

Sermon Notes

(A basic transcription with modifications for style and clarity)

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT “BURNOUT”?

Cliffton Veal, August 27, 2016

Does any of the following sound familiar to you? Let me just go through a few scenarios here. “Boy, I am tired.” “I seem to be spending more and more time daydreaming. I’m not getting any work done.” “I get these outbursts of emotion -- impatience, sarcasm – that’s not me.” “I’m not really happy with my job anymore. I can’t seem to get along with anybody either -- colleagues at work, friends.” “I don’t understand why I am so forgetful lately.” “I feel inadequate, I feel unappreciated.” “I don’t have any enthusiasm.” “My health seems to be going downhill, I don’t really care what I look like anymore.” “I feel so unmotivated – even to study the Bible – and I know I should and it makes me feel guilty.” “Well, at services I am still able to put on a good face, but, if I’m honest with myself, when I’m home alone the enthusiasm, the joy, the spark is gone.”

Does any of this sound familiar? I hope not, but I dare say, with some of us, that may be the case. Now, I am not asking for a showing of hands – but I suspect that if I did a few (and maybe more than a few) might go up.

These are all symptoms of what is commonly known as “burnout”. Have you ever been burned out? Burnout: *“an emotional and physical exhaustion resulting from a combination of exposure to environmental and internal stressors and inadequate coping and adaptive skills. In addition to signs of exhaustion, the person with burnout exhibits an increasingly negative attitude toward his or her job, low self-esteem, and personal devaluation.”* (That was from an online medical dictionary.)

You know, brethren, if Satan can bring us to the point that we are just worn out, burned out, exhausted, discouraged, depressed so that we just don’t want to go forward ... he has won! He’s won!

We live in a hectic, frenetic, fast-paced, never-stop-for-a-moment kind of a world. Have you ever said, “Stop the world, I want to get off!” I’ve said that many times. Sometimes we push ourselves, though. We make ourselves go ... and sometimes we

just can't push anymore. We reach a stage referred to as mental exhaustion or burnout. We can become discouraged, depressed, apathetic.

"Apathetic", that's an interesting word. It comes from the word *pathos* which means emotion and compassion and you add the "a" on the beginning and it takes all that away. No emotion – I don't care anymore. I just don't care.

We have spent years (most of us here in this room and those listening) have spent years in God's Church. We have heard about, talked about, thought about, prayed about God's Kingdom and the things of God for a long, long time. It can get to the point though, that the Kingdom of God is not that shining, utopian goal to which we are marching. It can come to the point that we lose some of the enthusiasm that we once had for going God's way; the enthusiasm that God certainly wants us to have.

As I said, Satan wants us to become complacent, lethargic or even apathetic to life itself and especially to our own spiritual well-being. That's his goal. We must remember that Satan is a master tactician. Here's a quote:

"To fight and conquer in all your battles is not the supreme excellence; the supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemies' resistance without fighting." That quote was from Sun Tzu's book, *The Art of War*.

That's what Satan wants to do with us – sap us of all of our *pathos*, of all of our compassion, of all of our desire to go God's way. Satan hates the way of God. And he will do anything to stop us – we who have been called out, out of the world away from Satan, to go God's way. He wants to stop that.

I am speaking of a spiritual and also a physical problem when I speak of being burned out; when I speak of being apathetic, lethargic. It has both components, or certainly can have (with us it would have). Once again, did you recognize any of those symptoms that I mentioned: outbursts of uncharacteristic emotion, dissatisfaction with your job, forgetfulness (well, with some of us it may be more to do with age than anything else), feelings of inadequacy, difficulty in motivating ourselves. Once again, I hope that none of us suffer from this. But I think if we're realistic, brethren, probably some do.

Now, in all aspects of our life – our health, our moods, our relationships with others and, most importantly, our relationship with God can be very negatively affected because of these problems; because of the apathy, the depression, the discouragement, the burnout that we can sometimes go through. Very negatively affected.

I think it's very interesting when we think about what we have been teaching, learning and talking about for the last couple of years – refreshing and restoring a relationship with God the Father, a relationship with Jesus Christ. These are very positive things, but that's something that Satan hates. He will try anything to stop that.

Let's talk a bit about the cause of this burnout/apathy/lethargy that I'm talking about. Burnout is a type of stress that happens (interestingly enough) with committed people, with intelligent people. But demands on our time, demands on our mental resources (sometimes very unrealistic demands), cause us to eventually neglect...and I think most of you know what I'm talking about. We will begin to neglect personal, emotional, physical and most importantly, spiritual needs. We'll just stop doing things that we should be doing.

When we become burned out spiritually, generally speaking, we have, for a number of reasons, simply lost sight of what God is offering us; what God wants for us, what God has set before us. We've lost sight of it. We have, in essence, allowed the cares of the world to overwhelm us. And isn't that easy to do in today's world? Unfortunately, it is very easy to do.

On the spiritual level, an important way to counteract burnout is to refocus on God's goals for us. Refocus on what God is offering us, what He wants to do for us. We need to put ourselves back in the perspective of God's plan for mankind because it is a tremendous thing. But we can lose sight of that and sometimes we do. I'll come back to that in a bit.

Just on the physical side; some information that I've gleaned. On the physical side if the causes are physical (they are rarely only physical) -- but if they are physical, what can you do about that; about burnout? Well, if your job is the problem, get the job in perspective. I remember I took a class at Ambassador College and this particular professor said, "Know your own limitations. Know what you can do, know what you can't do." That's a good bit of advice. Sometimes we maybe expect more than we can actually do. Sometimes we expect much less than we can actually do and then that can cause problems.

We need to realize, on a physical level, that our job (whatever that may be) does not provide all of our physical and emotional needs. Some people have jobs that do, but most of us, frankly, don't. I mean I do, thankfully. But not everyone does. Realize that it's not all going to come from your job.

We need to broaden our horizons. If our work is not giving us satisfaction, maybe we need to find a hobby or something outside of our work that can give a bit of satisfaction in life where we can be successful.

Maybe we need to get organized. Procrastination and disarray can accentuate burnout; can accentuate apathy. Procrastination and disarray -- they sort of feed on one another, don't they? Have you ever gone into a room "well, I really need to sort of clean this up. But oh, I just can't face it"? So, then you procrastinate and you let it go and then the next time you come back it's even worse and they do sort of feed off one another.

Maybe we need some time away. Maybe we need some vacation, or holiday as the Brits say.

Exercise and nutrition are very important. I'm not going to expound on every single one of these. Just a few things to give you an idea of some of the things that can be done on a physical level. Then we'll talk about the spiritual level. But exercise and good nutrition are extremely important. And that, frankly, is one thing that we forget when we're in this hectic lifestyle that we have. Sometimes we forget that. And we grab a quick something here and a quick something there. And after a while we're not very healthy anymore because we haven't taken the time (and it all takes time).

However, even on a physical level we can look toward the positive. There are many, many, many websites out there that talk about having a positive attitude and how that can help you. We, of all people on the face of the earth, have the reasons to be positive and we'll talk about that. Of course we, in God's Church, know that when we come to talking about these very real problems that we are afflicted with on a spiritual plane, we know that we are to go to God for help. We know that. We've been around for a while. Let's look at Psalm 55, verse 22.

Psalm 55: 22 Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

It doesn't say He will never permit the righteous to be tested, as we heard very clearly in the sermonette. But that is for our good. That is a very good thing for us, though it can be very painful as we're going through it. "Cast your burden on the Lord." That sounds good doesn't it? But sometimes we just don't do it. Sometimes we simply do not do that!

We get wrapped up in ourselves. We turn inward. We forget some very basic principles. We can even temporarily forget about – or at least push to a back burner – God's plan, our part in it; what God wants for us, God's way of life. Can you get so busy you forget that? Yes, you can.

We begin to worry... and lo and behold, in our worrying, so often, we leave God out of the picture. Because the more we concentrate on ourselves – another way of saying that is "the more we look to ourselves" – the more we begin to believe that WE have to fix everything! "I've got to do that." We almost take God's place at times! "He's not going to fix, it so I have to fix it." I know usually we would not consciously think that, but in effect that's what happens.

Here's a quote from Corrie Ten Boom "*Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength.*" And don't we know that's true. She and her family supported and hid many Jews in Holland during World War II. She's written many books about those situations and motivational things, inspirational things. I

thought that was apropos. We worry and worry and worry and that can empty today of its strength.

Galatians chapter 6, verse 9.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Satan wants us to lose heart.)

9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season...

That's a bit uncomfortable. What does that mean? Because we want whatever it is that's bothering us or hurting us or causing us pain -- we want it to go away immediately. "In due season" can mean weeks, or months, years. It's up to God. He knows and we don't. But "in due season",

...we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

If we lose heart, if we give up, if we quit -- once again Satan has won! But again: burnout, discouragement, apathy, lethargy -- these things happen to us; we who are trying to follow God. We can't ignore that. But we are not helpless in the face of these things. We are not helpless.

Today I would like to talk to you primarily about two points to consider if you are in this kind of a state or slipping into that kind of a state; or you've been there for a while or you know someone who is.

First of all, we must get God's plan, God's purpose for us, back firmly in our minds because if we're in this state of complete discouragement and depression and lethargy and apathy we've probably forgotten that. So we need to bring that back to the forefront. We need to have that, once again, clearly in our minds.

And secondly we need to practice encouraging and supporting one another. We'll talk about that just a little bit later as well. In other words, we need to look after ourselves and we need to look after others. It's a very brief way of putting it.

Burnout is a "good person's" problem. Evil people don't often get burned out. I don't know, maybe they have a power from other sources. Good people get burned out; people who are diligent, people who are hardworking, people who are loyal, people who approach their jobs with a deep sense of commitment. These are the kinds of people (us) who burn out. Satan knows how to get at us. There is a verse in Daniel 7; there's just a little piece in there that says:

Daniel 7:10 "...shall wear out the saints of the Most High..."

That's what we're talking about: being worn out, being absolutely worn out and that's what Satan would like to see. Now Daniel was referring here to one of the beast powers, but I think it applies to us.

Quite frankly, knowing that we are not alone -- that others are sharing our burdens, appreciating what we are going through, there to help us; that our efforts haven't been in vain. You may remember one of the symptoms was, "Well, I just feel like I'm not accomplishing anything. I don't like my job anymore. What good does it do for me to keep going?" Well, that's where we need support and that's where we can help one another. Sometimes that kind of support can help keep us from burning out in very stressful times.

Now, let me just open a parenthesis here for a moment. I'd like to speak about a factor that can, has, possibly could still, easily contribute to becoming burned out spiritually: that is the turbulence in God's Church over the last several years. I don't have to give you a big dissertation on that. You've lived through it. We are living through it.

We have said many times, especially in the last couple of years, that God simply cannot be pleased with what He sees. The fractioning; here's a group and there's a group and there are groups everywhere and here we are scattered all over. Division, brother against brother at times. Doctrinal diversity among those of us who ostensibly, fundamentally, believe "the same things". Families have split up, Church-wise. I have three grown children; all three in a different Church group. But, you know, I fully believe -- I'm convinced -- they are all converted. They know what they need to be doing. But when we're together and Sabbath comes -- there, there and there. I never thought that would happen, but it has. And things along that line and much worse have happened to many of you, too.

There has been turbulence, there has been break-up, there has been loss of friends. And that's no small thing, especially for younger people. But it's no small thing for us older folks, either. If we had a Church area that we were in and now we're somewhere else and the thirty friends we thought we had in that area won't speak to us anymore -- that's no fun. But I think, especially among the young people it's been very, very difficult. It takes its toll.

How many young people in the spotlight of whatever Church group they are in, or on the fringes of whatever Church group they are on the fringes of -- how many have said to themselves and said to others, "Well, just let the old folks fight it out among themselves. I really want no part of their inter-Nicene battles". Are we at fault? Well, certainly! I don't stand here and say, "Well, I didn't do anything."

But we do need to be very, very careful. We need to make sure we're looking at godly principles and not at people and personalities. I realize that is, certainly, a factor and many times a major factor. But what are God's principles?

How many people, some friends and relatives of ours, have just chosen to "sit this one out". They've retreated to the safety of their own homes and their own computers,

and if you don't like the sermon you can just click it right off. How many people have done that?

Many people in society in general have given up on main stream religion and I think many people who spent years in God's Church have given up on God's Church. In reality what they've given up on, what they didn't like and what was so glaringly wrong were things that people did. People, not God. God didn't do anything wrong. God wants to teach us His principles. God wants us to go His way. But sometimes, we throw the baby out with the bath water. Sometimes we can't distinguish between the two and some have simply become burned out on religion, whereas God's religion is not something to be burned out on.

Be burned out, if you will, on the conduct of some people that were purporting to promulgate that religion. It wasn't God's fault. We need to be careful that we don't confuse those two situations. But it has happened and many have become burned out on religion, burned out on the Church and that may include many who still attend -- whose heart, though, is simply no longer in it. Do you know some like that? I do.

Is giving up the answer? Is quitting the answer? Well, I think all of us would say no. Why is it not the answer? Because God doesn't want us to. Let's get God's perspective on this. What is God's approach to us? What does He want to do with us? Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 10.

Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

In other words, He's very happy if we continue doing that, certainly. And He doesn't forget that and He doesn't not see that, even if we sometimes think that He does. He knows exactly what's going on in our lives. The point is that God does not forget us. Even if we fall into a slump, even if we lose sight of what we should be doing, He does not give up on us. Even if we lose enthusiasm, even if we become apathetic, He doesn't give up on us. We are the only ones that can ultimately give up and we don't have to do that because God does not give up on us!! Hebrews 13:5, a scripture we all know quite well:

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never (never) leave you nor forsake you." (That's God's perspective. That's His approach to us.)

But, as I said before, one of the chief causes of burnout is the fact that we as human beings, with the hectic lives that we lead or the turbulent or painful lives that we live; that we've simply gotten our eyes off the goal. We probably haven't read Hebrews 13 in a while. We lose sight of what we, with God's help, are or should be working toward. We

turn inward. We are busy, busy; job, a demanding family situation. Then that can be compounded by physical exhaustion by working two, three jobs or one very, very long job. That can compound the whole thing physically and mentally. And we can come to the point that we just don't really care anymore – at least for a while. What do you do about that? What do you do if you find yourself in that kind of a situation?

Some of you are master craftsmen. Some of you are DIY-ers. I'm a DIY-er. I like to build things out of wood and that sort of thing. I enjoy that very much. What if you've got an old, nasty tool that needs to be cleaned up? How do you clean it up? Well, there are different ways to do things. What if you've got some paint on an old piece of furniture? You've got to just chip it away, put chemicals on there and wipe it away, very slowly, layer by layer, step by step. A little bit at a time, that's how that works.

We can only go through this life one step at a time – one foot in front of the other. So if we are to the point where we're ready to give up, we shouldn't -- because we don't have to. We can come back; you can come back. Anyone who is in that condition can come back. It takes work. It takes, for example, beginning to fill our minds with godly thoughts because we probably haven't been doing that.

What is the first thing, when you come into a difficult situation (I'm not saying everybody, but I've talked to so many people over the years); what is one of the first things that happens when a really difficult situation comes along? Prayer and study go out the window. Don't have time for that; too busy, too upset, too whatever. It goes out the window. And that's a shame. It's the wrong way to handle it. But that's what we sometimes do, is it not? I think many of you know what I'm saying. I know that I know what I'm saying.

Sometimes we simply need to step back, regain the proper perspective of who we are, who God is – His omnipotence, His power, how we fit into His plan. A powerful tool for doing that is fasting. I'm not going to be talking a lot about fasting right now, but that is a very powerful tool. By the way, I don't like fasting, never have; don't know that I ever will. It is not an enjoyable thing for me. I have a pretty quick metabolism and I get *really* hungry. But I know that it's necessary. It gives us the opportunity to shut out the extraneous factors and to concentrate on what is important in life.

As I said before, we need to remind ourselves of the omnipotence of God Almighty – the all-powerfulness of God, because this might be one of the things that we've forgotten. He is our protector, He is our sustainer and maybe we haven't thought about that in quite a while.

If you find yourself in a state of depression and apathy, whatever, guilt...that's kind of interesting, too. Apathy: "oh, I don't care about anything, all of my emotions are gone." But guilt is always there. Guilt sort of hangs on. There's one emotion that doesn't disappear easily when we're not doing what we should be doing. You're

depressed, you're apathetic, you're feeling guilty. Maybe you need to make a list. Maybe you need to have some scriptures that you go back to on a regular basis.

In preparing for this sermon I found it extremely encouraging, once again, to look into God's word and see some, frankly, very basic things. It reminds us of who we are, who God is and what He wants for us. God is the Creator, of course, of all things. God is the sustainer of all things. Job chapter 38 and let's begin with verse 3.

Job 38:3 Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. (This is God talking to Job.)

4 "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.

5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! (Smart guy, do you know who's really in charge here? Do you know who has the power?)

This was an approach that God used specifically with Job at that particular time. He usually doesn't approach us in that particular way. But He was just reminding Job who's in charge here.

...Or who stretched the line upon it?

6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone,

7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Do we remember every single day that God is omnipotent, that He is all-powerful? And yes, whatever I'm going through really, really hurts. But we've seen other scriptures that show us He knows that. He knows that and He will help us "in due time". 2 Samuel chapter 22 and verse 2, where it says:

2 Samuel 22:2 And he said: "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;

The Lord is our fortress? What does that mean? It means He provides a place where we can go. He will take care of us. He will sustain us; He will protect us. Right now we're living in London. We've lived in Europe at different times, Italy and Germany, and we've seen a lot of old castles, old fortresses. They tend to be built on a higher position so that you can see the enemy approaching, if you will. They've maybe got a moat around there so that it would make it more difficult to scale the walls. They've got the crenellations on the top – where you can get out there and shoot and get back, slits in the walls so you can shoot and hopefully not be shot – for protection. They are there to defend the inhabitants of the town, of the area.

Funny thing about fortresses. If you leave the fortress, if you are far outside of the fortress -- it doesn't help much. If the enemy is approaching and you're a mile down the road; you're not in the fortress. God is our fortress. Are we in the fortress? Are we close to God? Because if we're not, we're outside of the fortress and He can't help us in the same way. I'm not saying He won't help us. Sometimes despite our whatever; our stupidity, our apathy, our discouragement -- sometimes He intervenes and helps us anyway. But the best place to be, for the protection and the nurture that we need, is in the fortress. And God is our fortress. He is our deliverer. Verse 3:

3 The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, My stronghold and my refuge...

Now, granted, this is ancient English and we don't talk like that do we? But do we think like that? Does it mean something to us? Is God our fortress, is He our refuge?

4 I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies. (If we're in the fortress. That's where we need to be.)

Psalm 18 and verse 2:

Psalms 18:2 The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;

Do we think about Him in that way? Or have we left the fortress and not feeling very good; not feeling very close to God? Psalm 71. Once again, if you need a list of really encouraging scripture here are some of them; beginning with verse 17:

Psalms 71:17 O God, You have taught me from my youth; And to this day I declare Your wondrous works.

Do we ever wake up in the morning and say, "Today I will declare the wondrous works of God?" Well, maybe not in those words, but we'd better be doing that. What have we been talking about for two years? That's part of what we've been talking about; declaring the wondrous works of God. That doesn't mean we're going to go out on the street and wave a Bible at people and that sort of thing. But what is our life declaring? Our lives should declare the wondrous works of God.

18 Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come. (Verse 20.)

20 You, who have shown me great and severe troubles...

Oh, wait a minute! He's the fortress. He's the rock. He's the good guy. He's the one that gives us everything; but He has "shown me great and severe trouble"? Yup, we heard about that in the sermonette.

20 You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, (because You love me so much and you want me to learn some things. You) **shall revive me again,** (That's why I say we can come back if we find ourselves in a bad place. We can, any of us can.) **and bring me up again from the depths of the earth.**

21 You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.

1 Peter chapter 5, verses 6 and 7, I won't turn there right now. We've already heard that.

1 Peter 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

What is the due time? Do I determine the due time? I wish I could. That would be wonderful. That's not the way it works. God Almighty, with His longer view of who we are, where we are and what we need, determines what the due time is. But we have to believe and know that God has our interest at heart. He wants the best for us. And we need to be reminded of that regularly. Regularly! 2 Corinthians 4:16, once again a scripture that we are all familiar with:

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Can we be renewed? Certainly we can. Hebrews chapter 6, verse 18.

Hebrews 6:18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, (We have this hope as an anchor of the soul.) **both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,**

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Turn just for a moment to Acts 27. This is a scripture that I've read many times. Here is a situation where a boatload of folks were just about to sink. They were going down. The ship was sinking. Verse 29.

Acts 27:29 Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.

And you know, brethren, sometimes we have to take that anchor mentioned in Hebrews 6:19 (the anchor of our soul, the hope that God gives us), and we have to cast that anchor out in the midst of a storm where everything is conspiring against us; where we feel like we are going under. Throw that anchor of hope out, pray for day and hang in there. Do not give up! 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 13.

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

It reminds me of a story. I think I may have used this once before, but I like it so I'll use it again. A fellow was walking along a canyon rim and he looked over and he tripped and he fell. It was several hundred feet down. But as he fell he grabbed hold of a bush and he was hanging there with one hand saying "Help! Is there anybody up there? I need help." All of a sudden this booming voice comes out of heaven. "I will help you. Just have faith and let go of the branch." His answer: "Is there anybody else up there?"

Sometimes God gives us the way of escape and we're not even looking for it. Sometimes we're right in the midst of a temptation or something that we're doing and we're not looking for a way of escape. God is giving it to us in some form or another and we're not even looking for it. That's the part that we have to do. We have to look for it and then grab hold of it when we find it. John 14, verse 27. Once again a very well-known scripture.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

But so often we do. We let ourselves, we let our hearts be troubled and we don't go back to the foundation. We don't go back to God's word and we remain troubled. We leave the fortress and wonder why things aren't going well. We don't have to do that. Philippians chapter 4, verse 7.

Philippians 4:7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

If we want it to, if we seek that, if we allow God to do that, if we look for the way of escape, if we stay in the fortress. The peace of God which surpasses all understanding -- is that the peace we have? We can have that kind of peace. But what if it's not happening? What if it's not happening in your life or my life? Well, we need to look and see what we are doing. Maybe we've left the fortress.

Psalm 119, verse 165.

Psalm 119:165 Great peace have they which love thy law...

So you can have that great peace, but you have to also love God's law. Have to: I mean, that sounds terrible. Have to do that. We want to do that; we need to do that. It doesn't say great peace have those who used to know God's law but have kind of forgotten and gotten away from it now. That's not what it says.

165 Great peace have they which love thy law and nothing shall offend them.

A scripture in Philippians 4:13, once again a very well-known scripture.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

It sounds kind of protestant-y doesn't it? But it's biblical and it's true and do we think about that when we get up in the morning and there's a really rough day coming up? Do we realize that we don't have to do it alone, that we can ask for God's help? We can ask for strength. We read Hebrews 13:5.

Hebrews 13:5 ... I will never leave you nor forsake you. (Never!)

And I don't care if we think He has, He will not! He will do what is necessary for us in due time. He will! Luke 12:7 talks about the very hairs of your head being numbered. Okay, I'm not going to make any jokes. Well, maybe one. With some people He has less difficulty than with others. What does that tell us about what God knows about us? What does that tell us about His involvement in our lives? Luke 12:17:

Luke 12:7 ...Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows.

Psalm 31:3, a familiar refrain.

Psalm 31:3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

Our satisfaction in life, if you want to put it that way, our security in life comes from knowing that we are part of something that is "bigger than we are". Really believing in that – you do need to believe in the right thing. I guess there are people that believe in aliens and all kinds of things and that's bigger than they are. But what I'm talking about are the godly things. Believing that, knowing that, living our lives in such a way that we prove we believe that.

Our security comes, our satisfaction comes, in what God has given to us; the opportunities that He gives to us, the love and the nurture that He gives to us, the Church. It seems, at times, that we're doing our best to destroy everything as human beings. But God intended the Church to be a place of succor, a place of nurturing and sustenance. And that's exactly what it should be. And that's exactly what we're trying to learn to do. Sometimes we don't do very well, but we're trying.

But, you know, this batch of scriptures that we've gone through, these are things that we sometimes forget. These are things that we need to go over; not just once a year or twice a year. Maybe we should have that list handy.

I spoke earlier about the fact that we can get out of a difficult situation with depression and discouragement by turning our minds away from just ourselves. What we've done is turned our minds into ourselves. That's where we are. And we need to turn out to others. That is not easy to do. I know that. It is not easy to do. It's not something we will do naturally. It is not something that we will do easily. But life is not very easy and sometimes we have to do the right thing, even though it's the difficult thing.

We have to turn our minds outward and serve others; help others. Obviously we need to serve from a proper motivation. So serving others, encouraging others, can help us, too. It really can. Mark chapter 10. Let's get a perspective on serving. Very briefly here, I'll go ahead and go to the end of this little section in verse 45 where it says:

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Christ came to serve and that's what He does for us. Do we take up that example? Do we do that in our own lives? Do we help others? Do we turn out away from self to thinking of others? We are all part of the body of Christ. We're learning more about that as we go along. Some of the things that we learned, what we are and what we've done in the past, are very disconcerting. They really are. But we know that we should be part of the body of Christ. We need to learn to be together; function together, help one another.

John chapter 15, verse 15.

John 15:15 I call you not servants, but friends.

It has to do with relationships. Jesus Christ doesn't look upon us as servants. He looks upon us as friends. One thing that we've tried to do and one thing that we will continue to do, is to show ourselves friendly. We had a picnic just recently in the Denver area. It wasn't populated by thousands of people, but there was a group there; the Denver congregation of our fellowship and a few from the others. And it was friendly. It was wonderful. It was pleasing. I think it was pleasing to God.

You might say, well, that's an awfully small step. It's a step. It's a step that five years ago I wouldn't have made. I would have had nothing to do with that, because I knew that my little group was the only one. What a foolish person I was. Relationships are so very important and service is based on relationships. Jesus Christ served His friends, not other servants. He served all of us. He continues to serve all of us.

Relationships thrive on what? On respect, on giving, on love. Ephesians chapter 3. Let's look at that for just a moment. We are talking about helping others, serving others, turning away from ourselves so that we're not turned completely in on ourselves and eating ourselves alive, which is what happens. Verse 14:

Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened (That's what God wants for us.) **with might through His Spirit in the inner man,** (Can we come back if we're in a pit? Yes, we can.)

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

There have been times in the past when we were rooted and grounded in love for ourselves. We've learned that that wasn't right. Not that we didn't know that wasn't right. We just thought we were right and we were wrong. I was.

...being rooted and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height —

19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (It's a tall order. A tall, tall order.)

The Body will only function well if the members of the body have proper relationships among themselves. It's not the case right now on the whole, but we're trying and we need to continue to try.

It's interesting. I'll go through just a short list here of "one another" statements. "One another". What does that mean? One and another – two people, two groups, two whatever – people working together, people doing things, people caring for one another. Romans chapter 12 and verse 10.

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

This is not all about self. It's about turning outward and helping others. Romans 15.

Romans 15:5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Galatians 5:13, toward the end of the verse:

Galatians 5:13 ...serve one another in love.

Ephesians 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Once again, I realize these are not easy things to do. These things do not come naturally. If we had the perfect mind of Christ, they would come naturally. It would be great. That's what we're working on. We have to remember, though, that we're working on that. We have to concentrate on, focus on, becoming more like our Elder Brother Jesus Christ; more like God our Father.

One way to think of others (we read several scriptures about thinking of others and being with others) -- one way to do that is to express appreciation. Philippians 2, beginning with verse 1.

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded...

Like-minded first and foremost with our Elder Brother Jesus Christ, like-minded with God the Father. And if we are like-minded with Them, and there are a whole bunch of people that are like-minded with Them, then we are automatically like-minded with one another. How does that go, if A equals B...no I won't get into that. But you know what I mean. If we are all like-minded with God the Father, then we will be like-minded among ourselves.

...having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Is that what we're striving for, is that what we're thinking about: "being of one accord, of one mind"? Part of our responsibility is to help our friends, our brethren, to resist becoming burned out.

Let me talk toward the end here about an important key to overcoming burnout and that is this: sharing our convictions. Convictions about what? Convictions about God, convictions about His way of life, convictions about how we are living. Sharing our convictions with the others who hold those same convictions. That can be tremendously encouraging; tremendously encouraging. Ezekiel chapter 9 and verse 4:

Ezekiel 9:4 and the Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it."

Now they sighed and cried because they were striving for the godly way and they saw that it wasn't happening and it saddened them. Do you ever watch the news? I've talked to people that don't watch the news anymore. They simply don't turn it on

because it is so depressing, so discouraging. And there are those times when I have turned the news on and just cried because of what I saw on my screen; because it was so unbelievably horrible.

Do we have that like-mindedness? Wanting so badly to go God's way? God said, "I'm going to mark the heads of those who are thinking that way." He thought that was a good thing. Malachi chapter 3 and verse 16:

Malachi 3:16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another...

I think it's pretty clear here that they talked about their life as it revolved around fearing the Lord, going God's way.

...and the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him...

You know, this is the God who has counted the hairs on our head. Do you think He hears what we say? I think so.

...and the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name.

Do we do that? Probably not as much as we should. But are we speaking to one another about what we believe? I know that happens. I know it does and it should. It should happen more that we speak to one another, that we share our convictions.

1 Samuel chapter 23, verses 16 through 18. I won't turn there right now. I just want you to jot that down in your notes. It talks about Jonathan. Jonathan and David were very good friends. Jonathan "strengthened David's hand in God." He went and he talked with him. By talking to one another, Jonathan strengthened his hand. We can do that, too. We can strengthen one another by talking about what God did for me this week. Do I know? Have I thought about it? He's done something. We need to think about those things and talk with others about them.

There was an example (I won't turn there right now, either) in Daniel chapter 2, verse 17. You might just want to note that and read it later. Daniel was hearing some horrible things from the king and he went and talked with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: "that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning what was going on". In other words, "Guys, this is terrible. Let's talk about this and let's all pray about this together". In essence, this is what he was doing. A lot of people were being slaughtered. He didn't want that to happen to them. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 11:

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do.

Are you, am I; are we known as edifiers? Or are you a whiner, are you a complainer? And people know, when you show up, they're going to hear the latest

about...whatever. He or she just whines and complains. It's not very fun. I'm tired of hearing it. Is that what we want people to say about us? Or will we edify. When we have talked to someone about a mutual friend or something, do they go away edified, built up, encouraged, thinking positive things? That's what we should be doing.

Hebrews 3:13:

Hebrews 3:13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

We are all living in this world and it is difficult. We know that. We need encouragement and we can encourage one another. We can turn away from self and encourage others. Still in the book of Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 24:

Hebrew 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Once again, these are all scriptures that we've read at various times, certainly. But when you put them together it shows a picture of what we should be doing. It, frankly, shows a way that we can turn away from self and turn to others and help others.

So, as I said, Satan obviously wants to wear us out. He wants us to be exhausted. He wants us to be burned out. Satan would love nothing more than to cause us to lose faith, to cause us to take our eyes away from the purpose for our existence; what God is doing with us.

We need to ask God for strength to overcome Satan and his devices. We need to work on ourselves with God's help. That's the only way that it works. Work on ourselves, go back to some of these basic scriptures, remember what God is, what He wants to do for us. Then we need to help each other, we need to encourage each other. We do not have to burnout, brethren. We don't have to do that. And as I said, if we are in that kind of a state, the excitement of following God's way can be rekindled. It might be a long trip, one step at a time; one foot in front of the other. But that excitement can be rekindled.

"When God is for us, who can be against us?" Seriously, when God is for us, who can be against us? Not even we ourselves can be against ourselves, as we so often are! God will help us with that. God is merciful, God is mighty.

Brethren, let's stay within the fortress where God really wants to nourish and support us. Let's not give up! Let's not give up. Let's not give in to Satan. Let's endure. Let's endure to the very end!! ♦