

Living Above the Circumstances

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of living above circumstances through contentment and reliance on Christ's strength.

Duration: 39:39

Scripture: Matthew 6:28-30, Ephesians 6:10-18, Philippians 1:12-18, Philippians 4:10-13

Topics: "Circumstances"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of finding spiritual lessons in everyday life. He mentions how the apostle Paul found spiritual significance in the armor of a Roman guard, seeing it as a representation of Christian character. The speaker also mentions how Paul was content and had a positive attitude even in difficult circumstances, drawing a parallel to missionaries who faced hardships in Istanbul. He shares an anecdote about C.T. Studd, who found joy and contentment in living in Africa despite challenging conditions. The speaker concludes by encouraging listeners to see the sermon in everything around them, just as Jesus taught to consider the lilies of the field.

Transcript

I wonder if you'd turn in your Bibles this morning to Philippians chapter 4, and I'd like to read some verses there. Philippians chapter 4, beginning with verse 10. Philippians 4.10, But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again, wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

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 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 need.

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Notwithstanding ye have well done 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 and 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 that were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever.

Amen. I'd like to speak to you this morning on the subject living above the circumstances. How often in life one man says to another, how are you? He says, well, pretty good under the circumstances.

Paul didn't live under the circumstances. He lived above the circumstances. Five of Paul's letters are called prison epistles.

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 2nd Timothy written on prison. But you know the remarkable thing is that there isn't a smell of prison about any one of them. I often put myself in his position and what I would be like if I were in prison and writing a letter.

And I'm very frank to confess they'd sound a lot different than the ones Paul wrote. And the reason was because he lived above the circumstances. In Philippians 4, 11 he speaks of himself as being content.

How can you be content in prison? I could imagine that maybe the Lord had made his first mistake if I were in prison, you know? I mean, if Jesus is Lord, if he's the sovereign of the universe, what am I doing in prison? I'm one of his messengers. Paul never felt that way. He was content in prison.

Really, the Christian life is a supernatural life, isn't it? Something you can't live in the power of the flesh can only be lived by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. And that's the only way a person could be content in those circumstances. He says in verse 12 he knew how to be abased and how to abound.

It's interesting how people misinterpret a verse like this. Paul says, I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. When people think of that verse, they think, oh yes, abased.

That's when he was traveling through Turkey over the wild rugged mountains and he didn't have any food. And abound, well, that's when things were going good and the money was flowing in and he was living in high celestial state. No, no, that wasn't it.

He was abounding in prison. So how do you know? Because he says, I have all things and abound. Having received of Epaphroditus the things that were sent by you.

Well, that's an interesting development, isn't it? So when you come to that verse and you think of Paul being abased and Paul abounding, just remember the abounding part of it was what was taking place when he was there in prison. In verse 18 he says that he's satisfied. That's where he says, I have all things and abound.

Boy, that's a wonderful thing. A wonderful thing to be satisfied. Hmm? Paul says godliness with contentment is great gain.

I wonder how many content Christians there are today. Are you content? Would you like just a little more? I went into an Arby's restaurant some time ago and they were having, I shouldn't mention Arby's, I should mention McDonald's, shouldn't I? But I went into Arby's restaurant a little while ago and they were conducting some kind of a sweepstake, you know? And so after I got my sandwich, the girl, she said, I got my change. And she said, oh here, I forgot to give you your sweepstake.

And I said, no thanks, I've got all the money I want. She said, you do? She had never met anybody who had all the money he wanted. It's really a commentary on present day life, isn't it? Hmm? Paul says godliness with contentment is great gain.

If you're godly and if you're content, you have something that money wouldn't buy. After all, all our riches are treasured up in Jesus. The only security we have anyway is the Lord.

And so it's great to be content and satisfied with him. I think it's wonderful to see how Paul realized that he was in prison by the will of God. I wish I could say that when the circumstances of life are adverse, when everything comes crowding in upon me.

I wish I could see God's hand in it, all Paul did. He realized he was a prisoner by the will of God. In Ephesians chapter 3 verse 1, he speaks of himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

I'll tell you, that's lovely. Why is it lovely? Well, because after all, it was the Roman government that tossed him into prison. But he wouldn't acknowledge that.

He would dignify his imprisonment by calling himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Verse 1 of chapter 4, he speaks of himself as being a prisoner of the Lord. Isn't that great? A prisoner of the Lord.

And then in chapter 6 of Ephesians verse 20, he calls himself an ambassador of Jesus Christ. It's a great thing to be moving on in the current of God's will and realizing that nothing can happen to you apart from the will of God. And that if something adverse happens to you, God is going to glorify himself in it.

Ill that God blesses is our good. And unblessed good is ill. And all is right that seems most wrong if it be his goodwill.

And it's true too. Ill that God blesses is our good. And unblessed good is ill.

Paul could see that. He could see God working behind the scenes. A very wealthy Christian lady was in a car accident.

And she was rushed to the nearest hospital. And the next day her relatives caught up with her. They came to visit her.

And they saw that the hospital she was in was a bit substandard. You know, for a lady of her means. And so they said, look, we're going to get you out of here and get you to a better hospital.

She said, you're going to do nothing of the sort. She said, God put me here and I have a work to do here. Meaning witnessing to the other people there.

She was living above the circumstances. Seeing God's hand in it all. I think it's beautiful in 2 Timothy 2.9 where Paul is thinking about his imprisonment.

And he says, he was bound, but the word of God was not bound. Ah, that's great, isn't it? Yeah, they might bind the apostle Paul, but they couldn't bind the word of God. And it's true, too.

It really is true. That although God's messengers might seem to suffer what appear to be setbacks. The word of God goes on triumphantly.

I was recently in mainland China and was astounded to learn that the communist government recently printed a million copies of the Bible. People say to me, was it a good version? Yes, it was a good version. It was the Bible.

And was it done by the communists? Yes, it was done by the communist government. Why would the communist government want to print a million Bibles? I don't know. I know that the sovereign God sometimes makes men do things that ordinarily they wouldn't do.

Say things they wouldn't say. Look at how he made Balaam say some of the most true and beautiful things. And then if you go over to Poland or to Hungary or to Yugoslavia.

You'll soon find out that there's an underground river flowing into Russia and Bulgaria and Romania and all of those countries. That underground river of Bibles. They can't keep the word of God out.

And the more they try, the more it enters. The word of God is not bound. Isn't it great to be sitting in imprisonment and thinking, well, they can bind me.

They can't bind the word of God. It's going to get out. And it will, too.

And the truth of God will triumph in spite of all man's effort to keep it in. I think it's beautiful to see how the Apostle Paul used his circumstances for the spread of the Gospel. Generally speaking, when my circumstances are not so good.

I think, well, I'll wait till I improve and then I'll do something for the Lord. You know, wait till the circumstances improve. It's not the way.

God isn't so interested in improving my circumstances as he is in improving me. He's trying to develop my character in all of this. And it's a mistake to wait for circumstances to... You know, some people do that.

Some people do that in church life. They wait for people to pass away. Things like that.

It's ridiculous, isn't it? God wants to use us where we are. Philippians 1, 12 through 14. Philippians 1, verse 12.

Paul says, I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel. So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace. That is the praetorian guard imagined.

And in all other places that many of the brethren of the Lord waxing confident by my bonds are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear. Well, that's certainly seeing the rainbow through your tears, isn't it? So don't worry about me, brethren. Don't think.

What a shame that the great apostle Paul should land in prison. I'll tell you, we would be a lot poorer today without these prison epistles, wouldn't we, huh? Take those five letters out of the New Testament and what do you have? Well, you have a big gap. That's what you have.

So Paul says, don't worry about that. God is working. As a result of my being here, the whole praetorian guard has heard the Gospel.

Not the whole praetorian guard, Caesar's household, he says also. Caesar's household had heard. Chapter 4, 22.

It says, all the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. We often hear the argument today, you have to be rich to reach the rich. You have to be intellectual to reach the intellectual.

You have to be well-educated to reach the well-educated. Paul didn't believe that, did he? How do you reach Caesar's household? By going to prison. It was kind of a reverse twist, isn't it? But God's ways are above our ways.

And incidentally, it was probably through his imprisonment that he contacted Onesimus. And Onesimus was saved and Paul was able to send him back to his master. And that lovely letter Philemon was written as a result.

So, God is above the scenes. God is wonderful. The way he moves the checkers on the checkerboard, isn't he? And his purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour.

The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower. A very old man, terminally ill, was taken to the hospital. You'll think all my illustrations are hospital illustrations.

They're not. But anyway, a terminally ill man was taken to the hospital. And his family came to see him.

And they said, how are you? And he said, fine. He said, I've spoken to everyone at this end of the ward so far. He wasn't fine.

He was dying, you know. Another man who was really in the very last stages of life, they said to him, how are you? And he said, almost well. That's true too, isn't it? He didn't say almost dead, he said almost well.

And we'll never be more well than we pass into the presence of the Lord Jesus. I think it's wonderful how Paul, in the adverse circumstances of life, saw illustrations of Bible truth all about him. I envy him for this, I really do.

I think it's great when you can go through life and see illustrations of Bible truth in everything. For instance, he was there, and he was probably manacled to a Roman guard. And he would study the armor of that guard.

And he'd say, ah, the armor of a Christian soldier. The helmet of salvation. The breastplate of righteousness.

The sword of the Spirit. He could make connections between all of those things. It's lovely, isn't it? That turns a prison into a school, and into a pulpit as well.

Illustrate. I believe that everything in nature and in life about us is preaching a sermon, if only we had eyes to see it. Jesus said, consider the lilies of the field.

I just thought they were wildflowers. I thought they were dandelions that you had to root out of your lawn. Jesus said, look, don't be, in going through life, don't be so spiritual that you don't see object lessons in these things.

Consider the fowls of the air. It's true. They teach us spiritual lessons if we'll only stop and listen to them.

Only stop and observe them. I like to tell about one day I was with dear Fred Elliott. His name has been mentioned to me several times since I've been here.

Fred Elliott from Portland. And we were back in LaGrange, Illinois. We were, we were there at the Sunday morning service at the assembly.

The assembly was situated at that time right next to the railroad tracks. And those were the tracks where the California Zephyr would go through once a day. And one day after the meeting, Fred and I were standing out on the front porch.

And just then, the California Zephyr went through with a tremendous roar. I mean, it had two or three diesel engines. And it was really going fast.

And of course, it was just deafening. You couldn't hear yourself think. So our conversation was interrupted.

And when the train passed, Fred put his hand on my shoulder and he said, All I had seen was a train. But he had seen an object lesson of the resurrection of Christ, of the power that raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. And that's what Paul did, even in prison.

He could make these connections. When Dr. Barnhouse used to travel with his family, they made a great deal of money. His children would try to stick him.

They'd try to name something that he couldn't get some spiritual connection. They couldn't do it. No matter what they would name as they traveled along, he would bring something from the Word of God to bear on that subject.

Be a good way to spend the time when you're traveling. It's kind of boring. You see nothing but billboards.

Try to get object lessons of spiritual truth. Paul did that. And he saw in the armor of that Roman guard a picture of the development of Christian character in the soldier of Christ.

And he gave it to us there in chapter 6 of Ephesians. And then Paul had a great spirit. He was a great man.

And he was happy to see the gospel preached. As long as the gospel went out, he was glad even if some were preaching it of strife and contention. Chapter 1, verses 15 through 18.

Philippians chapter 1, verse 15. He said, some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill. The one preached Christ of contention, not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Now, I can't understand the mentality of people who would preach the gospel out of contention. What does that mean anyway? You ever stop to ask yourself, what does that mean? What was really happening? Well, all I can think of is, some people who didn't think too much of the apostle Paul, they would say, well, praise God, he's in prison, and we'll get out, and we'll preach the gospel, and let him feel badly because he's not out doing it.

Now, I can't understand that mentality. And I think I could sit in jail and rankle. I think all my gastric juices would turn to sulfuric acid probably.

And Paul didn't. He said, oh good, they're out there preaching the gospel. And God honors his word, and he does too.

God honors his word, and the message is always greater than the messenger. And Paul could be pleased that that was happening. And not only so, but he could rejoice in his imprisonment because others were emboldened by it to preach the gospel.

Verse 14 says, verse, many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak. The word without fear. That's good.

If, as a result of my being put in prison, some others are emboldened to preach the gospel. And I can see how that would happen, can't you? I mean, people who love the apostle Paul would say, well, here's our dear brother in the Lord, and he's not able to get out there and do it. Now, we'll step into the breach, and we'll do it.

Paul says, praise God. That's a good thing, coming out of this imprisonment. Really wonderful.

One of the most remarkable things, of course, is that Paul was joyful through it all. He didn't accept his circumstances with meek resignation, the way most of us would do. I would think that would be a great triumph of faith, just to be in prison and accept it with meek resignation.

He didn't do that. He was joyful in it all, and urged the Philippians to be joyful. Hmm? You know that joy is the key word of this whole epistle, the epistle of the Philippians.

Joy is found six times, and rejoice is found 12 times in Philippians alone. Doesn't that touch your heart? It does mine. A prison letter.

Joy, the word joy is found six times, and rejoice is found 12 times. Um, that's wonderful. Look, if you're a joyful Christian, I'm sure the Lord will forgive you.

Hmm? Nice to see happy Christians, isn't it? Good advertisement to the world. And you know, there's a very lovely touch here in Philippians chapter 1, verse 4, that I get a real thrill out of. It says there that Paul prayed with joy.

He prayed with joy. It says, um, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making requests with joy. People think, well, prayer is such a burden, you know.

And really, I'm sorry to say that many prayer meetings are pretty dirge-like affairs, aren't they? In fact, a woman in Colorado Springs, a young woman in Colorado Springs said, you mean you can pray with joy? And that afternoon, we had a prayer meeting. We spent an extended time in prayer. And she came to me after, and she said, where did the time go? She had been praying with joy.

Carl and I attend a new little assembly down in San Lorenzo, California. I can stand here and honestly say to you today, our prayer meeting is one of our most popular meetings. Every Wednesday night from 7 till 8 o'clock.

And it's a moving meeting. It's all prayer. We don't have ministry at all.

It's all prayer. Different brother is in charge every month. He's instructed to make sure that the prayer meeting moves, that there are no long, dull pauses, and that the prayer requests are meaningful.

And people look at their watches and say, where did the time go? Well, I've been in other types of prayer meetings where you didn't say that. A young fella came to me once and he said, Bill, I love our prayer meeting. Boy, we must be doing something right when a young man comes and says, I love our prayer meeting.

It's the way it can be. Paul prayed with joy. There's nothing in the Bible that says that prayer has to be a sorrowful affair, is there? Nothing in the Bible.

Pray with joy. It makes me think of the man who went to the doctor. He was having eye trouble, and the doctor told him that one of his eyes would have to be removed, and a glass eye put in its place.

And he looked at the doctor, he says, doctor, please put in one with a twinkle in it. Isn't that good? I often think of that. When I was at Emmaus, after I left Emmaus, the rumor went around that I, that I had a glass eye, that I had been in the war and was shot down in a bomber, and I had a glass eye.

Well, a good story is worth repeating. And I, you know, I always say you can tell the glass eye, it's the one with compassion in it. Well, Paul was joyful, and he urged others to be joyful.

And not only so, but Paul counted it a privilege to suffer for the Lord Jesus. Philippians chapter one, verse twenty-nine, he counted it a privilege. He says, for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

That was not nice. I was brought up in the stories of the Christian martyrs. My mother was a Scottish lady, and she used to get us by her knee, and she'd tell us the story of the martyrs.

People say, oh, don't tell children those stories. They'll develop all sorts of fears, forgetting what the kids see on television. No word about that.

But I tell you, I thank God today for that background. And men and women who counted it a privilege to stand true to the Lord Jesus Christ, even if it cost them, even if it cost them their lives. In all of Paul's writings from prison, he was always thinking more of others than he was of himself.

I'm sure you've noticed that in the second chapter of Philippians, the key word is others. Others. Jesus thought of others.

He came from the ivory palaces, laid down his life. God has highly exalted him and given him a name that's above every name. Paul thought more of others than he did of himself.

Chapter two, he said, Yea, and if I be offered upon the surface the sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. Now that sounds like a jumble of holy words, but what does it mean? Well, I'll tell you what it means. Paul is saying in that verse, look, what you Corinthians, the sacrifice, the offering you're making to God, that's the important thing.

And if I could just be poured out as a drink offering over the sacrifice and offering that you're making, I would rejoice and you rejoice with me too. That's what he's saying, really. And to be poured out as a drink offering means martyrdom, means to give your life.

Let me repeat that again. First of all, maybe I should show it to you. In the verse Philippians chapter two.

Take me just a minute. Seventeen, yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. Paul is saying that that the offering and the sacrifice they were making, that was the important thing.

And he would just be glad to be poured out as a drink offering over it. What he was doing wasn't really too important at all. Others, thinking of others.

Timothy thought of others, chapter two. Paul says concerning him, I have no man like minded who will naturally care for your affairs. And Epaphroditus, I love that at the end of chapter two, it's really beautiful.

Epaphroditus had been sick, nigh unto death for the work of the ministry. And he was plunged into sorrow. Why? Because he was sick.

No, because they had heard about it. Well, that's not like me. When I'm sick, I like to get the old mimeograph going and let the world know, you know.

Epaphroditus was sorry because they had heard about it and they would worry about him. Others, others. Zord, yes, others.

Let this my motto be, help me to live for others that I might live like thee. Paul's letters were filled with teaching, with exhortation, with warnings, and with encouragements. He was always thinking of what would profit others.

And he desired fruit that would abound to their account. I thought of this. In all of his letters, there's no complaining.

Wow. No complaining. How could you write five letters from prison and never complain once? He never did.

There was a brother in Chicago years ago, Jim Humphrey. I used to say to him, how are you, brother Jim? And he'd say, it would be a sin to complain. I never forgot that.

That was a good answer, wasn't it? It would be a sin to complain. Although there was no complaint. But listen, dear friends, I want to tell you something.

Those, when Paul was in prison, there was nothing very pleasant about it. When we think of prison, we think of the United States and we think of the some prisoners are living in today. And I mean that sincerely.

I was asked to go down to speak at a federal correction institution in Pleasanton, I think within the last two years. And when I got there, I couldn't decide whether it looked more like a country club or a motel. It was beautiful.

Had the finest facilities. Well, if you go to Turkey, the prisons aren't like that. Some of our young people who've been arrested in Istanbul have been thrown into a dungeon cell with 60 common criminals.

No beds, a bench. If you wanted to sleep and could get one of the benches, maybe put a little newspaper over it. No toilet facilities.

If you wanted a meal, you gave money to the guards to go out and get the food for you. It was rough. And they took the prisoners, they take the prisoners out every morning and beat them across the legs with rubber hoses.

Paul wasn't given the red carpet treatment in prison. But there's no complaint, no complaint about the weather. No complaint about the cold, about comfort, about health.

Makes me think of C.T. Studd when he was out in Africa, living in a hut in Africa. And he'd write back to England and he'd entitled his letter, From Buckingham Palace. I tell you, that's living above the circumstances, isn't it? From Buckingham Palace.

In all of Paul's letters written from prison, there's not, no frantic appeal for prayer that he might be released. That's terrific. Makes me feel very small.

How do you feel? He didn't ask them to pray for his lead. What did he ask them to pray for? He asked them to pray for boldness and utterance. He didn't want to be intimidated by his circumstances or by the authorities.

He wanted the gospel to go out with boldness and with utterance. Philippians chapter 1, verse 20. According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

I notice also that there's no self-pity in the letters. No self-pity. You know, one of the greatest problems in life today is introspection and self-pity.

Thinking too much of self. I tell you, if we as Christians can only lose ourselves in service for the Lord, in service for one another, we forget a lot about our own troubles. The reason a lot of people are flogging off to the psychiatrists and psychologists and counselors is because they're too occupied with self.

No bad-mouthing the Roman authorities. Oh, I think if I were sitting there day after day, I could dip my pen in acid and write a few well-chosen words about those wretched Romans. Paul never did.

Not a bad word about them. Remarkable, isn't it? Men living in the days when Nero was in power could teach the Christians to submit to the powers that be for they're ordained of God. Makes me think of dear Corrie ten Boom and her sister Betsy, when they were in the concentration camp.

And they were suffering indescribable pain and indignity. And every so often, Betsy would say to Corrie, Corrie, when we get out of here, we've got to do something for these people. And Corrie naturally assumed that she meant the fellow prisoners.

She didn't mean the fellow prisoners at all. She meant the Nazi overlords. When we get out of here, we've got to do something for these people.

She was referring to the Nazi persecutors. And Corrie wrote, and I think this is beautiful. She said, and I wondered, not for the first time, what sort of person she was.

This sister of mine, what kind of a road she followed while I trudged beside her on the all-too-solid earth. In other words, she's saying Betsy was really living a supernatural life, and I was trudging beside her on the all-too-solid earth. I wondered what kind of a person she was, this sister of mine.

Well, you could say that about the Apostle Paul, too. No irritability in his letters. No irritability.

You know, the times when we tend to be most irritable are when the going gets rough. Maybe it isn't that way with you. It's that way with me.

When circumstances are adverse, I can get a bit irritable. And I can take it out on those I love the most, too. That's one of the strange things in life, isn't it? That when things are bad, it's the people you love the most that you take it out on.

Well, I guess they're handiest. You got to take it out on somebody, don't you? No irritability in Paul's letters at all. And no shame either.

He said, I'm not ashamed. He knew why he was there. He was there because of the testimony of Jesus.

And he had nothing but praise and worship for him. And not alone that, but not afraid of death. That comes out so clearly in 2 Timothy chapter 4. He said, I fought a good fight, kept the faith, finished the course.

Henceforth, crown of righteousness. He knew what lay before, and he could face death with equanimity. Uh, only concerned that Christ be glorified.

That Christ might be magnified, whether by life or by death. And I believe the Lord was magnified in his death. And he went to Rome, put his head down on the block, and the executioner's sword came down.

And Paul passed into the presence of the Lord to hear his Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Maybe some of you have come to the conference and you're discouraged.

I battle discouragement. You probably think, oh, Carl and Bill, everything is gloria in excelsis. Cloud number nine.

All mountaintop experiences. Don't believe it. I face discouragement.

Something that's helped me, and it isn't even a verse of scripture. Moody once said, I've never known God to use a discouraged person. When I tend to get discouraged, I think of that.

Well, I do want the Lord to use me, so I better snap out of it. Some of you might be coming here at the conference under adverse circumstances. Things seem to be against you.

Live above the circumstances. Take page from Paul's letters and live. Above the circumstances.

We can do it by the power of the word of God. We can't do it by our own power because it's too supernatural. May the Lord bless his word to us.

I just think of a thing that East Stanley Jones said once that really has been a help to me. He said, when the blows of life come in, I try to recover within the hour. Well, I can't recover within the hour.

I might as well be honest with you. But just that little statement has somehow been a help to me. Don't buckle under it.

Try to recover within the hour. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for your faithful servant, the great Apostle Paul. We thank you that he was indeed exhibit A of what you can do, what the grace of God can do in the life of a man.

We thank you for the way he lived above the circumstances. So often we just crash under them, give way to them, adopt a fatalistic attitude. Lord, help us to soar with eagle wings.

We just pray that you will bless your word to our hearts this morning. In Jesus name. Amen.

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