



*As you hold
firmly to the
word of life,
and then I will
be able to
boast on the
day of Christ
that I did not
run or labor
in vain.*

Phil 2 : 16

Great Expectations

Compiled By Doctor Harold Bollinger

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Forward

I was born to a pastor and his wife in a small community in the southwest during the 30's while the dust storms were still rolling across the plains.

When only seven days old, my father died leaving my young mother with a new baby and other children. In time my mother married a local farmer and we moved to our country home.

When the house had been built, it was lined up with the North Star in an effort to make it square with the world. In this four-room house, our family of seven grew and developed. No indoor plumbing or electricity was necessary.

Our expectations were based on the blessings of the Lord. We attended church, and prayed together. We grew and learned to work.

While still in my teens, I married a local girl, and we headed for Bible College, as the calling and desire to be a preacher was ever upon me.

Today, after more than 60 years of ministry, my hope is still in the Lord.

My expectations are great. The opportunity to attend school was given to me many times, and I learned and grew.

Today, I write for a Bible College in preparing text and lessons. After hundreds of hours of studying the word of God, my longed-for expectations are being fulfilled.

Look into the Word of God. Join me in receiving your great expectations.

Dr. Harold Bollinger

Chapter 1

An expected end for your service and love

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

A leader who stirs us to move ahead encourages us all. We want one who believes we can do the task he has given and who will be with us all the way. God is that kind of leader. He knows the future, and his plans for us are good and full of hope. As long as God, who knows the future, provides our agenda and goes with us as we fulfill his mission, we can have boundless hope. This does not mean that we will be spared pain, suffering, or hardship, but that God will see us through to a glorious conclusion.

God did not forget his people, even though they were captive in Babylon. He planned to give them a new beginning with a new purpose—to turn them into new people. In times of deep trouble, it may appear as though God has forgotten you. But God may be preparing you, as he did the people of Judah, for a new beginning with him at the center.

According to God's wise plan, his people were to have hope and a future; consequently they could call upon him in confidence. Although the exiles were in a difficult place and time, they should not despair because they had God's presence, the privilege of prayer, and God's grace. God can be sought and found when we seek him wholeheartedly.

God is a loving and a peaceful God, He would never wish that bad things would happen to us. God wants to give us the desires of our hearts if we would only seek Him first.

Expect Your Path to be Directed by the Lord

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
[6] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Leaning has the sense of putting your whole weight on something, resting on and trusting in that person or thing. When we have an important decision to make, we sometimes feel that we can't trust anyone—not even God. But God knows what is best for us. He is a better judge of what we want than even we are! We must trust him completely in every choice we make. We should not omit careful thinking or belittle our God-given ability to reason; but we should not trust our own ideas to the exclusion of all others. We must not be wise in our own eyes. We should always be willing to listen to and be corrected by God's Word and wise counselors. Bring your decisions to God in prayer; use the Bible as your guide; and then follow God's leading. He will make your paths straight by both guiding and protecting you.

To receive God's guidance, said Solomon, we must acknowledge God in all our ways. This means turning every area of life over to him. About a thousand years later, Jesus emphasized this same truth (Matthew 6:33). Look at your values and priorities. What is important to you? In what areas have you not acknowledged him? What is his advice? In many areas of your life you may already acknowledge God, but it is in the areas where you attempt to restrict or ignore his influence that will cause you grief. Make him a vital part of everything you do; then he will guide you because you will be working to accomplish his purposes.

Love and faithfulness are important character qualities. Both involve actions as well as attitudes. A loving person not only feels love; he or she also acts loyally and responsibly. A faithful person not only believes the truth; he or she also works for justice for others. Thoughts and words are not enough—our lives reveal whether we are truly loving and faithful. Do your actions measure up to your attitudes?

Giving to God first helps us conquer greed, helps us properly manage God's resources, and opens us up to receive God's special blessing.

Chapter 2

A Woman who expected to be healed

Luke 8:43-48

And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, [44] Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd. [45] And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? [46] And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. [47] And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him and how she was healed immediately. [48] And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

Many people surrounded Jesus as he made his way toward Jairus's house. It was virtually impossible to get through the multitude, but one woman fought her way desperately through the crowd in order to touch Jesus.

As soon as she did so, she was healed. What a difference there is between the crowds which are curious about Jesus and the few who reach out and touch him!

Today, many people are vaguely familiar with Jesus, but nothing in their lives is changed or bettered by this passing acquaintance. It is only faith that releases God's healing power. Are you just curious about God, or do you reach out to him in faith, knowing that his mercy will bring healing to your body, soul, and spirit?

It isn't that Jesus didn't know who had touched him; it's that he wanted the woman to step forward and identify herself and make a confession of faith.

Jesus wanted to teach her that his cloak did not contain magical properties, but that her faith in him had healed her.

He may also have wanted to teach the crowds a lesson.

According to Jewish law, a man who touched a menstruating woman became ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:19-28).

This was true whether her bleeding was normal or, as in this woman's case, the result of illness.

To protect themselves from such defilement, Jewish men carefully avoided touching, speaking to, or even looking at women in this condition..

By contrast, Jesus proclaimed to hundreds of people that this "unclean" woman had touched him—and then he healed her.

In Jesus' mind, this suffering woman was not to be overlooked. As God's creation, she deserved attention and respect.

The same Jesus is calling upon you to expect to receive from the Lord what ever you need might be.

If you are in need of healing, expect to receive healing and let that experience glorify Jesus.

Expect to Receive Strength from God

Philip. 4:13

I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.

In 1 Cor. 9:11-18, Paul wrote that he didn't accept gifts from the Corinthian church because he didn't want to be accused of preaching only to get money. But Paul maintained that it was a church's responsibility to support God's ministers (1 Cor. 9:14). He accepted the Philippians' gift because they gave it willingly and because he was in need.

Paul knew how to be content whether he had plenty or whether he was in need. The secret was drawing on Christ's power for strength. Do you have great needs, or are you discontented because you don't have what you want? Learn to rely on God's promises and Christ's power to help you be content. If you always want more, ask God to remove that desire and teach you contentment in every circumstance. He will supply all your needs, but in a way that he knows is best for you

Paul was content because he could see life from God's point of view. He focused on what he was supposed to *do*, not what he felt he should *have*. Paul had his priorities straight, and he was grateful for everything God had given him. Paul had detached himself from the nonessentials so that he could concentrate on the eternal. Often the desire for more or better possessions is really a longing to fill an empty place in a person's life. To what are you drawn when you feel empty inside? How can you find true contentment? The answer lies in your perspective, your priorities, and your source of power.

Can we really do everything? The power we receive in union with Christ is sufficient to do his will and to face the challenges that arise from our commitment to doing it. He does not grant us superhuman ability to accomplish anything we can imagine without regard to his interests. As we contend for the faith we will face troubles, pressures, and trials. As they come, ask Christ to strengthen you.

Chapter 3

Expect to Receive Power and Love and a Sound Mind

2 Tim. 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). Later, on his third missionary journey, he stayed there for almost three years (Acts 19-20).

Ephesus, along with Rome, Corinth, Antioch, and Alexandria, was one of the major cities in the Roman empire. It was a center for the commerce, politics, and religions of Asia Minor, and the location of the temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis (Diana).

The church at Ephesus may have been plagued by the same heresy that was threatening the church at Colosse—the teaching that to be acceptable to God, a person had to discover certain hidden knowledge and had to worship angels (Col. 2:8, 18).

Thinking that it would aid in their salvation, some Ephesians constructed mythical stories based on Old Testament history or genealogies. Their own interests rather than Christ's message motivated the false teachers.

They embroiled the church in endless and irrelevant questions and controversies, taking precious time away from the study of the truth.

Today we could also enter into worthless and irrelevant discussions, but such disputes quickly crowd out the life-changing message of Christ. Stay away from religious speculation and pointless theological arguments. Such exercises may seem harmless at first, but they have a way of sidetracking us from the central message of the gospel—the person and work of Jesus Christ.

They expend time we should use to share the gospel with others. You should avoid anything that keeps you from doing God's work.

There are many leaders and authorities today that demand allegiance, some of whom would even have us turn from Christ to follow them. When they seem to know the Bible, their influence can be dangerously subtle. How can you recognize false teaching?

- (1) It promotes controversies instead of helping people come to Jesus (1 Tim. 1:4).
- (2) Those often initiate it whose motivation is to make a name for themselves (1 Tim. 1:7).
- (3) It will be contrary to the true teaching of the Scriptures (1 Tim. 1:6-7; 1 Tim. 4:1-3).

To protect yourself from the deception of false teachers, you should learn what the Bible teaches and remain steadfast in your faith in Christ alone. He desires to give you power, love and a sound mind.

Chapter 4

Expect All Things to work together for those Who are called of God.

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

God works in “all things”—not just isolated incidents—for our good. This does not mean that all that happens to us is good. Evil is prevalent in our fallen world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our long-range good. Note that God is not working to make us happy, but to fulfill his purpose. Note also that this promise is not for everybody. Only those who love God and are called according to his purpose can claim it. Those who are “called” are those whom the Holy Spirit convinces and enables to receive Christ.

Such people have a new perspective, a new mind-set on life. They trust in God, not life’s treasures; they look for their security in heaven, not on earth; they learn to accept, not resent, pain and persecution because God is with them.

God’s ultimate goal for us is to make us like Christ (1 John 3:2). As we become more and more like him, we discover our true selves, the persons we were created to be. How can we be conformed to Christ’s likeness? By reading and heeding the Word, by studying his life on earth through the Gospels, by being filled with his Spirit, and by doing his work in the world.

God chose certain people to receive his gift of salvation. They point to verses like Ephes. 1:11 that says we are “predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.” Others believe that God *foreknew* those who would respond to him and upon those he set his mark (predestined). What is clear is that God’s *purpose* for people was not an afterthought; it was settled before the foundation of the world. People are to serve and honor God. If you have believed in Christ, you can rejoice in the fact that God has always known you. God’s love is eternal. His wisdom and power are supreme. He will guide and protect you until you will one day stand in his presence.

Exalt Jesus among the Unbelievers And Expect a Blessing

Psalm 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth.

War and destruction are inevitable, but so is God's final victory. At that time, all will stand quietly before the Lord Almighty. How proper, then, for us to be still now, reverently honoring him and his power and majesty. Take time each day to be still and to exalt God.

These Psalms are written as hymns of praise, celebrating deliverance from some great foe. Psalm 46 may have been written when the Assyrian army invaded the land and surrounded Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:13-19:37).

The fear of mountains or cities suddenly crumbling into the sea as the result of a nuclear blast haunts many people today. But the psalmist says that even if the world ends, we need not fear. In the face of utter destruction, the writer expressed a quiet confidence in God's ability to save him. It seems impossible to consider the end of the world without becoming consumed by fear, but the Bible is clear—God is our refuge even in the face of total destruction. He is not merely a temporary retreat; he is our eternal refuge and can provide strength in any circumstance.

Allow your songs of praise to exalt the name of Jesus.

The Lord Most High is awesome beyond words, but this didn't keep Bible writers from trying to describe him. And it shouldn't keep us from talking about him either. We can't describe God completely, but we can tell others what he has done for us. Don't let the indescribable aspects of God's greatness prevent you from telling others what you know about him.

Chapter 5

Expect the Lord to be with you

Joshua 1:9

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither are thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Many people think that prosperity and success come from having power, influential personal contacts, and a relentless desire to get ahead. But the strategy for gaining prosperity that God taught Joshua goes against such criteria.

He said that to succeed Joshua must:

- (1) be strong and courageous because the task ahead would not be easy,
- (2) obey God's law, and
- (3) constantly read and study the Book of the Law—God's Word.

To be successful, follow God's words to Joshua. You may not succeed by the world's standards, but you will be a success in God's eyes—and his opinion lasts forever.

During the previous year, the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had asked Moses if they could settle just east of the promised land. The area was excellent pastureland for their large flocks. Moses agreed to give them the land on one condition—which they help their fellow tribes enter and conquer the Promised Land. Only after the land was conquered could they return to their homes. Now it was time for these three tribes to live up to their agreement.

God was giving the people rest. This was wonderful news to these people who had been on the move for their entire lives.

Expect Your Mind to be at Peace

Isaiah 26:3

Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

We can never avoid strife in the world around us, but with God we can know perfect peace even in turmoil. When we are devoted to him, our whole attitude is steady and stable. Supported by God's unchanging love and mighty power, we are not shaken by the surrounding chaos (see Phil. 4:7). Do you want peace? Keep your thoughts on and your trust in God.

At times the "path of the righteous" doesn't seem smooth and it isn't easy to do God's will, but we are never alone when we face tough times. God is there to help us through difficulties, to comfort us, and to lead us. God does this by giving us a purpose (keeping our mind centered on him, Isaiah 26:3) and giving us provisions as we travel. God provides us with relationships of family, friends, and mentors. God gives us wisdom to make decisions and faith to trust him. Don't despair; stay on God's path.

Even wicked people receive God's benefits, but that doesn't teach them to do what is right. Sometimes God's judgment teaches us more than God's good gifts. If you have been enriched by God's goodness and grace, respond to him with your grateful devotion.

No matter how difficult times may be, we have hope when we keep our trust in him. Can you wait patiently for God to act?

Some people say there is no life after death. Others believe that there is, but it is not physical life. But Isaiah tells us that our bodies shall rise again. According to 1 Cor. 15:50-53, all the dead believers will arise with new imperishable bodies—bodies like the one Jesus had when he was resurrected (see Phil. 3:21). Isaiah 26:19 is not the only Old Testament verse to speak about the resurrection; see also Job 19:26; Psalm 16:10; Daniel 12:2, 13.

Expect to never be Separated from the Love of God

Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

These words were written to a church that would soon undergo terrible persecution. In just a few years, Paul's hypothetical situations would turn into painful realities. This passage reaffirms God's profound love for his people. No matter what happens to us, no matter where we are, we can never be lost to his love. Suffering should not drive us away from God, but help us to identify with him further and allow his love to reach us and heal us.

These verses contain one of the most comforting promises in all Scripture. Believers have always had to face hardships in many forms: persecution, illness, and imprisonment, even death. These could cause them to fear that Christ has abandoned them. But Paul exclaims that it is *impossible* to be separated from Christ. His death for us is proof of his unconquerable love. Nothing can stop Christ's constant presence with us. God tells us how great his love is so that we will feel totally secure in him. If we believe these overwhelming assurances, we will not be afraid.

Powers are unseen forces of evil in the universe, forces like Satan and his fallen angels (see Ephes. 6:12). In Christ we are super-conquerors, and his love will protect us from any such forces.

Paul says that Jesus is interceding for us in heaven. God has acquitted us and has removed our sin and guilt, so it is Satan, not God, who accuses us. When he does, Jesus, the advocate for our defense, stands at God's right hand to present our case.

Chapter 6

Expect God to Continue a Good Work in You

Philip. 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

The God who began a good work in us continues it throughout our lifetime and will finish it when we meet him face to face. God's work *for* us began when Christ died on the cross in our place. His work *in* us began when we first believed. Now the Holy Spirit lives in us, enabling us to be more like Christ every day. Paul is describing the process of Christian growth and maturity that began when we accepted Jesus and continues until Christ returns.

When God starts a project, he completes it! As with the Philippians, God will help you grow in grace until he has completed his work in your life. When you are discouraged, remember that God won't give up on you. He promises to finish the work he has begun. When you feel incomplete, unfinished, or distressed by your shortcomings, remember God's promise and provision. Don't let your present condition rob you of the joy of knowing Christ or keep you from growing closer to him.

Paul speaks of his Roman imprisonment. Wherever Paul was, even in prison, he faithfully preached the Good News. Remember Paul's inspiring example when hindrances, small or large, slow down your work for God.

Paul had such a longing to see the Christians at Philippi. His love and affection for them was based not merely on past experiences, but also on the unity that comes when believers draw upon Christ's love. All Christians are part of God's family and thus share equally in the transforming power of his love. Do you feel a deep love for fellow Christians, friends and strangers alike? Let Christ's love motivate you to love other Christians and to express that love in your actions toward them.

Expect to Walk humbly with your God

Micah 6:8

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

People have tried all kinds of ways to please God (Micah 6:6-7), but God has made his wishes clear: he wants his people to be just, merciful, and to walk humbly with him. In your efforts to please God, examine these areas on a regular basis. Are you fair in your dealings with people? Do you show mercy to those who wrong you? Are you learning humility?

The story of Balak and Balaam is found in Numbers 22-24. Shittim was the Israelites' campsite east of the Jordan River just before they entered the promised land (Joshua 2:1). There the people received many of God's instructions about how to live. Gilgal, their first campsite after crossing the Jordan (Joshua 4:19), was where the people renewed their covenant with God (Joshua 5:3-9). These two places represent God's loving care for his people: his willingness both to protect them and to warn them about potential troubles. In Micah's day, the people had forgotten this covenant and its benefits and had turned away from God.

God continued to be kind to his forgetful people, but their short memory and lack of thankfulness condemned them. When people refuse to see how fortunate they are and begin to take God's gifts for granted, they become self-centered. Regularly remember God's goodness and thank him. Remembering God's past protection will help you see his present provision.

Micah could not find an upright person anywhere in the land. Even today, uprightness (honesty, integrity) is difficult to find. Society rationalizes sin, and even Christians sometimes compromise Christian principles in order to do what they want. It is easy to convince ourselves that we deserve a few breaks, especially when "everyone else" is doing it. But the standards for honesty come from God, not society. We are honest because God is truth, and we are to be like him

**Expects the Lord to Redeem you
And Call You by Name.**

Isaiah 43:1

But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

God says that despite the people's spiritual failure, he will show them mercy, bring them back from captivity, and restore them. He would give them an outpouring of love, not wrath. Then the world would know that God alone had done this.

God created Israel and made it special to him. God redeemed Israel and summoned them by name to be those who belong to him. God protected Israel in times of trouble. We are important to God, and he also summons us by name and gives us his name (Isaiah 43:7)! When we bear God's wonderful name, we must never do anything that would bring shame to it.

Going through rivers of difficulty will either cause you to drown or force you to grow stronger. If you go in your own strength, you are more likely to drown. If you invite the Lord to go with you, he will protect you.

God gave other nations to Persia in exchange for returning the Jews to their homeland. Egypt, Cush, and parts of Arabia (Seba) had attacked Persia, and the Persians defeated them.

Israel's task was to be a witness (Isaiah 44:8), telling the world who God is and what he has done. Believers today share the responsibility of being God's witnesses. Do people know what God is like through your words and example? They cannot see God directly, but they can see him reflected in you.

The Israelites had been as slaves in Egypt before the exodus. They would cry to God, and again he would hear and deliver them. A new exodus would take place through a new desert. The past miracles were nothing compared to what God would do for his people in the future.

Chapter 7

Expect to Receive a Mansion in Heaven

John 14:2

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Jesus' words show that the way to eternal life, though unseen, is secure—as secure as your trust in Jesus. He has already prepared the way to eternal life. The only issue that may still be unsettled is your willingness to believe.

There are few verses in Scripture that describe eternal life, but these few verses are rich with promises. Here Jesus says, “I am going there to prepare a place for you,” and “I will come back.” We can look forward to eternal life because Jesus has promised it to all who believe in him. Although the details of eternity are unknown, we need not fear because Jesus is preparing for us and will spend eternity with us.

This is one of the most basic and important passages in Scripture. How can we know the way to God is Only through Jesus. Jesus is the way because he is both God and man. By uniting our lives with his, we are united with God. Trust Jesus to take you to the Father, and all the benefits of being God's child will be yours.

Jesus says he is the *only* way to God the Father. Some people may argue that this way is too narrow. In reality, it is wide enough for the whole world, if the world chooses to accept it. Instead of worrying about how limited it sounds to have only one way, we should be saying, “Thank you, God, for providing a sure way to get to you!”

As the *way*, Jesus is our path to the Father. As the *truth*, he is the reality of all God's promises. As the *life*, he joins his divine life to ours, both now and eternally.

Jesus is the visible, tangible image of the invisible God. He is the complete revelation of what God is like

Expect the Compassion of Jesus to Never Fail

Lamentations 3:22

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

Jeremiah saw one ray of hope in all the sin and sorrow surrounding him: “Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.” God willingly responds with help when we ask. Perhaps there is some sin in your life that you thought God would not forgive. God’s steadfast love and mercy are greater than any sin, and he promises forgiveness.

To “bear the yoke” means to willingly come under God’s discipline and learn what he wants to teach. This involves several important factors: (1) silent reflection on what God wants, (2) repentant humility, (3) self-control in the face of adversity, and (4) confident patience, depending on the divine Teacher to bring about loving lessons in our lives. God has several long-term and short-term lessons for you right now. Are you doing your homework?

To “offer his cheek to one who would strike him” means to submit to physical abuse without defending yourself or fighting back. Jesus taught his followers to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), and he exemplified this at the highest level just before his crucifixion (Matthew 27:27-31; Luke 22:64; John 18:22; John 19:3).

Parents discipline children to produce right behavior. God disciplined Judah to produce right living and genuine worship. We must not complain about discipline but learn from it, trusting God and being willing to change. We must allow God’s correction to bring about the kind of behavior in our lives that pleases him.

At one point in his ministry, Jeremiah was thrown into an empty cistern, and he was left to die in the mire at the bottom (Jeremiah 38:6-13). But God rescued him. Jeremiah used this experience as a picture of the nation sinking into sin. If they turned to God, he would rescue them.

Chapter 8

Expect the Lord to Rejoice over you with Joy

Zeph. 3:17

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

The Lord himself will remove his hand of judgment, disperse Israel's enemies, and come to live among his people. He will give them gladness. We sin when we pursue happiness by cutting ourselves off from fellowship with God—the only person who can make us truly happy. Zephaniah points out that gladness results when we allow God to be with us. We do that by faithfully following him and obeying his commands. Then God rejoices over us with singing. If you want to be happy, draw close to the source of happiness by obeying God.

The message of doom in the beginning of the book becomes a message of hope by the end. There will be a new day when God will bless his people. If the leaders in the church today were to hear a message from a prophet of God, the message would probably resemble the book of Zephaniah. Under Josiah's religious reforms, the people did return to God *outwardly*, but their hearts were far from him. Zephaniah encouraged the nation to gather together and pray for salvation. We must also ask ourselves: Is our reform merely an outward show, or is it changing our hearts and lives? We need to gather together and pray, to walk humbly with God, to do what is right, and to hear the message of hope regarding the new world to come.

God will remove the proud people and leave the meek and humble. God is opposed to the proud and haughty of every generation. But those who are meek and humble, both physically and spiritually, will be rewarded because they trust in God. Self-reliance and arrogance have no place among God's people or in his kingdom.

All Jews, no matter how far they have been scattered, will return to worship God.

Through Prayer and Supplications, Expect your prayers to be answered

Philip. 4:6

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Imagine never being “anxious about anything”! It seems like an impossibility—we all have worries on the job, in our homes, at school. But Paul’s advice is to turn our worries into prayers. Do you want to worry less? Then pray more! Whenever you start to worry, stop and pray.

God’s peace is different from the world’s peace (see John 14:27). True peace is not found in positive thinking, in absence of conflict, or in good feelings. It comes from knowing that God is in control. Our citizenship in Christ’s kingdom is sure, our destiny is set, and we can have victory over sin. Let God’s peace guard your heart against anxiety.

What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Paul tells us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Do you have problems with impure thoughts and daydreams? Examine what you are putting into your mind through television, books, conversations, movies, and magazines. Replace harmful input with wholesome material. Above all, read God’s Word and pray. Ask God to help you focus your mind on what is good and pure. It takes practice, but it can be done.

It’s not enough to hear or read the Word of God, or even to know it well. We must also put it into practice. How easy it is to listen to a sermon and forget what the preacher said. How easy it is to read the Bible and not think about how to live differently. How easy it is to debate what a passage means and not live out that meaning. Exposure to God’s Word is not enough. It must lead to obedience.

Chapter 9

Expect the Lord to Strengthen and uphold you

Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

God chose Israel through Abraham because he wanted to, not because the people deserved it (Deut. 7:6-8; Deut. 9:4-6). Although God chose the Israelites to represent him to the world, they failed to do this; so God punished them and sent them into captivity. Now all believers are God's chosen people, and all share the responsibility of representing him to the world. One day God will bring all his faithful people together. We need not fear because (1) God is with us ("I am with you"), (2) God has established a relationship with us ("I am your God"), and (3) God gives us assurance of his strength, help, and victory over sin and death. Have you realized all the ways God has helped you?

Israel was surrounded by many nations whose gods supposedly had special powers, such as raising crops and providing victories in war. These gods, however, failed to deliver. A god with limited or no power at all is not really a god. When we are tempted to put our trust in something other than the living God—money, career, family, or even military power—we should stop and ask some serious questions. Will it come through? Will it unfailingly provide what I am looking for? God delivers. When he makes a promise, he keeps it. He is the only completely trustworthy God.

Each generation gets caught up in its own problems, but God's plan embraces all generations. When your great-grandparents lived, God worked personally in the lives of his people. When your great-grandchildren live, God will still work personally in the lives of his people. He is the only one who sees 100 years from now as clearly as 100 years ago. When you are concerned about the future, talk with God, who knows the generations of the future as well as he knows the generations of the past.

Expect to Run and not be Weary

Isaiah 40:31

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah describes God's power to create, his provision to sustain, and his presence to help. God is almighty and all-powerful; but even so, he cares for each of us personally. No person or thing can be compared to God (Isaiah 40:25). We describe God as best we can with our limited knowledge and language, but we only limit our understanding of him and his power when we compare him to what we experience on earth. What is your concept of God, especially as revealed in his Son, Jesus Christ? Don't limit his work in your life by underestimating him.

Even the strongest people get tired at times, but God's power and strength never diminish. He is never too tired or too busy to help and listen. His strength is our source of strength. When you feel all of life crushing you and cannot go another step, remember that you can call upon God to renew your strength.

Hoping in the Lord is expecting that his promise of strength will help us to rise above life's distractions and difficulties. It also means trusting in God. Trusting helps us to be prepared when he speaks to us. Then we will be patient when he asks us to wait and expect him to fulfill the promises found in his Word.

God is often pictured as a shepherd, gently caring for and guiding his flock. He is powerful (Isaiah 40:10), yet careful and gentle. He is called a shepherd (Psalm 23); the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14); the great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20); and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). Note that the shepherd is caring for the most defenseless members of his society: children and those caring for them., but rather the one that **relies on God's caring strength.**

Chapter 10

Expect to think only on those things that are Pleasing to God

Philip. 4:8

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, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Paul tells us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Do you have problems with impure thoughts and daydreams? Examine what you are putting into your mind through television, books, conversations, movies, and magazines. Replace harmful input with wholesome material. Above all, read God's Word and pray. Ask God to help you focus your mind on what is good and pure. It takes practice, but it can be done.

We can trust that God will always meet our needs. Whatever we need on earth he will always supply, even if it is the courage to face death as Paul did. Whatever we need in heaven he will supply. We must remember, however, the difference between our wants and our needs. Most people want to feel good and avoid discomfort or pain. We may not get all that we want. By trusting in Christ, our attitudes and appetites can change from wanting everything to accepting his provision and power to live for him.

There were many Christians in Rome; some were even in Caesar's household. Perhaps Paul, while awaiting trial, was making converts of the Roman civil service! Paul sent greetings from these Roman Christians to the believers at Philippi. The gospel had spread to all strata of society, linking people who had no other bond but Christ. The Roman Christians and the Philippian Christians were brothers and sisters because of their unity in Christ.

Expect to Rejoice for Evermore

1 Thes. 5:16-18

Rejoice evermore. [17] Pray without ceasing. [18] In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you

Our joy, prayers, and thankfulness should not fluctuate with our circumstances or feelings. Obeying these three commands—be joyful, pray continually, and give thanks—often goes against our natural inclinations. When we make a conscious decision to do what God says, however, we will begin to see people in a new perspective. When we do God’s will, we will find it easier to be joyful and thankful.

We cannot spend all our time on our knees, but it is possible to have a prayerful attitude at all times. This attitude is built upon acknowledging our dependence on God, realizing his presence within us, and determining to obey him fully. Then we will find it natural to pray frequent, spontaneous, short prayers. A prayerful attitude is not a substitute for regular times of prayer but should be an outgrowth of those times.

Paul was not teaching that we should thank God *for* everything that happens to us, but *in* everything. Evil does not come from God, so we should not thank him for it. But when evil strikes, we can still be thankful for God’s presence and for the good that he will accomplish through the distress.

As Christians, we cannot avoid every kind of evil because we live in a sinful world. We can, however, make sure that we don’t give evil a foothold by avoiding tempting situations and concentrating on obeying God.

The spirit, soul, and body refer not so much to the distinct parts of a person as to the entire being of a person. This expression is Paul’s way of saying that God must be involved in *every* aspect of our lives. It is wrong to think that we can separate our spiritual lives from everything else, obeying God only in some ethereal sense or living for him only one day each week. Allow God to be in control in every area of your life, and expect only the best.