

# Koronis Conference 1970-02 Phil 4;

by Neil Fraser

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*The norm of Christian experience is a high standard of living a life that is pleasing to God, as described in Philippians chapter 4.*

**Duration:** 46:45

**Scripture:** Philippians 1:21, Philippians 2:5, Philippians 3:20, Philippians 4:4-19

**Topics:** "Joy and Contentment", "Christian Experience"

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## Description

Neil Fraser emphasizes the high standard of Christian experience as outlined in Philippians chapter four, contrasting the norm of Christian living with the true norm set by scripture. He highlights key attributes of a Christian, such as abounding joy, abnormal gentleness, abiding peace, absolute contentment, amazing power, and ample supply for all needs. Fraser encourages believers to strive for these qualities, reminding them that they can do all things through Christ who strengthens them. He urges the congregation to reflect on their own experiences and to seek a deeper, more fulfilling Christian life. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to live up to the high norms of Christian experience.

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## Transcript

Thank you for coming out this afternoon. We pray the Lord will bless the words of our brother. Our Irish brother was afraid that he would knock over the water.

So I'll put it under a nickel. Thank you for the trail. I like it very much.

Now I haven't said anything about my books which are here. And Sunday's not a good time to say it either. I notice our brother in the book stall has got two copies of each of my books.

Oh, my brother has one or two also. And I imagine brother Peter Pell has one or two back there. I want you to especially think of those others.

Anyway, we'll have some more to say about them tomorrow. Now I'd like to speak this afternoon on the norm of Christian experience from Philippians chapter four. There may be a great difference between the norm of experience and our experience of the norm.

Now what we call normal Christianity may not be the norm, the standard of Christianity. There might be a great difference, as I say, between the norm of Christian experience and our experience of the norm. And I think that Philippians chapter four gives us the high standard, the high norm of Christian experience.

I think it is the Scofield Bible that says that in Philippians we have the believer's existence in chapter one. For me to live is Christ. On the chapter two gives us the believer's example.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. On the chapter three gives us the believer's expectation. For our citizenship is in heaven, for whence also we look for the Savior.

And chapter four gives us the Christian experience. I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me. The great thing in chapter one is to be in Christ.

In chapter two to be like Christ. In chapter three to be with Christ. And in chapter four to do all things through Christ.

In my own mind I've always thought of chapter one as, since the word gospel occurs six times, is to have a helpful mind, a mind to help in the gospel. That's chapter one. In chapter two you have the humble mind, the mind of Christ.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. In chapter three to have the heavenly mind. Our citizenship is in heaven.

In contrast to those who in that chapter we read mind earthly things. While in chapter four it is to have the happy mind. A mind free from all anxiety and care.

My message is coming from the last chapter. Now both in Philippians and in 1 Thessalonians, Paul is not greatly under stress. And so the flow of his heart towards Christ and Christian experience can flow freely.

He's not under the tremendous haste and heat of the epistle to the Galatians. When he writes in indignant expostulation to that church. Nor is he writing more orderly on the same subject as Galatians to a large extent.

He does an epistle to the Romans where there's no such haste. And he can set out things in a more orderly fashion by the Holy Ghost. But neither in Philippi nor in Thessalonians is there great doctrinal error.

Nor great moral disorder. And so the apostle can talk warmly and quietly about Christ and Christian experience. All of one or two little things in Philippi which cause him a little anxiety.

There appear to be two sisters in the Lord who are not just getting along with each other. And he besought them to be sure to live up to the meanings of their name. He perhaps thought there might be a danger of the church taking sides with those two women.

It might be so. So he uses two words frequently. You all, you all, you all.

Somebody has said that's why we know Paul came from the South. He said you all so many times. But he also said it's very clear he didn't come from Texas for he said I've learned whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.

But he does write in chapter four of the high standard of Christian experience. Will you read please with me. And we'll pass over what he says to the ladies.

And we'll begin in verse four. Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say rejoice.

Let your moderation be known unto all men the Lord is at hand. Be careful for not. But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally brethren. Whatsoever things are true.

Whatsoever things are honest. Whatsoever things are just. Whatsoever things are pure.

Whatsoever things are lovely. Whatsoever things are of good report. If there be any virtue if there be any praise think on those things.

Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do. And the God of peace shall be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care of me hath flourished again.

For in ye were also careful but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want. For I have learned that whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.

I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed. Both to be full and to be hungry.

Both to abound and to suffer me. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Notwithstanding ye have done well that ye did communicate with my affliction.

Now ye Philippians know also. That in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia no church communicated with me. As concerning giving and receiving but ye only.

For even in Thessalonica ye sent once again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift. But I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

But I have all. And abound I am full having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from him. An odor of a sweet smell sacrifices acceptable well-pleasing to God.

But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints that are with you.

Chiefly they are of Caesar's house. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Now it wasn't until recently, and I'm sorry to have to confess, that I noticed how frequently the word all occurs in this chapter. And on a number of these alls I want to hang what I have to say today about the norm of Christianity. Notice again, please.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Now there we learn that a Christian is a person with an abounding joy. And then it says, let your moderation be known unto all men.

The Lord is at hand. And we know that a Christian is a person with an abnormal gentleness. And then it says, be careful for nothing.

But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. And there we learn that a Christian is a person with an abiding peace.

And then it says, in verse 11, Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, I know how to abound everywhere, and in all things I am instructed. The word means initiate.

Both to be full and to be hungry, both to be abound and to suffer need. And that leads me to say that a Christian is a person with absolute contentment in all circumstances, to be content in whatsoever state he is. And then it says, I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.

A Christian is a person with an amazing power. He can do all things through Christ that strengthens him. And then it says, in verse 18, he says, I have all and abound.

And he says, in verse 19, my God, so supply all your needs. And a Christian is a person with an ample supply for all his needs. And that's the high standard.

That's the norm of Christian experience that is given to us in this chapter. Let me just go over them for those of you who might be taking notes. A Christian is a person with an abounding joy, a person of abounding joy, of abnormal gentleness, of abiding peace, of absolute contentment, of amazing power, and of ample supply for all his needs.

So I'm going to ask you, my brother and my sister, here this afternoon, this question. Are you a person with an abounding joy, an abounding joy? Are you a person of great gentleness? I have said, abnormal gentleness. Are you a person with an abiding peace, an absolute contentment, day by day? Are you a person with an amazing power? Are you a person with ample supply for all your needs? And this is the high standard which the Apostle says before us all.

And God help us, and help men, not to be content with what's called normal Christian living, but rather that our experience of the norm may be the norm of experience. The Lord send us all away discontented with what we have been, and by the grace of God, what we need to be in the life of this church. Now notice the first of these.

Rejoice in the Lord, always, or always. And again I say, rejoice. Are you a rejoicing Christian? Am I a rejoicing Christian? I'm not the rejoicing Christian always that you think I am.

And you're not the rejoicing Christian that a lot of people think you are either. But the norm is that we are to rejoice in the Lord always. Maybe we're not rejoicing because we are not always praised.

What's wrong with this quotation? By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise now and then. What's wrong with it? What does it say? Continually. By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.

Our brother Denham read to us this morning in our service. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy. All ye that are upright in heart.

You ever shout for joy, brother? Ever shout for joy, sister? You say, me? Are you kidding? No, I'm not. Did I tell you yesterday? I sometimes shout for joy. Really shout for joy.

I think I do. I'm careful to make sure I'm on the highway with all the doors and windows shut in the car. You ever shout praise the Lord very loud as in your breath? It's wonderful.

You say, well, to be honest, I never have. Might be a good thing to start. And maybe after a while we'll get like Billy Bray, who seemed to find occasion to praise the Lord and allow his voice on the slightest provocation.

Seemed to work in a big cat hole, they tell me, over in Wales. In those days you brought the artisan to the house who didn't go to his shop. So they brought him to mend some parts, I think it was.

And so the master of the house said to the servants, now when this man arrives, put him in the fairest room in the house. Don't leave anything around the room whereby he might have occasion to shout hallelujah. It's very embarrassing.

So they put him in a very big, just a table and a chair, and an old calendar almanac, as they called it, on the wall. But to their consternation, they heard such shouts of hallelujah in no time that they rushed him to see what he possibly could find. And when they asked him, he said, look at that, look at that almanac.

You know what it says there? It says there the sea at its deepest part is seven miles deep. Hallelujah. I just remembered the Lord said, I'll cast all their sins in the depths of the sea.

Simple? Of course. A Christian is a person always rejoicing in the Lord, finding occasion upon the slightest provocation to break out in praise to the Lord. And do us good if we could rejoice in the Lord like that.

Jesus said, when you are persecuted, rejoice and be exceedingly glad. And in Hebrews we read about people who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods for Christ's sake. And there's that beautiful text which just comes to mind about the poor churches in Macedonia who in the abundance of their deep joy and great poverty besought the apostle to take their money and give it to the poor saints in Jerusalem who didn't want them to have the gospel in the first place.

The abundance of their great joy and their deep poverty. And then it says here, let your moderation be known unto all men the Lord is at hand. What does that mean? Moderation.

It doesn't mean that be careful not to eat too much. Though it would be good advice for us all. Or to drink too much.

Or to work too much. Do everything in moderation. That's really not what he says.

So some translators say, let your yieldingness be known unto all men. Another says, let your gentleness be known unto all men. One says, let your sweet reasonableness be made known unto all men.

There was a man who was going to build a house across the road from where I'm living now. And his cousin said, you'll like him. He's a gentle man.

I liked that when she said it. He's a gentle man. And every Christian shouldn't just be a gentleman, he should be a gentle man.

Sometimes we men think we wouldn't be he-men unless we were rough with everybody. Including our wives. But the most virile man who ever walked was a gentleman.

Are you gentlemen? Oh, there are times I know when we have to be firm. In Acts chapter 15, Paul was firm at the beginning of the chapter when he needed to be firm. But he was too firm at the end of the chapter when he needed to be gentle.

So there are times when we need to be firm, of course, if we're standing for Christian principles. But to be gentle and yielding if we're just standing for personal opinions. Let your yieldingness be known unto all.

And then it says the Lord is at hand. What does that mean? The Lord is at hand. What does at hand mean? Does it mean that he's close by your side? Or does it mean that in point of time his coming is near? Well, let me tell you something.

That word, if I remember right, occurs 31 times in the New Testament. The word translated at hand. And 15 times it clearly relates to time.

As when the Passover was at hand. And 15 times clearly it relates to place. For the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

And here's the doubtful place. What are we going to do? Well, when I'm in doubt about something, if it's not too radical, I say it means both. Just as when I'm in a Bible reading and two brethren are quite violently disagreeing on the text.

I say, well, brethren, of course, you're both right. Just looking at it different. You're probably both wrong.

You're both right, just looking at it different. Now maybe we're supposed to say, let your yieldingness be made known. The Lord is coming.

But, the Lord is at hand. The Lord, right by you. Let that gentleness.

Now, a Christian should be a person of an abnormal gentleness. Sometimes what we call firmness in ourselves, other people call pig-headedness. Are you a gentle person? You should be.

My father used to quote to us as boys and girls. Gentle at home amidst my friends I'd be, like the high leaves upon the holly tree. And they say that the high leaves on the holly tree are comparatively free from jagged points.

It's only as they come closer to earth that the points become more pointed. So when we boys were quarreling, my brother and I maybe, it was always his fault. He would say, gentle at home amidst my friends I'd be, like the high leaves upon the holly tree.

I hope you're gentle at home. Let's look at the third thing here. Be careful for nothing, but everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God and the peace of God, that passive all understanding shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

Now, most of you will know, I'm sure, let me just recall to your memory, but the word keep, when it's translated elsewhere, and I think only elsewhere, is translated keep with a garrison, the whole word. Kept with a garrison. Now, the whole epistle to Philippians is based upon what it says about the church of Philippi in Romans.

Just in passing, Luke says, Philippi was a colony. And Paul builds his letter upon Philippi as a colony. You see, Philippi was protected, because it was a colony, by a garrison from Rome.

And every night, the footsteps of the garrison could be heard as they patrolled the city. That's why Paul says in Philippians chapter one, I am sent for the defense of the gospel. And what it literally says is, I am posted as a sentinel for the defense of the gospel.

And a colony could always look to Rome for a supply of its need in time of scarcity. And Paul writes in this letter and says, my God, so supply all your need. All the resources of Rome were at the disposal of a colony.

But Paul says, my God, so supply all your need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus. There was always a shrine in the center of colonies to Caesar. And on that shrine it said, to our great God and Savior, Caesar.

Paul speaks of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. And so, what that garrison was to the people of the colony. The garrison said to all the foes, you keep out of here.

All the power of Rome is pledged for the protection of this city. It's kept with a garrison. And Paul uses it elsewhere.

He says, when I got saved and I was in Damascus, the city was kept with a garrison. But it said, I escaped out of a window. Now, what the power of Rome was to Philippi as a colony, Paul says to the individual Christians at Philippi.

If you are anxious for nothing, if you are prayerful in everything, and if you are thankful for anything, the peace of God that passeth all understanding will garrison your heart and mine through Christ Jesus. That actually, says Paul, again he raises the standard high. Actually, says Paul, the peace of God will say to every anxious heart, you stay out of here.

You stay out of this heart. This heart is kept by the very garrison of God. Because, he that is anxious for nothing, and is prayerful in everything, and is thankful for everything.

And then, of course, is where we so often fail, isn't it? Would like the woman, you heard about it, would like the woman who was carrying a heavy bundle along the road, and a man with a horse and gig stopped and invited her to come up. So she did, she got into the little wagon, and they drove off. And he noticed that she was still holding the bundle on her shoulder.

He says, why don't you put it down on the bottom of the gig? Well, she says, I don't want to make it any harder for the horse, and I have to. He says, lady, the horse is carrying both you and it anyway. And he might just as well be coming.

Now, most of us friends don't want to make it too hard for the horse. So we carry what we call the little things, and turn over the big ones to him. It's a great mistake.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgivings, let your requests be made on God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will gallow the neurons and mind through crisis. A Christian is a person with an abiding peace. Have you got it? I said, Brother Fraser, to be honest, I haven't got it.

Have you got it? You asked me. And I said, to be honest, I don't always have it. But we ought to have it.

This is the norm. And God has provided us to have it. He's not holding up something to us that we can't attain to.

It's here. And the provision is all. Oh, how wonderful to learn it.

Very early in my Christian preaching, I arrived at Hurdsfield, North Dakota. This is Weissberg, San Diego. And I had meetings there, and lived there until today.

One day I got an invitation for dinner from a very dear German Mennonite minister, Ronald Hofer. He never learned the truth of eternal security until he came to my meetings and he rejoiced it. So he invited me for dinner, and I went along.

And after dinner, I said, well, I want to thank you for a wonderful dinner. Chicken dinner, I remember. I got on my coat.

I was going downtown to buy two things. So I got on my coat. He says, I thank him for the dinner.

He said, Brother, Brother Fraser, could you use some shaving cream? I said, I surely could. As a matter of fact, I squeezed the last bit of it out this morning. And the Scotsman squeezes the shaving cream.

No more or less. He said, I'll give you some. So he went into a drawer and he gave me.

He said, how about toothpaste? Oh, I said, Brother, as a matter of fact, it finished this morning. He said, I'll give you some. Now, it's never happened since then.

That's 40 years ago, I suppose. That my toothpaste and shaving cream finished on the same morning, but it ain't that morning. He said, I'll give you some.

So he went into a drawer and he gave me some. I was starting my shoe polish adventure. So after he gave me some, I said, Brother Hofer, how come you've got this to give away? Oh, he says, my nephew sells this stuff all over North Dakota.

And he gives me some samples. So I give him some. You know, I had the money to buy that, my friends.

But it didn't mean an awful lot of good. I said, my Heavenly Father knows my need before I ask Him. Right? Now, that's the God you have to deal with.

Now, if you and I could get into the habit of being anxious for Him now, and being prayerful in Him, and being thankful for Him, we would experience the peace of God that passes all understanding. Let's read again, down in verse 11. Not that I speak in respect of want.

For I have learned. Now, that word learned means learned by habit. In whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

And then he uses a different word in the next verse. For he says, I know both how to be abased. In that word, abased, is a word used for a stream in drought.

No more water in it. I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed.

This is not the word learned. It's the word initiate. You see, about six times over in this chapter, Paul uses different metaphors.

He's got a banking metaphor. And he's got the metaphor of entrance into a secret society. And that's this one here.

I am initiated. Both to be full and to be hungry. Both to abound and to suffocate.

A Christian is a person of absolute contentment. It says that. I have learned.

In whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. Are you a contented person? Did you hear about the woman that lived in North Dakota with her husband? Excuse me. So many reference to North Dakota.

I've nothing against it. A freezy, wheezy state. Well, she lived there and her husband was transferred to California.

The Sunshine State, they called it. And after a while, he was transferred back to North Dakota. And somebody came to comfort the poor soul and said, too bad.

You're back now in North Dakota. That freezy, wheezy state. Aren't you sorry? Oh no, she said, I've learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Are you like that? Are you always wishing you were someplace else? Wish I lived out there on the coast. It's so balmy out there. We haven't got the long winters we've got here.

Wish I lived on the coast. Those people on the coast say, oh, it's so drafty out here, so wet. Wish I lived in the Middle West where it's so nice and dry.

People that work on factories where it's so smelly say, I wish I lived out and worked in the open spaces where the air is so good. And those who work out where the air is so good in the field say, I wish I lived in a warm factory. I worked in a warm factory.

And fat people wish they were thin, and thin people wish they were fat. And single people wish they were mats. And married people? We're such a discontented bunch.

We're always wishing that we were someplace else. And doing something different. Have you learned in whatsoever state you are? Therewith to be content.

I hope you like the woman, the dear Negro woman, who was asked how she got on with her husband. She says, I just treat him with silent content. And I hope you do that.

I hope you treat him with silent content. You ladies don't be always wishing you had better house and better furniture and better electric equipment in the house until your husband feels like a criminal because he hasn't got it. Amen, brethren? Anyway, be content.

I have learned in whatsoever state I am. Paul says, be content with such things as ye have. For he hath said, I'll never leave you.

Now for a change. Henry Ford couldn't say that to me. I worked for Henry Ford for 18 months.

Never once did he come into my department and say to the boss, I heard Neil Fraser's working for me, I should like to meet that lad. As a matter of fact, he died without ever knowing I worked for him. I'm sorry about that.

But Henry Ford couldn't come to me and say, I'll never leave you, nor forsake you. Because he did leave me. Edsel Ford couldn't say that, I'll never leave you, nor forsake you.

But he died soon after. Jesus said, I'll never leave you, nor forsake you. Be content with such things as you have.

A Christian is a person of absolute contentment. And then, I must hurry. A Christian is a person with an amazing power.

I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me. And Jesus said to his disciples, greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father. And he said in another place, and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Think of that. I can do all things. Through Christ.

When I came in with my briefcase this afternoon, my brother says, you may be asked to show what's in your briefcase. You're thinking of bombs. I said, brother, I'm going to speak about dynamite this afternoon.

He said, well, maybe you'd better search your briefcase. You see, Paul wrote to a Roman capital, and he says, I'm coming to you with dynamite. You're known as the Iron Kingdom, and you've got the whole world enslaved.

But he said, I'm coming with the gospel, for it is the dunamis, the dynamite. We have dynamite from dunamis. It is a dynamite of God.

I'm coming to Rome with that. And dear friends, that gospel shook and broke the power of Rome. And slavery went overboard, and heathen temples were deserted, and women were set free, and child murder stopped, and joy and peace took its place in so many places.

Oh, the power we have, brother, and sisters, at our disposal. And finally, a Christian is a person with an ample supply for all he's made. My God shall supply all your need.

So I don't have to hint to anybody? No. So I don't have to covenant for a set sum in the work of the Lord necessarily? No. New Testament does say a laborer is worthy of his wages.

The word hire is wages. And when Jesus says, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, the word reward is wages. But I do not have to covenant, and I do not have to beg, and I do not have to hint.

My God shall supply all your needs. In closing, I want to tell a story about Minneapolis. Years ago, when my second daughter was born, Betsy.

What a baby she was. We lived in Virginia up there. And I got a bill from the hospital for \$52.80. You know, that's a long time ago, by the bill I got.

\$52.80 in the hospital. And I said to my wife, we'll have to pay that bill. And I think it was the next day I got a letter from Longfellow.

And when I opened it, it was a check for \$52. My bill was \$52.80. And I said to Nan, why did the Lord cut me short 80 cents? She said, well, the Lord knew that you had 80 cents and more. I said, that's true.

But I don't think He stopped for that reason. I mean, it doesn't work. It just hit me once.

What happened? That He didn't send the 80 cents. Well, the next day after that, I got a second letter from Minneapolis. When I opened it, it was a dollar fell out.

And a little note. And it said, Brother... I think it was Brother M's. I mentioned his name because he didn't have one today.

He wasn't present on Sunday morning when we had set aside the offering for you. And when he heard where the offering was gone, he says, well, send him this dollar, will you? I felt pretty small. I had \$53.

I had 20 cents to the good. And let me tell you this, friends. That miracle has gone on for 45 years.

Amen. As the Lord prepares me to my birthday, September 21st, It will be 45 years since I was commended for the work of the Lord from the city of Detroit. It's been a wonderful 45 years.

So my wife and I are going to celebrate. We're going to combine pleasure with profit in His good will. And we hope to leave on October 3rd for New Zealand.

For I am booked up for about a year of meetings. I'm over for rest. And you can pray that we'll have no accidents between now and then in the will of the Lord.

Nor illnesses that might prevent us going. I just want to say that it's been a wonderful 45 years. And I want to pay tribute, just as I close, to many others.

For standing by us through the years. I'd love to come back to this day. Now the Lord bless us.

Bless you all. And grant we may live up to the high norms of Christian experience. Amen.

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