

Joy: The Last Disciple

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- [0 : 0 0] There's a lot of things I don't understand about Canadians, so that's fine. We'll do just grand. Whenever I go and go to a conference, I say, Lord, teach me.
- What would you have me know? And so I wanted to share the things. First of all, the kindred spirits with the men here. I enjoyed them immensely. It was just a blessing for me to see them, to be around them, to interact with them, to hear their hearts about things.
- It was just tremendous. But the three things in particular I learned about, they took me snowmobiling up the mountains. The guys I went with, they were kind of like hot rodders, you know, so I'm just trying to stay alive.
- And one of the things that I was kind of poking along, and it's because I miss the mountains. We have hills in Missouri. We don't have mountains. mountains. And so I'm looking at the mountains, and this scripture just came in my mind so often.
- Isaiah chapter 2, he says, it shall come to pass in the latter days, the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established at the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills, and all the nations will flow to it.
- [1 : 1 3] And I'm praying, and thinking of that, all of a sudden, no! Now this is all, we'll be all, I said, okay, I better step it up a little bit, because they're way out there, and I don't know what I'm going to get back. So thank you, Lord, for this opportunity to learn to be, you know, to trust you, but also to get going.
- And then I had great lows. And, you know, in my life, when I think of curling, it's more like what my wife's going to go in the bathroom. She's going to curl her hair or something.
- And so I went to this thing on curling, and they showed me how it is, and I said, okay, Lord, this is definitely different.
- So what is it you have me learn? And then it was clear. Fifteen times, I think you'd call it a stone. You would get on your knee, and you would push this stone down.
- And I said, oh, fifteen times I get to pray. So that's what I did. I would get ready. Like, guys, can we step it up a little bit? That's usually because I'm nailing down, and I'm kind of praying, you know. And one of the prayers was, Lord, as I pray, I don't drive this stone out through the wall and through someone's head.
- [2 : 1 8] I pushed it too hard. And so that was the great low, I mean, in my life, and that was good. And then what was the third thing? You know, I'm a family pastor, and I like the we people.
- And so when David had talking about what they learned, I love this. I told this to BK. What have you learned? And I guess it was Jesse.
- He raised his hand. You didn't see him. And someone mentioned over here, we've learned about Moses. And Jesse went. And I thought, shouldn't that be our heart when it comes to learn the things about the magnificence of our God?
- We're eager to share it, and we don't have an opportunity to share that with someone we should be like, little Jesse. I missed that opportunity. I had a chance to share my faith with a man from Columbia on the way from St. Louis to Chicago, and then a woman from Poland.

And I've found over the years when you get a chance to share, two things happen. They want to know more, and they're open, and they're listening. And the second thing that happens is they excuse themselves.

[3 : 25] They go back to the bathroom, and for a five-hour flight, you never see them again. So, you know, I think that's fine. That gives me more room in the seat, whatever ends up happening. So God's gracious in all parts of our life, and we're going to look at that today.

We're going to spend some time looking at what I see as I travel the country and talk to people, and I talk to believers. What I see is this lack of this particular thing. And the question is this.

What is biblical joy? What is it? The economist Jeff Sachs says, for a society, this is why I'm talking about Western culture, that chases money, we are chasing the wrong things.

Our social fabric is deteriorating, social trust is deteriorating, and so is faith in all things. If you read anything from the writer, Irish novelist and writer James Joyce, he was not a believer, but he said, so many have lost touch of knowing how to cultivate joy anymore, so, he says, we resort to quick fixes like alcohol and drugs and finding fleeting moments of happiness from other places without truly experience.

And then he had this question, which is sad, but it is reality of an unbelieving world. How do I know or cultivate joy?

[4 : 46] So, in our time this morning, BK said that I should be limiting myself to no more than two hours. I should make sure that I do that with you this morning. We are going to look at this transition, this failure of temporal happiness, people putting themselves there for what I call faith, the eternal disposition.

It has been called the elusive spirit of the fruit of the spirit, yet it's sung about in many songs. So much is said about it, the word joy in the scriptures. Why don't we understand that?

Why so few grasp it? So what is this biblical joy? Joy of rejoicing is a major motif in the Bible. There's 463 references, and the context is overwhelming of an eternal nature.

It's a spiritual dimension. And the emphasis is encapsulated here in these well-known verses. The joy of the Lord is my strength, Nehemiah 8.10. And the petition from David, Please restore to me the joy of your salvation in Psalm 55.

It's fitting that joy surrounded the birth of the Messiah. The angels proclaim good news and great joy in Luke chapter 2. And again, Luke states that the angels rejoiced in the repentance of even one sinner.

[6 : 03] There's joy. There's joy. For Paul, in the New Testament, there's no paradox to the great spiritual light. On this side of heaven, joy prevails, even amidst affliction for us.

One look at the beaten Paul and Silas and stocks in the Philippine jail. They are praying. They are in stocks. They are in bondage. And they're singing hymns.

And they're waiting for the mourning magistrate to sentence them to death. Acts chapter 16. So it destroys this idea that joy is just this deep, deep feeling of happiness.

Really? In stocks? Ready to be sentenced to death? And I can have this deep, deep sense of happiness? I don't think so. Let's face it. It's a challenge to live in this world by a Christian faith, to journey through this world, and it will always be so.

In a recent survey by Lifeway magazine, 63% of Christians have stated they are dealing with some types of persecution. And that number is continually escalating.

[7 : 07] It does not include the daily trials and tribulations that we all have. The heartaches and the difficulties of being in the world and not being of the world. Talking to hundreds of pastors that I know around the world, they'll tell me their counseling, and Dave would know, is increasing.

People are disenchanted. They're discouraged. They're dismayed. Maybe you struggle that. Maybe this sense of joy is yours in a difficult hardship right now. But with God, there's always hope.

Thankfully, the God of all comfort, he will provide us hope. So what are we going to do in the time that we have in the next several hours? Well, we're going to impact the first of four verses, and you're going to turn to God's word with me to James.

We're going to look at chapter one, and we're going to focus on this issue. Because James is going to try to teach us this idea that we can count all things joy. Our God has given us the way to do that.

It is possible no matter where you are right now. So let's read this. And you'll be familiar with this. So you're going to sit there, and you're going to say, well, my pastor's covered that.

[8 : 16] I've read this before. I know that. Stop. Don't go there. The word of God is rich. It's enlightening.

It's noble. It's pure. Let your mind listen to what's being said here. It's an aspect of this particular exegesis, and you've probably never thought through this before.

So I want you to go there. Follow the thinking here of James. It will help you. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes in the dispersion, greetings.

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet trials of various kinds. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let that steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

So I would tell you this. You can saturate your mind with these three antidotes right here for an accurate attitude during adversity and fliction.

[9 : 24] Why? So that you can possess joy of the redeemed life, and our Savior will be magnified. That's a good reason. So let's open this and think through this.

And so let's begin with this first idea. And for years as I kind of thought through this and mused over this and meditated on this, I was working through this, doing all my Greek and all my exegesis, understanding that, and I was struggling.

And I realized I was such in a hurry to figure out what his message was. I overlooked an aspect of it, and I don't want you to do that. James, a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A servant. He has a disposition. In the Greek culture, the idea of a servant referred to the involuntary permanent service of a slave. But many of the writers of the New Testament elevate the word to describe a servant who willingly commits to serve a master that he loves and respects.

If we are to have the disposition of a servant for the living God, here are the four perspectives that we need to grasp. We need to grasp this. To be a servant, here's what you should think of. First, a servant is exclusively owned.

[10 : 31] You sang about that this morning. Thank you, Dustin. I love those songs. I'm going to kick you up with our music minister, and maybe a couple of those songs I wasn't familiar with, but I love them. So thank you.

In fact, I, see, Lisa, right? Is that right? No, no, no, you're Jody. You're Jody, okay. So Jody, I actually, I enjoyed your husband immeasurably. He was always a blessing.

So do you have that? Do you realize that you've been bought with a price? Your name's written in the Lamb Book of Life. You belong to Jesus Christ. He sought you. Ephesians 2, you are dead.

That's what it says. So I used to tell people all the time, people want to live. Go to a cemetery after someone's been buried and sit there for hours and see if someone sticks their hands up through the soul and says, I want to live.

It's not going to happen. They're dead. You were dead. I was dead in our spiritual nation. My friend over there, BK and I, are talking about spiritual zombies. You know, they're around us everywhere. They haven't got a clue.

[11 : 30] And he sought us, and he brought us, and he made his own, and I belong to him, and I'm a servant, and you're a servant of the living God. 1 Corinthians 3.23 says, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

So what else do we know about a servant? Well, you have to be useful. You have to be obedient. Sometimes later in verse 22, James will say, be doers of the word and not hearers, only deceiving yourself.

So are you a servant? Yes. You're bought with a price? Yes. But are you serving? What are you doing? We encourage the people at New Community Church, a church where I serve as a family pastor, to each one find one thing and serve.

I don't care if you have a small group and you bring the donuts or something. You have one thing. But to be sitting in that pew or chair and not have one thing that you're serving, let me tell you, you are missing out.

So when I was here, I had a chance to go back in the kitchen. I guess after those famous BK sandwiches, and I was back with two neat guys. Kevin, and I always forget his name.

[12 : 38] It starts with an S, Sabian. I don't want to say Sabrina, but I know that's not it. So it's Sabian. Yeah. I know. I work on that. And so I was back there with Sabian and we were doing those dishes and Kevin and Sabian, they're like a team.

And, you know, Sabian, he smiles all the time. And I said, Sabian, you know, he says, I just take each day and I enjoy each day. That's biblical. This is the day the Lord has made.

Rejoice and be glad in it. Yeah. And so we did the dishes back there and they're joking around and having a good time. And then we gave him hugs when we finished because it was fun. Yeah.

Yeah. It was a blessing, wasn't it? Yeah. I loved it. But I would have done it not because as much as I enjoyed Sabian and Kevin and being back there and it's because do I get a chance to serve the body of Christ?

Yeah, I can do this little thing. One little thing. It's not much. I wash his dishes. But it's something. Look, if the king of kings can wash the disciples' feet, I can wash some dishes.

[13 : 43] Seriously, right? So we are servants. Thirdly, you must be prepared for every good work. Kick it up a notch.

Do what the master desires. How many times do we do things that we're not comfortable doing? If you did the summation of all 150 psalms, you get this sense from the psalm writers, mostly a lot of times David, that I am poor and needy.

I'm gonna trust you. I'm gonna do things that I can't imagine and whatever else, but I'm poor and needy. I need you. My brothers, Paul says, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

I don't know how it is here in Canada, but in the States. Sometimes working with kids and being a family pastor, when I left the seminary, you should be a senior pastor, right?

You should be preaching. D.L. Moody said, if I had to live my life alone, he's a famous evangelist and Bible teacher. Chicago, he said, if I had my life to do again, I would have spent my life with children. Why?

[14 : 45] Simple. I know the answer. Adults, I don't want to know the answer. I don't really care. I'm not really interested. Half of you are already falling asleep. I'm not, you know, no.

The kids are there. They're engaged. They want to know. And they ask questions. I used to send the seminary students, please, go teach a Sunday school student. Why? Just trust me. A few weeks later, they come back.

I need to leave seminary. Why? Well, a seven-year-old asked me a question and what we're learning. I don't even know I have to answer for that. Good. Humility. You've learned something else. That's good. Kids will ask you questions and they'll draw you out and they'll force you to go back to the scripture and think about it.

The mind, they're wonderful. The little wee people. Now, a little commentary on this one thing. It's sad, but I see what you're doing here. I'm thinking you're doing with Moses in your Red Sea. You're thinking about all those ten, the plagues and the bloody and the lice and all the things that God did and God brings them out of Egypt and the Egyptians were pleading for God to save us.

He does. It came to my mind, Judges 2.10. It said, after this generation, the generation that came out of Egypt, the next generation did not know anything of the Lord.

[15 : 57] This is a sidebar, but we're losing this generation because we don't care about these kids. We don't invest in these kids and that's probably why I like Dustin so much. He's talking about his family, what he does and they always sit in the front row and we're going on about that and I'm thinking, this is a blessing.

It's a blessing I need because I'm dealing with a lot of families everywhere that lights on no one's home. They're not shepherding their kids. They're not pouring into them. They're not telling about this great God who we serve and we're wondering, we'll get into some statistics later on but we're wondering why we're losing this generation.

So we're servants. We need to remember that and finally number four, as a servant, we are totally dependent on the kindness of our master. Do not be anxious than saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink with what shall we clothe ourselves for all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek for your heavenly father knows that you need these things but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.

Therefore, they do not be anxious for tomorrow for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew chapter 6, 31 through 33.

So our knowledge of our relationship with the risen Savior is knowledge and it's this experience that we get when we serve. And as we show ourselves in these four servant attitudes, trust me, there will be blessing upon blessing and it's a way that our master demonstrated us through Jesus.

[17 : 26] All those things he did. He said, Jesus said, my food is to do the will of the Father. You want a perfect example of this servant?

Look to Jesus. Now sometimes when we look to Jesus, we, you know, that hypostatic union, the relationship between holy human and fully God, we want to lean on this and say, yeah, but he was Jesus, he was God, but he was fully human.

Ray, show me someone that was human that dealt with these afflictions and difficulties and maintained his worshipful attitude. Sure, I'm glad to do it. The name's gonna be real familiar. Job.

He's minding his own business. He's serving the Lord. He's loving God and walking his ways. He's raising his families. He's enjoying the fruits of his efforts. But in a realm beyond God's, beyond Job's perception, a conversation happens between God and Satan.

Satan says to God, hey, I want to take out the swing of this guy. Remarkably, God says, have Adam. Job, you'll never forget that day. Nope, he wouldn't. So in rapid succession, four messengers burst through the door.

[18 : 27] These bearers of bad news must have seen each other crossing as they sprint across the field and out of their breath and rocked with grief. None of the messengers were able to even finish the report before something else came in. The first servant says, your oxen and donkey have stolen.

The second one says, hey, lightning has killed your sheep and shepherds. The third, you know what? The Chaldeans, they've come in and they've taken your camels. And then the fourth one, the fourth one, Job and his wife brace, your sons and your daughters were killed when a great wind came and blew down the four corners of the house.

Some have speculated that Job learned of this astounding losses in about 45 seconds. Now, I would expect that Job would say that he stood and wept.

But the scripture says, Job rose and act of mourning he tore his robe, shaved his head, he fell down and he worshipped.

And he said, naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will return. The Lord gave me and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

[19 : 46] Through all this, Job did not sin nor did he blame God. Job chapter one verses 21 and 22. My friends, this is not just a deep, deep feeling of happiness that you stir up.

But what it is a deep, deep dependence and trust upon a righteous God. To maintain joy during adversity, we must remember we are servants of the living God and that we can trust him.

But there's more here. Job's gonna, I mean, James is gonna hit us over and over and over again so we get this point. We should understand what true joy is. The second point is this one.

Our disposition. I've called it, count it as a theologian's deliberation. Well, what do you mean by that, Ray? Well, it means this. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kind.

The Greek word for count is *hegemigai*. It's a verbal form that requires a continuing deliberation. We continually think on these things that are lovely and true and right. We're commanded to have a conscience consideration of these trials and to respond correctly.

[20 : 52] Since God commands us, he will enable us or he will equip us to do everything good that we will. He'll work through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 13, 12 and 21 says he will allow us to understand and be trusted and grow in our faith.

A right relationship to the living, holy God of the universe is the promise of eternal heaven which is incomparably priceless. Behind this word count is the reminder that Christian world view it's rational.

It's deliberate. It makes sense. It involves mental action. The Bible makes good sense. It contains no contradictions, no errors, no unsound principles. This sort of rationality is sad to say antithetical to the whole gist of postmodern thought.

People today are taught to glorify contradiction, to embrace that which is absurd, to prefer that which is subjective. Let their feelings, rather their intellect, determine what they believe. Theologian John Scott wrote this and it's even more changed since it was written.

He says, has God created us rational beings and we shall deny our humanity? And now you could say you would deny your gender which God has given us?

[22 : 03] Has God spoken to us that we shall not listen to his word? Has God renewed our minds through Christ that we shall not think with them? Is God going to judge us by his word and we shall not be able to wise and build our house on the rock?

No. No. Joy then is experienced through God's means of grace. It is knowledge of his word that produces it. I have stored your word in my heart that I may not sin against you.

Psalm 119 and 11. Worship as we had this morning invokes it. Let the righteous one rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him. Let all that is upright in heart exalt.

Psalm 64. It's a reflective mind. These things I remember that I will appear before you someday and as I pour out my soul how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God.

Psalm 42.4. And finally, it is this cognitive assessment that experiences joy. How do I know that? Again, my mind and my heart is shaped through the word and it says in Psalm 2.7 sorry, Philippians 2.17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of my faith says Paul I am glad and I will rejoice with you all.

[23 : 20] Now if you think about that for just a moment Paul's making a connection with the individual that he loves. He presses through the prize the calling of Christ Jesus.

Paul loves Jesus. He's infatuated. His desire is to do everything that Jesus said. And so being poured out he's making an allusion to the drink offerings the metaphor of the blood of Jesus spilled out on the cross in Luke 22.20.

Think on those things. the next time afflictions and heartaches comes your way and you're consumed with downcast being downcast and misery.

The men I exposed to them a little while ago and I talked to one of the guys about this so I have to do this again because people always want to say can we live this way? Is it likable? Is it possible? Someone says I think it was Steve who says give me application.

Now here's an application. 1924 Summer Olympics was hosted by the city of Paris a devout Christian by the name of Eric Little I talked to the men about this he refused to run in the heat held on a Sunday and was forced to withdraw from the 100 meter race his best event.

[24 : 28] He petitioned and was selected to run the 400 meter race instead and deprived of a view of the other runners because he drew the outside lane he raced the whole of the first 200 meters and he cleared it but by the time he finished 200 meters he was exhausted with little option but then to treat the race as a complete sprint he continued on and he finished the final bound.

He was challenged all the way down the home straight but he held on to take the win. He broke an Olympic record he broke a world record and then as a gold medal winner he had everything that he could possibly have chosen to do.

The world was coming to him but instead he returned to northern China to serve as a missionary and in 1941 life in China he had become so dangerous because of Japanese aggression that the British government advised British nationals to leave.

The Japanese took over the mission station Eric Little was interned at the Weeheisen International Camp with the members of the China Inland Mission he became a leader and organized the camp there was scarce food and medicine and other supplies but he made it work he tried to bring joy to those participants that were there in the camp.

In his last letter to his wife written on the day that he died Eric Little wrote of his suffering and his debilitating headaches he found out later on that he had an inoperable brain tumor overwork malnourished he died on 21 February 1945 five months later the camp would be liberated.

[26 : 00] Remember the camp Langdon Gilkey wrote later the entire camp especially its youth was stunned for days so great was the vacuum that Eric's death had left.

according to a fellow missionary Little's last words were this he asked for the Salvation Army Band to play nearer my God to thee and as they bend over to pray with him they heard him whisper it's all about surrender.

It was a reference to what God had done for him as he trusted and lived with him as he turned his life over to him. It can be done it's possible.

A servant's disposition encourages joy a theologian's deliberation liberates true joy and our third antidote for an accurate attitude during adversity and affliction is to have this same athlete's determination.

So let's go back to our text James says in verse 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. the word to know is not just intellectual facts but knowledge plus experience.

[27 : 12] We talked this with a man about the importance of wisdom. Along life's journey the bumpy roads as a believer we know that God is faithful and will experience his care and direction.

These themes are out scripture. They pervade it. Micah 7 7 we read but as for me I will look to the Lord I will wait to the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.

Lamentations 3 25 Deuteronomy 3 22 Joshua 1 it's just throughout scripture. God does not guard us apart from our faith but by working through our faith and our athletes determination we persevere.

Paul is clear on this point not that I have already obtained it or I have already become perfect. But I press in order that I may lay hold of that which I wait.

Who is this that I'm pressing for? Who is this that I'm running the race for? Most of us enter this race it's a marathon and it's challenging and it's difficult and we come to the starting line and we go I made it to the starting line.

[28 : 17] You're a fool. You got 26 more miles to go. Who would ever say that? But sometimes we do that. We enter this starting line and we say okay I'm there. You're not. This race is going to be spiritual sweat.

This press is an aggressive chase. It's an earnest pursuit. I would like to change this noun to a verb. Instead of saying I press I say I Eric Littled.

I Eric Littled. How'd your day go? My wife will ask me. I Eric Littled. I asked the staff recently what Paul said it just so convicted me. Anybody here it's been a long week anybody here labor to the point of exhaustion?

Of course the elders and pastoral staff is going to raise their hand. That's Paul's premonition. We labor for the point of exhaustion. Our joy is found as our face is placed under a heavy load.

It's spiritual sweat. We determine to resolutely stay under the trial rather than to seek to immediately escape it. This is hard. This is contrary to every fiber of our human nature but our virtue of steadfastness or endurance guess what happens?

[29 : 25] Our faith grows. No bearing up. No remaining with a joyful determination. Full reliance on God. There's going to be little spiritual growth. Martin Luther captured this idea beautifully.

Listen to this. I wish I could write this way. He says when we let down a blazing torch in the depths of our soul during difficult troubling times we will see many things which we little expected to see.

We find our faith weak when we thought it would be strong and we find that our eternal focus dim where we thought it to be bright.

James has more to say about this athletically inspired type of endurance in verse 4 he said and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking nothing.

The reward for staying the course for running the plies like the athlete who wins the prize is stated that as a double purpose clause the first one he says is a positive perspective and then a negative. So positively he endured so that he may be perfect and complete.

[30 : 36] It's a present progressive attainment. As we accomplish one step God provides more opportunity to your knowledge and this explains what you see in people's lives. Sometimes you you'll meet people and say well how long have you been a disciple of Christ?

40 years. Oh well let's go to the Psalms and read that. I don't know where that is. Oh you don't know where the Psalms okay well let's go. And then you see other actions and attitudes and you think they're spiritually immature.

How can they have been knowing Christ for 40 years? Well this is what we're talking about here is progressive spiritual attainment. As we accomplish one step God provides more opportunity to growth.

The richness of knowledge and character progresses that we more like Jesus Christ. I liken it this way. I just had my little 14th grandson born a week ago.

That's why Missy couldn't come with me. Little Beckett. And so you know as Beckett's grows and other kids grow they come down and do Legos. And we're playing with Legos.

[31 : 36] That's what you know I like to play with Legos. They like to play Legos and we're doing stuff with them. And sometimes they get frustrated. They're trying to build something. And we're building a castle and little Hudson. He couldn't build the bridge and he was frustrated.

Now think about this for a moment. Hudson can't build a bridge out of Legos. He hasn't grown. He doesn't know how to do that. I'm going to turn him over the engineering schematics for the Golden Gate Bridge and say hey it's Hudson.

Would you build this? But people wonder why don't I grow? Why am I not more Christ-like? Are you doing what God asks you to do? Why would God give you more to do when you don't do what he asks you to do?

Why would I have Hudson build the Golden Gate Bridge when he can't build something out of Legos? Perfect illustration. And this is what's saying here. God's saying the same thing to us. He will provide you the opportunity to grow.

The richness of knowledge and character progresses so that we'll be more and more like Jesus Christ. To step here where he steps. To walk daily where he walks. They are the hallmarks of a growing Christian faith.

[32 : 42] The word complete, it's a classical Greek signal. It is a turning point. It is a culminating point that you would be complete. I've reached this point in my progressive sanctification.

Now I'll move another thing. And in that trial and tribulation and suffering, God's going to move another point. And guess what? All along the way, I will then begin to know Jesus more fully. I'm convinced that many theologians agree as well.

When we get to heaven and we see the all that's there, our whole eternity will be learning the life about our God and Christ. Every day we'll be learning something that we never knew.

We'll start it now. 1 Thessalonians 5.23 says, now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, your soul, and your body be kept blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We discussed this with the men. That should be our focus. You're going to return someday. Why? Because if God's going to return, his return is going to be imminent, I'm going to remember that he's going to see me how I am.

[33 : 42] Am I participating in doing things that he would be pleased by? It's happening. And so, Maranatha, come quickly.

That was the greeting of the first century church. That's how they greet each other. We say hello, yo, or you guys say eh, we say huh. And there it's Maranatha. Come quickly.

Why? Because they're being persecuted. The torches of the dinner. I can't believe it, but this is what the Roman historians record. They would have dinner, and they would light up the torches, and there would be bodies on those crosses or whatever, and they would lit up, and they would have their dinner while people are screaming.

These are Christians. You don't think they're thinking much about this life. They're thinking, Lord, come quickly. That's what they're thinking about. We need to think about that. If we're going to run this race, and we're going to do it joyfully, we have to keep our focus.

It's clearly demonstrated in John 19.30 when Jesus finished what he said, because he said, it is finished. He had victory over death. He conquered sin.

[34 : 57] But what about the negative perspective? Second purpose clause states that the joy for these difficulties, nothing is left behind. Nothing is left behind. No area of godly maturity development should fail to reach the goal.

No part of our faith will fail to develop. It's resolute. We can have joy in Christ. Hebrews 12, 12, 2 says, who for the joy, here's that word again, set before him and endured the cross, despising shame, sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, for he considered him who has endured such hostilities by sinners against himself so that, there's our purpose clause, that you may not grow weary and lose heart.

To have biblical joy during difficulties, we must have a disposition of a servant, we must have the deliberation of a theologian, and we must have the determination of an athlete.

athlete. I have found this profitable for my life as I read through scriptures, I search the scriptures, and I've already alluded to the men, I've suggested the same thing to you.

Find one thing, find one thing, and you can always ask me, well, Ray, what do you mean, is that biblical? Yes, I'll give you three examples.

[36 : 15] Do you have one thing you know? John 13, truly and truly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is the messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

One thing I know, I'm a servant of the living God. And not just because I'm a pastor. I don't care what your role is, if you name the name of Christ as a disciple, you are a servant. Do you have one thing you do?

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it. But we talked about this. I pressed the prize. Philippians 3, 13, 14. That's one thing I do. I'm focused. I'm running. I'm getting out of gas.

That's okay. Keep running. Keep going. God helped me to finish the course. I had a professor in the seminary. He had Lou Gehrig's and he was next door to me and I walked by and his head was on the table.

I thought, oh man, he's died. And he looked up when I was there and I'll never forget it, Dr. Craig. He said, I have one thing.

[37 : 27] I want to finish this life well. He had one thing. He wants to finish his life well. There he says one thing. And do you have one thing that you ask?

One thing I've asked you, Lord, said David in Psalm 27, that I would dwell in the house of your Lord all the days of your life to behold your beauty and to meditate in your temple. This is what David wanted.

One thing. A man after God's heart. So, I'm really not going for three hours, so you're safe. I don't have the energy after snowmobiling that curling thing, so you're safe.

But it's my prayer for you that you would grow in your joy and your love for Jesus Christ. And during tribulations and hardships and difficulties, my prayer would be that your joy would be manifest.

Why? Because a watching world cannot generate joy amidst those trials and tribulations. It's impossible. And when they see that in your life, it's like Sabian.

[38 : 28] You see that in life. Everybody's talking about Sabian. Everything's talking about Sabian. I'm around Sabian. I'm going to talk about Sabian. because there's joy in what he does. And it's a testimony to our life in Christ.

So if you would, bow your heads with me as we pray. you see that in the end of the day. I'm going to talk about Sabian. I'm going to talk about Sabian. I'm going to talk about Sabian. I'm going to talk about Sabian.