. Isn't that a wonderful thing? Even stuff I can't remember right now, I'll remember later on because it's all going to abide with me.

Hopefully, I keep it fresh enough that it won't be a long lost souvenir of a past Bible class. It will still be something relatively familiar. The truth which abides in us will be with us forever.

It's a promise of God. It's a fact. So the more we accumulate, it's a treasure we will carry with us into the eternal future.

So the Word of God in us, that's one of the manifestations. That's number one. It's taken us a long time.

It's taken less than a half year to get to number two. But we're here now. The second one is the peace of Christ.

The peace of Christ. Peace is a tricky thing. Buddhists will tell you they have peace.

Muslims will tell you they have peace. Hare Krishnas and people who meditate, people who get into Ouija boards and demon possession will tell you, oh, I had such a sense of peace. People get shot up on drugs and say, oh, I hallucinated often in the most peaceful place.

But there is a genuine peace. And hopefully we know the difference. Hopefully we know the difference between peace that is based on the reality of eternal God and peace that is transient, peace that is based on deception and falsehood.

People attain a kind of peace that they think is peace, but it's not the peace of God. The peace of God passes understanding. There's nothing else like it.

When we acquire it, when we receive it and begin to enjoy it, it's an almost indescribable thing. A long, long time ago I read a book and somebody was talking about how difficult it was to describe something that you have to experience to appreciate. You just can't communicate what it is to someone else.

And they said, they used this phrase and it always stuck with me. They said, well, it's like trying to describe the color green to a person blind from birth. If someone had never had sight and had never seen red and green and blue, how would you describe green? You say, oh, I'm looking at the leaves on the trees.

It's springtime. The grass is coming out right after spring rain. It's so green.

And the blind person says, what do you mean by green? There's no power of description to convey. You have to see green to know what it is. The vividness of it, the brilliance, there's nothing like that bright spring green.

You know, when the grass first comes out and you have to go mow it, it's a beautiful, beautiful color. But unless you've seen it, you can't, there's no way to communicate it. Well, the peace of God passes understanding and it really passes description.

And you can't just say, oh, it's a really great peace. We as believers each have to receive that gift from Jesus Christ. Remember when he talked to the disciples and he said, peace I give you.

My peace I leave with you. I don't give like the world gives. When I give, it's a permanent, eternal thing.

So the peace of Christ. Look at Colossians 3.15. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts to which also you were called in one body and be thankful. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

Now rulership, that's a pretty powerful word. Let the peace of God rule. Again, we're seeing this in our study in Genesis.

Remember when Abram and Lot are together and there's strife. There's strife between Abram and Lot. There's strife between the herdsmen.

There's strife between their two clans there. And Abram says, let there be no strife. Peace needs to rule.

And he does the self-sacrificial thing. He said, Lot, you pick the best thing that you can find. You pick what you think you need.

I'll go the other way. I'll rely on God to provide for me. You do what you think you need to do.

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. There's nothing worth sacrificing our peace. As I've told

you before, this is the big thing that has helped me become calm in traffic.

I no longer get just all bent out of shape trying to drive from one place to another, which is good since I'm now having to drive downtown and out of downtown every day. It could be so frustrating the way people drive and a lack of consideration. But all I have to do is remember, am I going to let this person take away the peace that Jesus Christ worked so hard to give me? It's not worth it.

I don't know who this person is. I don't know where they're going. God knows.

He can deal with them. I'm not going to let it make a ripple in my pond. And it really is a very powerful thought.

And I really have been able to stay calm most of the time thinking about that. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. John 14.27 is the passage I just alluded to.

Jesus in the upper room talking to the disciples. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you.

Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Same thing he opened chapter 14 with.

Let not your heart be troubled. No matter what the circumstance, here they are the night before Jesus Christ is going to be crucified. The most stupendous event in human history.

They're on the eve of it. They're closely associated with Jesus Christ. Their own lives are in mortal danger.

And Jesus says, don't let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. I've given you peace. I don't give like the world gives.

When I give you something, it stays with you. I don't take it back. Peace I leave with you.

My peace I give to you. When we make progress toward Christ in you, the hope of glory, our souls will be characterized by peace. The illustration I love to think about in that regard is the difference between a thermostat and a thermometer.

A lot of people are thermometers. When the situation around them heats up, their mercury rises. When things are stressful, they get stressed out.

When things are worrisome, they get worried. When things are dangerous, they get afraid. When things are unstable, they get insecure.

They reflect whatever the environment is around them. When people are all hilarious and happy, they get hilarious and happy. When people get depressed, they get depressed.

Whatever the ambient circumstance is, that's their ambient temperature. They're just a

thermometer reacting and responding to everything around them. The believer with the peace of Christ is a thermostat.

And it doesn't matter what happens around you. It can be violent. It can be unstable.

It can be fearsome. It can be boring. It can be deadly dull.

It doesn't matter what it is. We carry around an environment in our soul of peace. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Sometimes that's a hard thing to do. There are things that are just downright scary. I can tell you, people shooting at you is kind of a scary thing.

I haven't had that happen to me during one short period of my life. It only takes one short period of your life and only one little piece of lead to pretty well put a period at the end of your paragraph. And you have to make a decision at that point.

Well, am I going to follow all the pieces here or remember who decides the length of life? And it becomes more than an academic proposition. There are people that have had a whole lot worse experiences in this than I have. But I had enough of the taste of it to appreciate that it takes more than just an act of will.

You really have to have faith that God knows, that God determines these things, that He's really there. After long years in the faith, you suddenly say, gosh, I sure hope there really is a God and I hope He really is a terrible thing. But it's amazing how fear can start turning your soul upside down.

But we train for these in the small details of life. We train in the charge of the mosquito. And when the charge of the elephant comes, hopefully we have a thermostat in our soul that gives us calm.

You think about the Lord Jesus Christ. I can't even comprehend. I can't even begin to imagine.

The night before the cross, He's busy comforting the disciples. He is about to undergo the cross. And He's saying, I'm giving you peace.

Let not your heart be troubled. Don't be afraid. I would think He'd be out there in constant communion with the Father and flights of angels all around Him, a pep rally out there to try to keep Him held together.

But that's the example. Christ in you, if Christ can be that calm and be selfless and thinking about others and meeting their needs and communicating truth and love to them, knowing they're all going to run off and leave Him, knowing Peter's going to deny Him three times, He's giving them promises. He's comforting them.

He's encouraging them. He's giving them the Word of God, promises, principles, doctrines. Right

in the midst of the biggest crisis anybody has ever faced, man, angel, or God, the single biggest thing that ever happened in the universe, and Jesus Christ in the middle of it is concentrating on the ministry to His disciples.

That's a high standard. But if we have Christ in us, that's the direction that we will be moving as well. We're not going to be self-centered even in the midst of our own trials.

Many of us have had the blessing of being associated with believers who we go to visit them in the hospital on their deathbed or in their hour of great need and trial, and you come away encouraged. You thought, well, I'm going to go down and try to comfort them and help them, and you come away having received the blessing because they've got the thermostat in their soul. They have the peace of God and they're like Christ.

They are able to comfort others when they themselves are in a much greater trial than we are. What a wonderful reflection of the glory of God. That's Christ in you, the hope of glory.

There are other passages we could go to in this regard. You might just write these down and look at them. Romans 5, 1. Ephesians 2, 12-18.

Romans 14, 17. That's the passage that talks about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And Philippians 4, 6, and 7. But you get the idea.

If we want to see where we stand in real terms with regard to Christ in you, the hope of glory, here are two very prominent characteristics. The peace of God, the Word of God dwelling in us and dwelling in us richly. Dwelling in us to the point that it really makes a difference and these are things we can watch for.

These are things, if we haven't really enjoyed the fullness of them, we can look forward to that as we continue to take in the Word of God, meditate on the Word of God, seek the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, present our bodies a living sacrifice, abide in Christ, and be in us. Let's close in prayer. We thank you, Father, for the tremendous privilege we have of being heir to these things, of having the opportunity to have Christ formed in us, to reflect your glory in this wonderful way.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will take the truth of your Word and make it active and powerful in our thinking as we engage in the daily tasks and responsibilities of life. We pray that in all things our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be glorified. We pray these things in His name.

Amen.