

2026 Q1 Christ in Philippians and Colossians

Lesson 7 Heavenly Citizenship

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6 NIV84.

Do you think Paul is serious? Is there an expectation that we are not to be anxious about anything?

Do you know the number one type of mental health problem in the world is anxiety disorders of some kind? And do you notice the messaging of this world is a constant bombardment of things to make us afraid, to increase fear. And do you notice there has been an attack on things that are protective and reduce fear—such as a belief in God, family, marriage, the message to young women that life will be better not to get married and not have children but to make your life a career focused life on getting more for self.

But anxiety, fear, is ever increasing.

Jesus said that in the last days,

- “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; **men’s hearts failing them from fear** and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Luke 21:25-26 NKJV.

Peter wrote,

- Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8 NIV84.

What does a lion’s roar do? It causes fear!

The messaging in this world today is designed to incite fear, and what does fear cause people to do? To focus on self, to become more survival-driven, to have greater sense of desperation to feel safe, to feel secure, and which leads to a willingness to compromise principles in order to feel safe, to give up liberties, to give in to the noise, the mob, the threats, the tantrums, just to have peace—or to turn violent and use force, use government and law to force people to comply so people can feel safe. But

they can never get peace, security, safety in these means—it will always fail—why? Because it is avoiding the cure to fear while fueling the cause of fear.

What is the cure for fear?

The Bible teaches that perfect love casts out fear—that there are two antagonistic principles warring for every heart and mind and those principles, those spirits, are God's Spirit of truth and love that leads to trust versus Satan's principle/spirit of fear and selfishness based upon lies; and the biggest lie that keeps people from trusting God, even if they believe in Him, is that God's law functions like human law and God is the source of pain and death inflicted for so called justice sake and therefore we need something done to God to protect us from Him. This legal lie keeps the spirit of fear alive and simultaneously causes people to either reject the belief in a god who they cannot trust and thus remain afraid of, or to seek to use law, law enforcement, might and power to do right because they falsely think God wins by law and law enforcement. And these two groups make up the King of the South—godlessness in all its forms and all the chaos those groups make and the King of the North—those who believe in God but the Roman god, the imperial god, the rule-making authoritarian who is the source of death that he inflicts for punishment and who must be paid by the blood of a human sacrifice not to kill us.

These two views dominate the entire world in one form or another—only a small remnant worship God as Creator, understand His laws are design laws, and that He is the source of life, and that death comes from sin which, if not removed, cuts us off from God and life resulting in death.

So, why do we humans experience anxiety and fear?

Because Adam and Eve broke trust with God and corrupted their spirit of love and trust with fear and selfishness; and we are all born with a spirit of fear that causes us to instinctual turn to self, to comfort self, protect self, to survive. And we live in fear of death, fear of rejection, abandonment, failure, guilt, wrong-doing and are running and hiding like Adam and Eve did making our own garments to cover ourselves, learning to wear our own masks when we go out in public, learning to make our own excuses, it was me it was my upbringing, my parents, the legalistic church school I was sent to, the poverty I grew up in, and we develop all kinds of coping skills to make ourselves feel better, like the legalistic religious rules or the denial of God altogether.

People are desperate to feel safe, to not feel anxious, and they spend their lives trying to find comfort for their souls, which without the Holy Spirit living within them, fails to heal and they remain constantly anxious and fearful deep inside, yet might find symptom relief through their coping strategy.

There is a difference between alertness, a startle, awareness, paying attention, and anxiety, fear, dread, worry. When you hear a loud noise and you startle and immediately perk up and begin paying attention to gather information, that is alertness, attention, focus, that is not the same as fear, worry, anxiety, dread.

Such alertness improves one's assimilation of objective evidence for healthy decision-making.

However, that system, called the salience network, which scans incoming sensory signals and automatically filters innocuous signals so we don't have to waste brainpower doing it and prioritizes important signals for us to pay attention to, gets hijacked in some people.

Normally, as sensory information comes into your brain if it isn't important much of it you are never aware of, like the pressure you back feels from the chair you are sitting in or the sound of the air conditioner fan blowing while I am talking, all of that is sending signals into your brain but you don't have to try and filter that out, your salience network does that for you. But if you smelled smoke like the building was on fire smoke your salience network wouldn't let you ignore it—that is important pay attention to that.

The salience network monitors both positive and negative signals and elevates them for your attention to take notice and decide what to do. For instance, if you were in a survival situation your salience network would prioritize seeing water or food sources and elevate that to your attention center for you to register it and use that information to get something positive.

Sometimes this network gets disrupted in a variety of ways and people can become hypervigilant toward things that are not actual threats. In other words, their salience network can send alarm signals over non-threatening things because of previous life experiences—a soldier who now has full syndrome terror at a loud noise, or people who have various phobias and panic at the site of a small non-poisonous spider etc. This is due to learned experiences, something has happened and they have associated the environmental signal with a threat and live in fear of that object or threat and react with extreme fear which prevents learning and reinforces the false response mode.

Modern psychiatry and medicine have created the term “anxiety disorders.” Such diagnoses as Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Social Phobia, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and others are differentiated by various criteria.

While this was done to assist psychiatrists and other mental health professionals in categorizing and differentiating the types of anxiety and, thereby, individualize treatment with the goal of better outcomes, the unforeseen result has been turning **symptoms** into **disorders**, and the **creation of disorders** has caused the beliefs of people to shift such that rather than seeking to resolve the **cause** of the **anxiety symptoms**, patients all too often pursue treatment of “disorders,” which means symptom relief. In other words, people with chronic anxiety come to believe their anxiety is no longer a symptom of a problem **but is the problem**. This has resulted in perpetuating chronic anxiety, obstructing healing, and creating a class of patients who become dependent upon pharmaceuticals or other ongoing “treatments” to manage symptoms rather than actions that would resolve the cause and restore a patient to wellness.

My view is that anxiety serves to our minds the same function as pain to our bodies. If someone experiences physical pain in the body—they do not think, “Oh, I have a pain disorder. All I need is

pain meds.” No, whenever a person experiences physical pain, they may take pain meds, but they also think, “What is wrong? What is the cause? And how can I resolve it?”

Physical pain functions to both alert us that something is wrong, often harmful, and simultaneously motivate us to act. The greater the pain, the more intense the motivation to act. Anxiety serves the exact same purpose; it alerts us that *something is wrong* and simultaneously motivates us to act, to address the cause, to remove or resolve what is wrong. And the greater the anxiety, the stronger we are motivated to do something to resolve it. Unfortunately, rather than seeking to address the cause, all too often people merely seek symptom relief.

Anxiety can come from many causes, sometimes physical, but often psychological, relational, or spiritual. Physical causes include things like hyperthyroidism or hypoxia (low blood oxygen, so it feels like one is suffocating) from any cause (lung disease, sleep apnea, drowning). Anxiety in these situations can be overwhelming to the point of panic, but such individuals do not have anxiety disorders; the anxiety is normal—it is the healthy response to drowning or suffocating, designed to alert the person to take immediate action to oxygenate. If a drowning person gets their head above water, the anxiety remits.

But sadly, because anxiety most often comes from non-physical causes, the most common response is to seek symptom relief rather than resolving the cause. People will turn to alcohol, drugs, relationships, animals (support dogs or cats), comfort food, distractions (gaming, TV, entertainment), pornography, religiosity, cutting, pharmaceuticals, Eastern meditation, money, power over others, attention-seeking, and many other forms of self-soothing, all intended to cause the anxiety feelings to go away but without actually identifying its source and resolving the cause.

The healthiest approach to anxiety is to realize it is *always* a symptom of something that is not right, designed to alert us and motivate us to address the source of the anxiety—anxiety is never the problem in and of itself! If we fail to recognize this and falsely believe that anxiety symptoms are a disorder in and of itself, then we formulate an identity upon this, solidify into our understanding that the symptom is a disorder, and we stop pursuing the cause while we focus on relieving the symptom, which allows the cause to fester and worsen. This would be like having a cavity and experiencing dental pain and concluding one has a pain disorder, getting on pain medications, but never filling the cavity. Yes, for a time one might feel better, but the cavity would slowly get worse and, eventually, as the tooth decays, the pain med stop working and, if infection sets in, overall health worsens.

This is the problem with much of modern psychiatry, the unintended consequence of turning symptoms into disorders; promoting the belief that the symptom is a disorder results in both patients and practitioners focusing on relieving symptoms rather than resolving the cause of the symptoms.

Recently, a veteran told me that his community of veterans has rejected the label Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and referred to their struggles as Post Traumatic Stress Injury. I couldn’t agree more! Trauma causes injuries to hearts and minds, wounds that, if unhealed, cause symptoms, which are alerting us that there are wounds in need of healing.

With this in mind, do you see fear as a tool used by God's enemy? Do you see how people can be manipulated by fear, by threats, and their need to feel safe?

Do you see this happening in society?

And people can defend against this by either using the methods of this world or the methods of God. The methods of the world are all the various comfort measures described earlier, but also through might and power, using force, violence, kill or be killed, if you kill the threat you feel safe, and law and law enforcement, lock up the threats, punish them, make the threats to your sense of safety illegal, so if someone is preaching the gospel and it cuts across your false religious or rebellious lifestyle and causes your fear to increase, then make the sharing of the gospel hate speech and imprison those who share it.

Or, we take God's cure, the only true solution to fear and anxiety, we get to know Jesus and surrender our life, the spirit of fear we inherited from Adam, and are reborn with new hearts and right spirits. We become partakers of the divine nature in reality, in our living temple, in heart and mind, it is no longer our old self living but Christ lives in us—His law, which is the law of love and truth, is written upon our hearts and minds and our internal and external operations change, we change from fear-driven survival and me-first oriented beings into love and trust and glory to God by loving others beings. This is the final generation before Christ comes,

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Revelation 12:11 NIV84.

They have internalized the blood of Jesus, which is a symbolic way of saying His life, for the life is in the blood (Leb 17:11). This means that they have been reborn and the old spirit of fear has been replaced with the spirit of love and trust based on truth, so they give the word of their testimony, which is the same word that Christ gave about God and reality, for Christ lives in them—they know that Jesus taught, if you have seen Jesus you have seen the Father, that God is the Creator, His laws are design laws, He is completely trustworthy and if you trust Him He will heal your heart, give you a new heart and right spirit and take your fear away. And then you will not live the fear driven survival life, seeking always to save self, but will trust God with your life. The power of the spirit of fear will be broken.

Read last paragraph,

- Most important, we need not place our hopes in earthly systems of government, which regularly disappoint us. As Christians, we are citizens of God's heavenly kingdom. And with that citizenship comes privileges, wonderful privileges. And responsibilities, too. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 52.

Do you find Christians today placing their hope in earthly governments?

I see it all the time, Christians seeking to make the world better through government, through this political party, politician, legislation or that one. There is no question that some human laws and policies are objectively more fair, healthier for people than others—and if we are ever in a position of governmental responsibility, like Daniel was, we would want to carry out those duties with integrity and advance policies, laws, procedures that are the healthiest we can do in this sinful world. But, what people fail to see is that no human government, no human law, policy, legislation can actually provide security, safety, and health—none can save from sin, none can take fear out of the heart and reconcile people to God—and without that what does it matter to gain the whole world but to lose one's soul.

Because there are human governments that are objectively more abusive and restrictive of human rights than others, many people fall into the trap of thinking that security can be found in fighting against the abusive governments, but as soon as Christians take up that cause, the cause of fighting against objective evil being done through human government, by using the means and methods of other human governments, they instead of advancing God's kingdom and actually warring against evil, are participating in it and promoting evil under the lie that they are promoting the kingdom of God.

We see this all through history—why did so called Christians go on the crusades? Satan always has his two sides warring back and forth to keep people anxious, angry, distressed, and upset to the point they are willing to embrace his worldly methods to seek justice and make things better. But we are not to wage war as the world does, our weapons are not worldly, they have divine power to demolish strongholds—we are to demolish every argument and pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:3-5).

When we join forces with the world to fight evil through human governments under the name of Christ or God, we are telling the world God's kingdom works like human kingdoms and perpetuating the lies about God.

Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world, if it were His followers would fight. Jesus' kingdom is not the kingdom of imposed law and law enforcement. All the governments of this world are Satan's!

But the sad truth is that Christianity has allowed the governmental systems of this world to infect Christianity and almost all Christianity, and much of the leadership in the SDA church, teach the lie that God's law functions like human law, a system of made up rules that require Him to use power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking. This lie causes them to teach that God is the source of death and that salvation is getting something done to God to pay for the crime so He won't use His power to torture and kill. And this leads them to collude with human governments when they believe the human law is a just law. Thus, Christians are perpetually split into different political camps fighting back and forth for this law or party or that, both arguing why their party is the righteous one—because they both focus on some human legislation, rule, policy that advances something they find right. They both are trapped in the lie that God's government functions like human government and we advance God's kingdom through human legislation. Jesus and the apostles never did this.

Functionally, the lie about God's law in Christianity has resulted in a powerless Christianity in which the believers claim belief in God while they simultaneously do not trust Him. What do I mean?

Those who hold to the lie that God must use His power in so called justice to kill the wicked, create all kinds of theological mechanics to protect them from God—they place their faith in the blood payment, the erasure of their sins from the books of heaven, a legal pardon granted upon the basis of claiming a substitute's death as their legal payment, a robe of righteousness to cover them so the Father cannot see their wickedness, an intercessor whose job it is to plead the Father for them—notice all of these ideas have a function and the function is to hide or protect the sinner from God, why? Because they don't trust the Father not to kill them if this isn't done. This theology is perverse, it is evil, it is not biblical, it is demonic, and it shuts the Holy Spirit out of the hearts of people who claim to believe in God.

The true gospel is the eternal good news about God, that God is Creator, and as Creator His laws are the laws that life is built upon and deviations from those laws takes one out of harmony with life and results in death unless remedied by God. And God loved us so much He sent His Son to both reveal the truth about Him so that we would be won back to trust, but also to destroy, eliminate, purge, the cause of death from humanity and replaced it with sinless perfection—Jesus purged the spirit of fear and selfishness and replaced it with the spirit of sinless love and trust and thus saved the species, became the second Adam the new head of our species and offers to save every individual who will return to trust and open their heart to Him and His Father and thereby receive His life, His Spirit which transforms and heals them setting them right with God again, right in reality, in heart, mind, attitude, and character.

Then we walk boldly into the throne of grace and pray as David did, “Father, search me and see the wicked way in me. I no longer want to hide my sinfulness from you. I no longer believe the lie that if you saw how sick I am you would get agitated, lose control, and lash out in wrath against me. I know the truth that you love me and are angry at the sin in me, not at me, and that you want to purify me from sin, to take away my sin and heal me—just like a doctor wants to kill cancer in a patient, to save, not kill, the patient. So, like David prayed Father, search me and find every wicked way, every sinful trait, every rebellious thought, every cause of guilt, shame, fear, distrust and create in me a clean heart and renew your right spirit within me. Father I trust you, I place my life in your hands, Heal me Father so I can come home to you and dwell in your house forever!”

SUNDAY

Read Philippians 3:20-21:

- But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Philippians 3:20-21 NIV84.

Where is your citizenship?

Do you identify yourself as an American, Canadian, Australian, South African, or as some other nationality?

I was raised to be a proud American—to wave the flag, to celebrate Independence Day, and to revel in the storied history of my nation. As an adult, I received a scholarship to medical school from the U.S. Army, completed my psychiatric residency at Eisenhower Army Medical Center, and served as the Division Psychiatrist for the 3rd Infantry Division. So, I know about patriotism, love for my country, and identifying as an American.

Is it right to have such national patriotism? Could such love for country actually interfere with God's healing of our hearts?

Can we be a citizen of a nation state and a citizen of heaven? I am not talking legally, I am talking functionally, in our love and loyalty and devotion?

Can we give the same heart love, loyalty, devotion, prioritization, sacrifice to a nation state as we do to God's kingdom? Do the responsibilities and connections we have to our nation states ever conflict and compete with our loyalty to God's kingdom?

Could national loyalties cause human division and even obstruct the unity that Christ came to bring?

Can we be dual citizens of heaven and earth? Can we be a selfless citizen of heaven and a selfish citizen of this world at the same time?

What did Jesus mean when He said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

What are the requirements to be a citizen of heaven? Do people become citizens of heaven in a similar way they become citizens of earthly nations? Is it by legal claims, pledges, proclamations or something else?

To become a citizen of any nation of this world, one has to meet the legal requirements of that nation. One does not need to have a sincere change of heart; one doesn't even have to love that nation. A person becomes a citizen in this world typically by passing a knowledge test, claim the privilege by declaring one's desire to be a citizen, perform a ritual (such as holding up a hand), make a public pledge of loyalty, and, finally, receive a legal declaration, such as a certificate or some other document.

Sadly, many people think that becoming a citizen of God's kingdom follows the same pattern—pass a test (know the correct creed/list of doctrines), claim the privilege (accept the legal blood payment of Jesus), perform a ritual (be baptized in water), make a public pledge of loyalty, and then be legally declared a citizen of heaven (often represented to the convert in the form of a certificate of baptism by a church).

But becoming a citizen of heaven is not achieved by learning enough Bible facts, by making a legal claim, by performing rituals, or even by publicly pledging loyalty. Becoming a citizen of heaven is not a legal process—but a transformational one.

To be a citizen of heaven, one must experience a recreation of the heart and a healing of the mind—a rebirth, a renewal of the whole being. It is a cleansing from fear and selfishness and a writing of the law of God into the heart (Hebrews 8:10).

God's laws are not like man's law, a list of rules to which we must obey. God's laws are the protocols upon which reality is designed to operate. If we violate those laws, the natural result, without God intervening to heal, is death.

When God says that He will write His law on our hearts and minds, He is saying, “I will heal you from all the damage of sin and restore you to my perfect design. I will restore your hearts and minds to love, truth, and liberty. You will function within my design parameters for life, not because you are afraid, but because you love others and are in agreement and in perfect harmony with me. You will become like me in character, methods, and motive.”

This is how we become citizens of heaven: by being united with God in mind and heart, thus becoming a member of His family. We are adopted into His family—not in a legal way, but in a functional way. In trust, we open our hearts to Him and receive His Spirit and then WE adopt His law of love into our hearts, WE adopt His methods, motives, desires, and ultimately as we choose to do this daily WE adopt His character as it is formed within us. In short, we become partakers of the divine nature! When this happens, the things of this earth lose their appeal. The methods of this world become offensive. The kingdoms of earth will be seen as beastly, coercive, corrupt—and we will distance ourselves from them.

We no longer get tricked into trying to promote God's kingdom through earthly governments but rather we live under a higher authority than any earthly government. We see all human beings as children of God, and we seek to bring to every person the truth about Him.

TUESDAY

Read third paragraph,

- The antidote to anxiety in everything, including every situation, is sending up a prayer of faith (Phil. 4:6, 7). Clearly, we are to believe and act on our prayer as having been answered even before we see its realization, because we are to pray “with thanksgiving.” Also added is the word “supplication” (Greek: *deēsis*), signaling times of extremity and urgency (see, for example, Luke 1:13, Phil. 1:19, 1 Tim. 5:5, James 5:16). Our prayers are still “requests,” but we can know our petitions have been received as long as we ask “according to His will” (1 John 5:14, NKJV). Then we can rest and have peace, knowing that all our requests are in

God's hands. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 54.

What do you think of the first sentence, "The antidote to anxiety in everything, including every situation, is sending up a prayer of faith (Phil. 4:6, 7)"?

I think this is intended to be encouraging, helpful, but is based on an assumptions that are not necessarily true, and therefore the way this is stated could be discouraging for some people. As we already reviewed anxiety is a symptom alerting us something is wrong, until we know what the cause of the anxiety it, it is difficult to determine the best solution.

If a person is having anxiety because they have hyperthyroidism, and anxiety is a common symptom of hyperthyroidism, will sending up a pray of faith resolve that? Now certainly we believe God has the power to perform a healing miracle on a person having anxiety from hyperthyroidism, but are we suggesting the best treatment for that is to pray to God and wait for a healing miracle?

But if the lesson means, that sending up a pray of faith, is asking God for wisdom that would lead them to recognize they need to see the doctor, and they follow that prompting from the Holy Spirit and go to their doctor, get accurately diagnosed and treated and then the anxiety resolves, then okay, I would agree.

Another example, if one is anxious because they have a final exam coming up and they have not read the assignment, not done their homework, and have instead used their time to play video games, and as the exam is getting closer they are experiencing more anxiety, will the pray of faith resolve their anxiety? If they mean by the prayer of faith in this situation, praying to God to enlighten their mind, lead them to understand what the symptom of anxiety is coming from, and then they realize that they have not been preparing, and they go and do their homework, prepare, master the material, and experience resolution of anxiety, then again, I would agree with the lesson, but I am not sure it was meant in that exact way.

The sentence could easily suggest that when one is anxious, one does not reason, think, search for the cause, but pray to feel better, to take the anxiety away, and that would be a fatal mistake. The prayer of faith is the prayer to know the truth, and then to trust God with that which is not ours, but to fulfill the duties and responsibilities that are ours.

I have many Christian patients who have been struggling with anxiety and have been praying the prayer of faith to have God take away their anxiety and it doesn't go away and they get discouraged, doubt their faith, wonder if God doesn't care, some give up on Him because of this. But the problem is that they are praying for symptom relief without actually addressing the cause of the symptom. They are not seeking truth, they are seeking to feel better and they are seeking to feel better from the warning system God has put in place to alert them that something is wrong. It would be like touching a hot stove, feeling pain, and then praying God would take your pain away while your hand remains on the stove. But God is the God of reality, not fantasy, and He loves us too much to collude with self-destruction by removing symptoms that, if tracked, would lead us to the cause of the problem.

Read the last paragraph,

- God's peace is something the world can never give, because God's peace comes from the assurance that we have the gift of eternal life through Jesus our Savior (Rom. 5:1, Rom. 6:23). This peace impacts every aspect of life and "surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7, NKJV). It cannot be grasped by the mind alone, as the Greek word *nous* (minds) used here indicates. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2026, Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*, p. 54.

What is this peace that God offers?

The lesson references Romans 5:1:

- Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. Romans 5:1 NIV84.

What is this peace God offers and how do we get it?

The lesson states "God's peace comes from the assurance that we have the gift of eternal life through Jesus our Savior."

Would you have peace if you knew you had eternal life with God but God is the kind of person Satan says He is? Is the peace coming from the assurance of eternal life or something else?

In fact, is the assurance of salvation what causes the peace, or is the peace we experience the cause of our salvation?

The lesson is suggesting that if we have assurance of salvation then we will have peace with God.

But Jesus said,

- Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Matthew 7:22-23 NIV84.

I am taking the position that these people are protesting to Jesus because they believe they have salvation, they believe their salvation was assured. These are the foolish virgins in the parable of the Ten Virgins in Mt 25, who have their lamps, their Bibles, they are members of the church, and they are crying out to be let in because they believe they are members of His church, that they have salvation, but Jesus says He doesn't know them.

Is it possible a person could experience an **internal, emotional**, sense of peace, believe that they have peace with God because they believe they have salvation, but in fact they do not?

I think this occurs from the false penal legal theologies that teach people they have assurance of salvation by claiming Jesus as their legal substitute and His blood as their legal penalty and going through the ceremony of baptism, then they claim they are saved—that they have assurance of salvation—but many are not actually saved, why? Because salvation is not legal, it is actual, salvation requires the rebirth experience that Jesus told Nicodemus, that we must surrender the life of fear and selfishness and be reborn with the life of Christ so that it is no longer our old fearful selves living but Christ lives in us.

Thus we are first reconciled to Christ through faith/trust, are reborn with the indwelling Spirit and become partakers of the divine nature, we know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent and this recreation, renewal, transforming experience within causes us to in reality to be reconciled or at peace with God and that is the cause of or salvation. And the assurance is not in a legal mechanic, a payment, an adjustment in a record book, no our assurance of salvation which brings us peace is the assurance we have in our heart and mind that God is NOT LIKE Satan says He is. We have, through our knowing God intimately for ourselves, the assurance that God is for us, the Father is on our side, and we trust the Father to save and heal us, and no longer live in fear of what the Father will do to us.

With this in mind can we harmonize what Jesus said here:

- “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” Matthew 10:34–39 NIV84.

What does this mean? How is it Jesus offers us peace but then says He did not come to bring peace but a sword?

What is the sword Jesus brings?

- For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 NIV84.

This is the sword of the Spirit, which is the sword of truth and love. And where does it do its cutting? The dividing of soul and spirit—consider that.

The soul is our individuality, the Greek is *psyche* from where we get psychiatry and psychology. It is analogous to a computer's software. And spirit comes from the Greek *pneuma* from where we get pneumonia or pneumatic, and means wind or breath as in the breath of life.

This is describing that Jesus came to cut our identity, our individuality, our personhood, our self, our souls free from the spirit of fear and selfishness, and connect us to Him, the vine, we are the branches, through faith to receive a new life, a new spirit, the Spirit of love and trust.

What Jesus is describing about not bringing peace but a sword is that when we come into this world we are naturally animated, motivated, living driving by the spirit of fear and we naturally seek to make attachments to our hearts that make us feel safe, secure, comfort us. Sometimes those attachments are to people. Infancy and early childhood this is by design and is healthy. But godly parents, who in that early phase of childhood, stand in the place of God, are supposed to lead their children to transition their attachments from the parents to God Himself. Unfortunately, many parents are not themselves converted, they live in fear, and they teach their children to live in fear, and create unhealthy human attachments that interfere with the heart surrendering to God and being reborn with His Spirit. In other words, they love other people more, derive more comfort from what certain people think, cannot tolerate the thought of losing those people from their lives so choose loyalty to those people rather than loyalty to Jesus.

Jesus is saying that they cannot be healed from the spirit of fear in this way, it only gets worse. The only way to be healed from the spirit of fear is to trust Him and receive His life, His Spirit and be reborn by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

So, I paraphrased Matthew 10:34-39 this way:

- "Don't think that I have come to make peace with a selfish world. I have not come to bring peace with selfishness, but a sword to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. I have come to cut dysfunctional family ties: to free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, to sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, to cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law. A person's worst enemies are often members of their own family. Those who love parental approval more than they love me are untrustworthy of me and the Remedy I bring; and those who love the approval of their children more than me are untrustworthy of me and the Remedy I bring. Anyone who refuses to die to selfishness and follow me — loving others more than self — cannot be trusted by me to distribute the Remedy I bring. Whoever seeks to save self remains infected with selfishness and will die of their unhealed condition, but whoever surrenders self in love to me will experience healing of heart, and will find eternal life. Matthew 10:34-39
REM.

WEDNESDAY

Read Philippians 4:8-9:

- Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8-9 NIV84.

Is this important? Why? Is Paul telling us God has a list of approved materials and if we don't think about what is on the approved list then we break the law, get a crime registered into our heavenly record and unless we claim the blood payment of Jesus to pay for that crime we will have to be punished for it—minimum punishment of course is death?

Is God saying there is a list of material that is okay for the rest of the week, but the Sabbath list of materials to think about is different? If you think about a football game on Sunday is that okay, but if you think about it on Sabbath you have sinned?

Is there a list, or is Paul telling us this because of a design law, because of reality, because of how things actually work?

- And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV84
- They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. Jeremiah 2:5 NIV84.

Romans 1 Paul describes how they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and their minds became darkened, depraved, and futile.

This is the design law of worship—we become like what we admire, worship, watch, spend time reading, embracing, internalizing.

What we prefer becomes embedded into the substructure of our neurons, our brains change, the harmonic frequency changes, and the more vile, disgusting, selfish, fearful we internalize the more of the vile we resonate, align, and are in harmony with—meaning the easier and quicker we respond to temptation. However, if we internalize the truth and love of God it also gets embedded into the substructures of our neurons and our brains change, the harmonic frequencies come into ever closer alignment with God, the Holy Spirit, holy angels, and holy people and we are more sensitive to the leading of God and more repulsed by the evil in this world.

We are actually changed in this process.

THURSDAY

Read Philippians 4:11-13:

- I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:11-13 NIV84

What is contentment and what is the key to having it?

Contentment is being at peace with one's situation, station, circumstances—what is the key to this?

Trust in God—do we trust that He is good? Do we trust Him? And then do we trust that He has a plan, He is overseeing, He is directing, He sees and takes into account all the variables and that He wants better for us than we want for ourselves?

What do you think of this quotation from the book *The Desire of Ages*? Do you believe it? If we live this would it give us contentment?

- God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor. *The Desire of Ages* p. 224.

I have found this quotation very comforting at times when I was struggling with an unknown future—do I really trust God with how it will turn out.

One of my difficulties was a subtle trap that doesn't cause distrust of God, but focuses on what others in the situation might do. Okay, I trust God, but I don't trust this coworker, pastor, boss, neighbor because I have evidence they are not trustworthy, in fact they have declared their against me. And then I am tempted to divert my focus away from trusting God to what will they do.

What I have found helpful is that it doesn't matter what they do if I trust God, then He has already foreseen it and has a plan to bring good out of the evil others intend. That is easy to say but has not always been easy to do, but it was necessary to do in order to find ever increasing peace, contentment, and strengthening faith.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The God of Reality: Separating Truth from Fiction Seminar: August 13-16 2026 Orlando, Florida—More information coming soon.

REMEDY APP: Updated, many new features including the ability to listen to the audio right from the app!

AFRICA: Our first shipment of resources has arrived in Kenya, *Could It Be This Simple?* Wycliffe has been passionately sharing this end-time message about God with great success and Jacques van den Heever, our Come and Reason Ministries Director in South Africa has been able to produce and get him these resources. It is through the support of you our friends that he has been able to do this. If you are in Kenya or know someone there who would like this book email kenya@comeandreason.com Also Jacques has been translating many of our materials into Afrikaans for some time, but has now just provided our first blog translated into Swahili. More will be coming. If you want to access any of our ministry website and click the languages tab.