

# The Presence of the God of Peace

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] Psalm number 26 from the Sing Psalms version, and that's on page 30, singing verses 1 to 8. The tune is Balerna.

Declare me innocent, O Lord, I've walked in blameless ways, and I have trusted in the Lord, not wavering all my days. Test me, O Lord, and try my heart.

My inmost thoughts survey. Your love surrounds me, from your truth my feet will never stray. And so on down to verse 8, Declare me innocent, O Lord.

Declare me innocent, O Lord, I've walked in blameless ways, and I have trusted in the blameless ways.

And I have trusted in the Lord, not wavering all my days.

[ 1 : 16 ] Test me, O Lord, and try my heart.

My inmost thoughts survey. Your love surrounds me, from your truth.

My feet will never stray. I do not sit with worthless hope.

I shunned the hypocrite. I hate the wicked gatherings.

With them I will not sit. I wash my hands in innocence.

[ 2 : 41 ] And painless is my heart. I go apart, pure altar, Lord.

The place you set apart. I'll tell of all your awesome deeds.

O bringing light, pure praise. Your glory fills your dwelling place.

I love your hearts always. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Let's now pray. Let's join together as we call upon the Lord. Almighty and gracious God, once again we give thanks that your word has directed our minds, and given us so much information, even in these few verses, O Lord, that we can take to heart and apply as we now approach worship, and come to sing out praises, and to read your word, to call upon your name, and to give our mind to the teaching of your word.

[ 4 : 22 ] And we thank you, Lord, that we thank you, Lord, that we do so in a way that seeks to uplift and exalt your holy name, and a way that would glorify you.

For this is our great aim in life, and to glorify the Lord and to enjoy him forever. This is why you created us. This is our great privilege to know that despite what happened in our fall, and our being, therefore, detached from you spiritually and savingly, yet, Lord, you have made provision for us.

You have sent your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into this life, into this world, to take our nature, to take our place, the place of your people, even to the point of death, the death that we deserved.

We thank you tonight, Lord, as we come to worship you, that this is central to our worship, and that we come to give thanks for your redemption, and give thanks for the love in which you have provided this for us, and for the many promises attached to it as we come to know you.

You know each one of us, O Lord, here this evening. You are able to read our hearts and minds.

You know our manner of life. You know how we are in relation to you and to your truth.

[ 5 : 40 ] You know our circumstances in this world. You are familiar with every single detail of that, in a way that far exceeds our ability to know and understand it.

Lord, you know all aspects of your providence toward us as well, in the way in which in your sovereign purpose, so you rule over our lives and over the world, over the creation that you have made.

We thank you, Lord, tonight that you bring us these teachings in your word, that enable us to come and bow in your presence. We pray tonight that your Holy Spirit will once again take your word and apply it to us.

Lord, we confess our need again of your Holy Spirit. We confess our need of your Spirit at all times, for our spiritual understanding and development especially.

Yet we know that it is through you and even through your common grace that we live and move and have our being from day to day. So, Lord, bless us here, we pray, as we give our mind tonight to your word.

[ 6 : 48 ] Help us to realize your word shaping our thoughts. I forbid that we should come in any way thinking that our own thoughts and our own minds are superior to what you have given us in your word.

That we might come, Lord, as others may do, who would regard your word as in need of being changed to sit with the thoughts of human beings in this present age.

We thank you that your word is everlasting, that you have taken account of all that will take place in the history of this world when you gave your word to be written. And we thank you that it is therefore ever relevant for us in all our circumstances, in every age and every time that we come to confront it.

Bless us then, we pray, O Lord, as we give ourselves to you now to worship you and to wait upon you. We give thanks that, as we have sung in this psalm, that we are able to call upon you to examine our hearts, even though we know that this is such a solemn thing, O Lord.

For we know that our hearts are sinful, naturally sinful, that we sin against you every day in thought and word and action. And yet, Lord, we require that you would examine us and teach us the way of holiness, the way of life.

[ 8 : 05 ] And we pray that you would lead us away from the ways of darkness and of sin, that we have ourselves so naturally at our disposal. Lord, we ask that our life in this world as a worshipping people might be a bright light to those around us.

We pray especially that you would make us to be salt and light to those who don't care for you or for your truth or for your values. Lord, we ask that you would give us concern to be true to you and to be true witnesses for you in this life.

Remember us as a congregation, we pray. Again, we commit to you, Lord, our way and serving you in the different ways in which we seek to do this. Not only in the gospel, though we have the gospel and the teaching of the gospel foremost in our concerns.

We pray, nevertheless, that you would accompany every other activity associated with that, Lord, from week to week, from day to day. Bless those who give of their time to these activities, especially with our young people.

Lord, we ask that you would bless these efforts, bless that activity to them. Bless tonight the fellowship and bless Norrie as he speaks. We thank you for his willingness to come to speak of those things with us that he has come to think upon and to share.

[ 9 : 28 ] We ask, Lord, that he may be blessed and all of us may be blessed as we hear him. Remember, we pray our young people, our children at this time having come through and still, Lord, facing difficulties in school and even in Sunday school and church activities with the ongoing COVID situation.

We thank you for your keeping of us during these times. We thank you, O Lord, for the assurances that you give us in your word that nothing of this is outwith your control, that you have your own purpose in it, even though we may question and may find it difficult to comprehend and to conclude as to why this has come about.

We know that it is for our instruction. We know that it is for our instruction. Lord, we know that it is so that we will come to your word and seek your blessing and seek your enlightenment and seek your sanctifying of our minds and our lives so that we may live as we should.

And we ask today also that you would bless those who are ill of our number. We think especially, Lord, of those who are seriously ill. We pray for them.

We ask that you would bless them as they contemplate the possibility of their life in this world coming to its end. Lord, we ask that they may know your comfort.

[ 10 : 51 ] All of those who are seriously ill, we pray that you'd bless our elder Duncan McLean at this time when he is low and Danny MacArthur, Lord, whose place in the congregation was never vacant when she was able to be present.

Bless her and Duncan and all others that we know at this time are ill and prevented by illness from being with us. Oh, Lord, any others who are bordering on eternity, we pray your blessing for them and ask that you would prepare them and help us to remember them.

I grant your blessing, we pray to those who serve you in different capacities in our locality, in our community, whether it be in medical care, in our care homes.

We pray for them at this time and in the hospital and in the health centers. Remember them, Lord, at this time, we pray. Remember those who need to deal with the bereaved, the undertaker, his staff.

We once again give thanks for them and we commit them to you and ask that you'd be gracious to them from day to day. We thank you for the service that they give and have long given in this community.

[12:01] We pray for the street pastors, oh Lord, as they go out on these evenings, especially at weekends. We pray for them, for their safety. We pray that you would make them to be a benefit to those that they meet in whatever condition they are in, oh Lord, as they meet them.

We pray that you would help them to bring support and help to them and a word of counsel where that is appropriate. And Lord, we commend them to you and ask that you would graciously bless their work in this community.

And now we ask your blessing to be with us as we seek an assistant minister. We pray for Reverend Smith. We pray for Calumurdo, oh Lord, at this time as he contemplates receiving a call from us as a congregation.

Bless him, Johan and the family, as they give their mind prayerfully to this. And bless the presbytery. Bless ourselves, Lord, as we anticipate signing that call shortly.

And may it be, we pray, that he will see his way to come and take up the role of being an assistant with us. And we ask, Lord, that you would guide us to and enable us to continue to pray over this matter until we know your own will about it.

[13:16] Hear us then now, we pray. Continue with us and bless us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Let's read the word of God now as we find that in two passages, two short passages.

Firstly, in Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 16. And then we're going to read from Hebrews chapter 13. And then after we've sung another psalm, we'll come back to another study in Philippians, in chapter 4.

So our readings are Romans 16 at verse 17. And then Hebrews 13 from verse 20.

Just the final part of the letter to the Romans and the letter to the Hebrews. I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught.

Avoid them. Amen. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. And by smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the hearts of an Eve.

[14:21] For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you. But I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you. So to Lucius and Jason and Sosipater and my kinsmen.

I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus greet you.

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith.

To the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ. Amen. And some verses in Hebrews, chapter 13 from verse 20, again the final part of that letter.

[15:37] Amen. Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.

Through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. I appeal to you brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings.

Grace be with all of you. Amen. And along with our passage in Philippians this evening, these two passages we've read speak about God as the God of peace.

And we'll see where that fits into our study this evening shortly. Before we do that, let's sing again to God's praise from Psalm 19. Psalm number 19.

[16:42] And that's in the Scottish Psalter, page 223. And our final two singings just now and at the end of the service will be from 19. First of all, verses 7 to 11.

The tune is Moravia. Moravia. God's law is perfect and converts the soul in sin that lies. God's testimony is most sure and makes the simple wise.

The statutes of the Lord are right and do rejoice the heart. The Lord's command is pure and doth light to the eyes impart. So singing these verses 7 to 11 of Psalm 19 to God's praise.

God's law is perfect and converts the soul in sin that lies. God's law is perfect and converts the soul in sin that lies.

God's testimony is most sure and makes the simple wise.

[17:57] God's law is perfect and ■■■■■■ that lies in God's eyes impart. God's law is perfect and puts the soul in sin that lies untapes. God's law is perfect and puts the soul in sin that lies in sin that lies in sin that lies in sin that lies in sin. The statutes of the Lord are right and do rejoice the heart.

The Lord's calm and is pure and doth light to the eyes impart.

Unscotted is the fear of God, and death enter forever.

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

They more than gold, yea, much fine gold, to be desired are.

[19:23] Than honey, honey from the comb that dropeth sweeter far.

Moreover, they thy servant warned, How he his life should bring.

A great reward provided is for them that keep the same.

Well, let's turn to Philippians chapter 4 this evening. And tonight we're looking at verses 8 to 9.

These two verses, there's quite a lot in them.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

[20:50] What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. Now these are obviously very closely connected to the passage we saw last time, from verse 4 down to verse 7.

And they're connected not just by the way in which they speak about God, the God of peace and the peace of God. But you can see that in each case, when we saw the peace of God last time, he has certain conditions that lead to that, that he mentions.

The conditions being to rejoice in the Lord and to let your reasonableness be known, but especially the way in which he emphasizes prayer, not to be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication.

With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, then follows the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

And you actually have a very similar arrangement in the verses that we're looking at tonight, because it speaks about the God of peace being with us. But leading to that, there are certain things that need to be in place in order for us to enjoy the God of peace being with us in order for that to be a reality in our own personal experience.

[22:19] And we'll see that that involves things that he mentions there, being thought about or thought through, being given as the mind to be set upon them.

And that that then leads to the God of peace, the promise the God of peace will be with you. And the two things that you find here especially are the mind that he mentions, or the minding of these things, and then the practice of holiness, where you find in verse 9, the beginning of verse 9, what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things.

So first of all, he's dealing with the purity of the mind that's required, the purity of mind that's required, as he mentions this, especially in verse 8.

And then he speaks about the practice of holiness as they were taught by the apostle, as they saw in the apostle's life, those things that he's commending to them.

And then the practice of holiness leads to the presence of God. So the purity of mind, the practice of holiness, and the presence of God, really that's the structure, if you like, that we're following this

evening, as the verses set out these topics for us.

[ 23 : 39 ] So the purity of mind required, notice what he's saying here, finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, and so on, think about these things, or think upon these things.

And he's giving us a list here, and the list is very important. The topics that he mentions in the list are very closely connected together, but each of them is important in its own right.

Let's just go through them very briefly. I'm not going to open them up too much. Whatever is true. In other words, he's dealing with that which counters what is false, what is untrue, what is hypocritical, what is not according to the truth of God.

So you could say that what is true, really, is a description of all reality, as it's described by God. Whether it's human beings, human life, the world and the creation, everything that is in existence, all the realities as they are, as they're described by God, are essentially true, in the sense in which God is saying, this is fact.

This is what I'm saying exists. But it's more than that. There's a moral tone, and it fits in with the rest of the passage as well. Whatever is true, whatever is the exact opposite of falsehood, of pretense, all of that comes into the definition of the word true as well.

[ 25 : 10 ] Whatever is according to the truth of God, as he has defined truth for us, then that and all realities as he describes, this is what he's saying, then whatever is honorable, whatever is honorable really means, whatever is worthy of respect.

And you know, you find still in our own lives, in the world, thankfully, that God has not completely taken away the sense of what is right and wrong from people's lives.

Even if they're not practicing Christians, thankfully, you still find, especially when we confront the more, the more gross teachings, the more gross philosophies that are set out for us, the lifestyles that you can see are debauched lifestyles, well, still, there are people who wouldn't say that they're Christians, but they say, well, I don't accept that.

I don't think that's how people should behave. That's a residue of the knowledge of God in the human heart. It's not itself enough to actually bring you to be saved, to have Christ in your life, but nevertheless, it's there, and the truth of God actually connects with that as we present the gospel. We're not presenting the gospel to a heart that you could say is a vacuum. We're presenting a heart that knows God already in that sense that we're aware of God, and in that respect, I'm not going to go into it tonight, but actually, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as an atheist out and out because deep in the human heart there is, as Romans 1 puts it, an acknowledgement of God and acknowledgement of God's existence and even His power and Godhood, and that's from the things that are created even without coming even to the Bible, and it says that people are therefore without excuse for setting up alternatives to God.

[ 27 : 06 ] We also have to remember that the Bible never anywhere sets out to prove the existence of God. Have you ever thought about why that is?

Why don't you find somewhere in the Bible that says, now here are steps, here are various points by which an argument is set out for the proof, as a proof of the existence of God because the Bible, as God's word, already acknowledges that the awareness of God lies in every human heart, and this truth of God in the Bible connects with that, whether it's in conscience or in your mental capacity, whatever it is, that's what it is.

So he's saying whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is worthy of respect, and then he says whatever is just. Well, you know that justice is more than just something that happens in a court of law.

Being just is a description of a life that shuns unrighteousness. Being just is really the same as being righteous, and being righteous means, and we'll see in a minute that this is really something, a whole of these points as they're strung together and connected by the apostle are actually addressed to people collectively.

They're not just here for us individually, though that is part of it. He is writing this to a church. He's writing this to the Philippian church. He's writing this to the people of God in Philippi together, together, and it's together that they have to give a mind to what is true.

[ 28 : 40 ] It's together that what they need to give attention to what is honorable. It's together that they need to consider what is just, and justice means that you take care of the Old Testament all the way through, for example, the role of kings in the Old Testament where shepherds over the people, and in a number of cases, you'll find that that's the term given to them.

Shepherds over the flock, that's why God placed them there, and part of their shepherding responsibility in dealing justly with people and exercising justice was to remember the likes of the poor, the downtrodden, the people who didn't have recourse to powerful lawyers, who didn't have the means in order to have those advantages.

The king was to treat them justly. They were not to be regarded as any less important than those who are high up in society. And so it's the same for ourselves.

You treat people justly. That means you treat them as they deserve to be treated in the sense of being human beings that need the kind of ministry to them that acknowledges that they're no better and we're no better than they are essentially as we are in ourselves.

So he's saying, whatever is just. And it's something that we try and present, of course, to the world around us, especially to those in authority and to those in government because they're required to exercise justice in their dealings with people, in their establishing of laws, that they be just laws, that they be fair, that they be equitas.

[ 30 : 25 ] All of that comes into whatever is just. And then he says, whatever is pure. Whatever is not defiled. And in order to know what is and isn't defiled, you're depending again on the Word of God as that is defined for you.

What is pure is what is like God himself. What is like the Lord Jesus Christ. What is like him as God describes purity. What is unlike sin. What is unlike the defilement, the ugliness of sin, the twistedness of sin.

Whatever is pure. And whatever is lovely. Whatever has the moral quality of beauty about it.

You begin to think about beauty when you think about God. Because that's where beauty begins.

The beauty of God's being. The beauty of his perfection.

The beauty of his holiness. The beauty of all that makes up his character, if you like. That makes up his name, as the Bible calls, the character of God.

[ 31 : 34 ] Whatever is lovely. Whatever is commendable. Whatever is commendable. It means whatever is, really literally, it means whatever is winsome.

Whatever attracts you. In a proper, moral, upright way. Now he says, all of these things. Whatever is true. Whatever is honorable.

Whatever is just. Whatever is pure. Whatever is lovely. Whatever is commendable. If there is any excellence, anything worthy of praise, think on those things.

As we said at the beginning, they really are not just separate parts of a lifestyle or of a character.

They are all individually important in their own right, but they come together to form this kind of character that we need to cultivate as human beings, as Christians, as people of God, so that that is what the world actually sees.

So it's actually all of these things together, and not any one of them in particular. You know when you look at a rainbow, that you find all the colors of the rainbow in the sky, but it forms one entity.

[ 32 : 48 ] You can't just say of any of the colors, well, I see that color and it's really distinctive. It's more important to me. It's better to look at than the others. All the colors together harmoniously blend into one magnificent rainbow.

And all the colors of these moral qualities blend together and harmonize into one magnificent godliness. That's what he's about.

He's talking about godliness. A word that's so largely absent from the vocabulary of our land. A word that actually seems to many people to be far outdated for use nowadays.

Godliness, being like Christ. Godliness, pursuing holiness of life. Godliness, being obedient to God through the teachings of the Bible. Godliness, setting out to be as like Christ as possible in this life.

That's what he's saying here with regard to these qualities as they blend together. And as we said at the beginning, they're addressed to this congregation of Christians in Philippi.

[ 33 : 55 ] So you see, tonight, all of these things as they're set out here, they're not just speaking to me in an isolated way from you. They're not just speaking to you as if you were isolated or separate from every other Christian or believer in this place.

They're addressed to us. They're addressed to us collectively. They're addressed to us congregationally. In other words, this is not something that you and I have to be as individuals.

This is something that required of us because we are the church of Christ in the world. We are a branch of the church. We are a congregation of the church of Christ. This is what he's saying just as it was with the Philippians.

These are plurals. Think. Think plural. You think, all of you collectively, he's saying, on these things. And of course, when he says, if there is any excellence, if there is any worthy of praise, think about these things.

He's not suggesting that the use of if there, not suggesting that there aren't things which are excellent, that there aren't any things which are worthy of praise. It's actually the other way about. [ 35 : 04 ] It's a way of saying, as indeed there are things worthy of praise and excellence. Go back to chapter 2, verse 1. You find the same kind of language used there.

So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any comfort from love, if there is any participation in the Spirit, if there is any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind.

It's exactly the same thing he's saying, that since there is indeed encouragement in Christ, and comfort from love, and participation in the Spirit, and affection and sympathy, well, complete my joy then.

seeing they are realities. And that's what he's saying here in chapter 4 as well, using exactly the same language. Seeing there is such thing as excellence, as defined by God.

Seeing there is such a thing of things that are worthy of praise, think about these things. That's the next point. There's the list. There's the existence of excellence and things worthy of praise.

[ 36 : 12 ] Now he's saying, think upon those things. Give your mind to those things. And this word that he uses here for think is not the word that Paul usually has for thinking, although it's very closely related.

And as you know, as we've seen many times, for Paul, the mind is so centrally important to human life, whether it's life without Christ, life in sin, life in darkness, or life in Christ, life following salvation. The mind is absolutely central to the person. And the word that he's using here means to calculate something, to actually give such thought to it as you need to reach a conclusion.

And in fact, he has the kind of language that's used there, the tense of the word, means that it's an ongoing habit that he's calling for. It's not something just now and again. It's not something you do to begin the Christian life with, and therefore you're like a wound up toy and then you're left to follow that through.

It's something that continues into your life every day. Give a mind to these things. Give a mind to these things. Give a mind to these things. Let your mind dwell on these things.

[ 37 : 27 ] It's an ongoing activity. The mind for the apostle is pretty much, you could say, the control room of the human life.

And whether he's thinking about those who live without Christ or otherwise, you can see that the mind is really the control room. In fact, sometimes the word mind and the use of it in the apostles' writings actually amount to the person themselves, the whole person being meant by that.

Let me just briefly remind you where that is in Ephesians chapter 4, for example. Ephesians 4 and from verse 17. Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

In Paul's day, the people who are without Christ, pagans, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, again the mind, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.

You see, the mind is controlling their lifestyle. Due to the hardness of heart, they have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

[ 38 : 45 ] But that is not the way you learned Christ. That's not the mind you have is what he's saying. Your mind is opposite. It's in the opposite direction to that, whatever it is you once were.

And of course, you have the same Romans 12, verse 2. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed. How are we going to be transformed so it will be the exact opposite of the way we were born, the exact opposite of being lost sinners, hostile to God?

How are we going to become the opposite of that? Well, through God's grace, through God's power. But what he's saying is addressing our responsibility. Don't be conformed to this world. Don't go on in your life being like the world around you, but be transformed.

How? By the renewing of your mind so that you may know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

You see, you're not going to accept and I'm not going to accept the will of God and what that requires of me if my mind is just as it has always been the mind of a fallen, dark sinner.

[ 39 : 55 ] That mind needs to be renewed. That mind needs to be made new. There needs to be a recreation at the very center of my being so that my mind then comes to face the opposite direction to the ways of sin and follows the ways of holiness, the ways of Christ-likeness, the ways of pleasing God, not running away from Him.

And you find the same in the Old Testament. Proverbs 4, verses 23 to 27. You remember how that goes where it says, keep your heart.

Really, same thing essentially as your mind. Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it flow the issues of life. That's what he's saying.

That's where the streams of your life actually come from. That's what feeds them. That's what dictates how they are and what direction they're in, what they're made of, what your behavior is like. Keep your heart with all diligence. Look after your mind. Make sure your mind is focused on the truth of God. Make sure you're thinking upon what is true, what is honorable, what is just, what is pure, what is lovely, what is commendable.

[ 41 : 15 ] Think upon these things. Calculate these things. You find the word used in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 19 where it speaks there about God, about Abraham and God's will for him.

Chapter 11 verse 19 where you find he, where he was offering up Isaac in obedience to God. He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead from which figuratively speaking he did receive him.

There's the word considered. Well, that's exactly the same word that Paul is using here for think, consider. Let your mind actually reach a conclusion by giving careful thought to these things. In other words, what he's really saying to us is that the mind shapes our character. What we're giving to the habit of thinking of our minds is really what results in our lifestyle, in our way of life. Why is it that, well, we've seen it in Ephesians there, but why is it that the world of our day is as it is? And I'm talking here about immorality and talking about the ways of sin and talking about people's resistance and arrogance against God and against the gospel and against his church.

[ 42 : 38 ] Why is it like that? Because the mind is behind it. And it's no accident at all if people habitually give their mind, whether they're young or old, and we mustn't think that this is just for young people, that this just applies to young people, what I'm going to say.

If you, whatever age you're at, if you're regularly watching violence on television or on computer games, if you're regularly taking in pornography, if you're looking at things which pour out filthy, debauched language, it's no accident that your life will end up just being like that. Because your mind controls and dictates how you live. And if your mind is still the mind of darkness, then your life will be in darkness.

And if your mind is set on ungodly things, you will live an ungodly life. And this is what he's saying to us as he said this to the Philippians, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever you find is like God, commended by God, think upon these things. Let your mind be fed, controlled by these things, and then it will control your manner of life. And I want to say that especially to the young people, because I know the challenges that young people are actually facing in this day and age.

[ 44 : 12 ] Because you young people are facing your own peer group, your own age group, and you'll find many of them, whether you're in school or at work or whatever, many of them will be hostile to your following of Jesus.

They'll be hostile to the character of Jesus, and they'll be trying to influence you as to the kind of lifestyle that you ought to live. Well, this is what God is saying to you.

Purity of mind leads to purity of character. The same goes in the opposite direction. Ungodliness of mind leads to ungodliness of character.

Watch your company. Watch who you associate with. Watch who want to make friends with you. Make sure that it is for the right reasons, and especially have friends who are Christians, have friends who love Jesus, have friends who are in love with holiness, with the things of God. Whatever is pure, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, think upon these things. And then the practice of holiness. He speaks about his own example, just in a word.

[ 45 : 33 ] What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things. And it's no different things to what he's been saying at the beginning of verse 8, because what they saw in the apostle was an example of the very things he was asking them to think upon.

And what a marvelous, exceptional teacher they had in the apostle Paul. All of the things that they learned from him, they received from him, they heard from him, and they had seen in him, they could actually follow that safely, because he was a man of God, a reliable character as to what God required and to what Jesus is like.

And that's what we need too. We need, as we place our trust in Christ, look at what Paul is really saying here. He's saying to the Philippians, what I said to you is what you saw in me.

What I was calling upon you in the gospel to be or to become is what you saw in myself. There's no hypocrisy here. There's no distinction between what Paul was setting out for them by way of lifestyle and what he followed himself.

There's no division between his recommendation or his preaching of these things to the Philippians and what he himself lived by. And that's how you and I must be as well.

[ 47 : 05 ] To actually be examples and at the same time to follow examples. We want to be an example to those who don't have much of a clue as to what Christianity is about, what holiness is about, what loving Jesus is about.

And we want to follow examples as well. We all have examples that we can follow. Just as the Philippians had the Apostle Paul. And I'm not going to put myself in the position that he put himself in by saying what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me.

To the extent that he could say, although I hope as we preach the gospel that that is by and large true of us. Because we want to be true to God in our own private life, in our public persona, everything that we're about.

God in life, God in God in God. But it's important especially that the examples you know in your own life and have no doubt about that they are godly people, godly men and women, young people or old people, practice these things.

Follow their example. Be with them. Learn from them. And that's how the Philippians were advised by the apostles.

[ 48 : 25 ] So the purity of mind required the practice of holiness as they saw the example of Paul himself and the presence of God. This is how he finishes. And the God of peace will be with you.

Now, as we saw previously many times, the titles that God gives to himself through the apostles or the prophets or whatever are important. Whatever name is given to God here, it's the God of peace. Well, it's telling you something important about God. And as the God of peace, he's the God who has created peace for sinners like you and I.

That's what the death of Jesus was about. And you know, peace in the Bible is not a soft sort of malloy thing like a chunk of ice cream.

It's not something that you can just manipulate, if you like, or work into different shapes. Peace in the way the Bible speaks about it is a thing of substance.

[ 49 : 30 ] There's a solidity about it. There's a beauty about it, but there's also a substance about it. Why is that? Why is the peace that's mentioned in the Bible, the different ways in which it's mentioned, especially the peace of God that has come to us in Christ, why does it have substance?

Because it flows directly from the death and the resurrection, the victory of Jesus. That's what gives it substance. It's not just any kind of peace.

It's peace with God. It's peace between individual human beings as God has created that for us and given us the privilege of sharing in that wonderful peace of God.

Remember when Jesus came in John chapter 20, came into the group of disciples that were gathered there, showed them his hands at his side, the marks of his crucifixion, the proof, if you like, of his death.

But here he was risen from the dead, having left death behind, having gained this magnificent indescribable victory over death, having risen out of death, out of the grave, having accomplished life for his people.

[ 50 : 40 ] What does he say? Peace be to you. You see what's happening? Here is the Son of God, the mediator, the Savior, fresh from his resurrection from the dead, fresh from his victory with sin and with death.

And he's saying to these people, I am here so that you can be absolutely persuaded that I have created peace for you. And it's not any kind of peace. It's peace that has put behind me the issues of death.

And therefore for you as my people, he's saying, it's peace that I bring you, the peace that has already overcome death. The peace that's far more than a cessation of war, though that's a valuable thing.

We pray for it. But the peace of God is the peace that establishes people or belongs to the establishing of people in a right relationship with God again.

The peace of God will be with you. Now we said that there's a connection, of course, with the previous part of the passage, where he's saying that the peace of God which passes understanding will guard your hearts and minds.

[ 51 : 58 ] Now he's saying the God of peace will be with you. And that's going a step further, isn't it? Because one thing to say the peace of God will be with you, he's now actually saying the God of peace himself will be with you.

Since the pandemic came in, one of the benefits that we have certainly if you're using KJs as it's known, or to the older ones, Kenny Froggans as your chemist, when you order a prescription, it goes to the health center, the health center passes that down to the chemist, and then there's a delivery, bring it to your house.

It's actually not like that with God. He has himself made up the prescription, and he has made up the very medicine that our soul requires, if I can put it that way, the medicine of peace, the medicine of salvation.

He has created that, but he doesn't send a messenger with it to bring it to your home or to your heart. He comes with it himself.

Think about it. The great God of heaven, the God against whom we have sinned, the God who has created peace for us in Jesus Christ.

[ 53 : 22 ] Here's the peace of God that passes all understanding that we have in Jesus Christ by what he has done. But here is Paul saying, the God of peace will be with you.

He comes himself with the peace that he's created, and he comes to live in your heart. And whenever he comes to live in your heart, he brings his peace with him. What a wonderful privilege to know God.

What a wonderful privilege to have peace with God. What a wonderful privilege and advantage to know the gospel of peace, presenting the God of peace and the peace of God to us.

Have you made your peace with God? Remember, that's required of you, as it's required of me. Yes, God has created the peace that's in Christ, the peace that belongs to his salvation.

That exists. He has brought it into being by Christ's death and resurrection from the dead. That's what's offered in the gospel. That's what God is saying in the gospel as it's preached and proclaimed.

[ 54 : 39 ] Here is my peace. Here is my peace for people like you and I. But he is saying, you need to come and accept these terms of peace.

You need to put your name to them. You need to have them for yourself. You need to make that peace your peace. And when you come to give yourself through God's grace to the Lord Jesus Christ, however and whenever that will be, then you have peace with God.

The peace that passes all understanding. Then you have the God of peace as your God. Whatever happens in your life, though sometimes that peace can become hidden from us, though sometimes we may focus far more on feelings than we ought to, feelings of peace, peace.

When God establishes his presence and peace in your heart, no power on earth or on hell can take that from you. The only way you can lose it is if God takes Jesus away from you.

And that will never happen. Whatever the world throws at you, it may disturb your peace outwardly. It may disturb your sense of assurance, but it can never take from you the Christ who is your peace and the peace of God in Jesus Christ.

[ 56 : 23 ] May he bless his word to us. Let's pray. We ask, O Lord, that once again you would bless your word to us. And we give thanks that you describe the gospel as the gospel of peace, that you describe yourself as the God of peace, that you describe the peace as one that passes all understanding.

And we thank you, Lord, that while we cannot fully comprehend all that is true of this peace or of this God, we give you thanks, Lord, for the reality of knowing it, the reality of knowing its benefits and the way that it comes to occupy our hearts.

Bless each of us here, we pray, with that peace of God. Lord, if we have not yet come to lay down our arms of rebellion against you, if our heart is still closed against you, if we have continued, even for many years, to close our hearts to the terms of your peace, open our minds and our hearts this evening, we pray, and give us in our minds to receive those glorious things of Christ.

Hear us, we pray, and accept our worship, pardoning all our sin for Jesus' sake. Amen. And we're singing again in conclusion in Psalm 19.

Singing from verse 12 through to the end of the psalm. Psalm 19, verse 12, the tune this time is St. Columba. Who can his errors understand, or cleanse thou me within from secret faults, thy servant keep from all presumptuous sin, and do not suffer them to have dominion over me, then righteous and innocent, I from much sin shall be.

[ 58 : 11 ] The words which from my mouth proceed, the thoughts sent from my heart, accept, O Lord, for thou my strength and my redeemer art. These three verses in conclusion.

Who can his errors understand, O cleanse thou me within, from secret faults, thy servant keep, from all presumptuous sin, and do not suffer them to have dominion over me, then righteous and innocent, I from much sin shall be.

The words which from my mouth proceed, and thoughts sent from my heart, accept, O Lord, for thou my strength, and my redeemer art.

God willing, I hope that by the next time we meet together, that it will be without the masks, and we'll be able to sing out as we would like, with all the volume that we would want to have.

Let's hope that that will in fact be the case over the next week or so. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more.

[ 60 : 50 ] Amen.