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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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"My Peace I Leave With You"

John 14:27

**Prayer:** *Father, we just again, we thank you for just the fact that we are gathered here today and celebrating the freedom that is still ours and we are here to again focus on what you've done for us on the cross in a particular way and I just pray especially, Lord, for the grace of the presence of your Holy Spirit, guide us as we walk through your word, give us the ability to hear the word as it's spoken, give us the ability to understand it and to once again make it a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as we just said, this is our communion service, and Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated his Passover. Matthew 26 says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of*

sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. He then asked them to repeat this on a regular basis and this is what we call the Lord's table. And so we celebrate this table once a month and we do that by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us at the cross, by examining ourselves and that means asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our sins, and then by participating in the elements. John 6:53 says: So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

We've been following the life of Jesus for quite a while now, we're at the 14th chapter of the gospel of John, and Jesus is mere hours away from his crucifixion and he's just had this disastrous conversation with his disciples in which they revealed that after three years of the most intimate contact they could possibly have with him, they still know next to nothing about who he is and what he is here for. And even though it's only hours away from Jesus's own crucifixion, he is far more concerned with comforting and encouraging his disciples than his own comfort. And he tells them

that after he leaves he's going to be sending them in particular a comforter, namely the Holy Spirit, and he says this in *John 14:25*, he says: *"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*

This morning I want to focus in on that last statement that Jesus made in verse 27: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."* Now there's three different kinds of peaces that occur that Jesus is speaking about, three different kind of peaces when you enter into the kingdom of God. First there is for the very first time an end to the warfare between man and God, and that's followed by a certain loss of peace which is followed by God's peace. We have an end of war, an end of peace, and God's peace. Let me explain. See war's end is the reason why Jesus Christ came in the first place. Jesus came to bring a peace between two parties who were at war. The parties were God and mankind. You know, one of the most well-known verses in the entire Bible is one that you often find printed on Christmas cards. It's the one describing the fact that God left heaven

itself and that he entered into human flesh to live out his life perfectly and then offered that life as a substitute on the cross for our lives of sin. And if you look at this verse, you can see it really is a flat-out declaration of peace. This is the verse many of you are familiar with in *Luke 2:14*, it says: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*" Now the peace, the peace that God is speaking about here is the peace that follows when fallen sinful rebels lay down their arms and surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. See, sharing the gospel is really a matter of laying out for folks first the case that we are at war with our creator; and secondly, that Jesus Christ came to earth to establish a means for creating peace between God and his creation. An absolutely essential part of sharing the gospel is really, it's just a willingness to let people know that they're at war with their creator. And making light of the conflict between God and man is something that God considers to be a detestable dereliction of duty if you're a shepherd. According to God, God says of false shepherds in *Jeremiah 6:14*, says: "*They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them,*" says the LORD. And what God is saying is that he's going to hold

us shepherds responsible for failing to warn people about the conflict with God that they are engaged in every single day of their lives. You know, this is also why Jesus can refer to those who share the gospel this way in *Matthew 5:9*, he says, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*" See, Jesus became our peace by satisfying God's demand that every single sin ever committed be paid for. I tell folks all the time there's only two people in the universe that will ever be able to pay for your sin, that is either you can pay or by faith in Jesus's sacrifice on the cross Jesus can. And that's why Jesus -- that's why God says in *Ephesians 2:13*: *But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.* You see, the day that you asked Jesus Christ into your life is the day that you establish peace between yourself and your creator, but it's also the day to one degree or another that you find yourself at war with your fellow man. See, Jesus warned us that the more we identify with him, the less the world is going to be happy with us. He said this in *John 15*, he said, "*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*" Now you may notice here Jesus is not singling out some overtly

religious behavior as the cause of the world's hatred, I mean, he's not talking to street preachers and evangelists here, he's talking to ordinary Christian folk. And what he is saying there is to the extent that you belong to and are comfortable with this world, hey, it's going to love you. But to the extent that you identify with me and my kingdom, well, you will find this world to be a much more hostile place. And God insists this is a binary decision. He says you cannot serve two masters. What he says is "yes" to one side is "no" to the other, and he will not accept any attempt to have it both ways. It says in *James 4:4*: "*You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*" Jesus didn't mince words about how he was going to be received by the world and how the effects of identifying with him at the expense of the world would extend even to the most intimate relationships we have. He said this in *Matthew 10:34*, he said: "*Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.*" I mean, I know exactly what Jesus is referring to here. Jesus was a major problem between myself and my parents for most of my adult life. And my guess is there's many, many other folks in this room who have struggled to

reconcile family and friends with Christ and kingdom.

As the elders begin to distribute the bread, I'd like us to spend some time this morning just focused on what it really means to have peace with God and to understand that that peace comes at a price. Verse 19 says: *"If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own."* And as the elders are distributing the bread, consider also the warning that God gives us about communion itself. It's in *1 Corinthians 11:28*, God says, or it says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* You know, I say this every time we do this because it's so incredibly important, I say that communion is an extremely serious undertaking and to enter into it in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster. And what I'm asking and what I'm suggesting is if you're not absolutely confident you are a child of the King or if you first need to be reconciled with your brother and sister before you bring the sacrifice of yourself to this altar, then don't participate. As the elements are being handed to you, just pass them on to someone else. And nobody's going to look

askance at you. They may in fact think you wise for the respect that you're showing for communion. But on the other hand, I also want to point out that we can make the mistake of thinking that unless we're spotlessly perfect we are unworthy to receive communion, and that too is a mistake. You see, being a child of the King does not mean that you don't sin, and it doesn't mean that you never, never fall, it means that you recognize that salvation is a gift that no one, no one can ever earn just by being good. I repeat each month this quote from Dane Ortlund because it's so apropos. It says this: "In the kingdom of God the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means that when we do fail, when we do sin, we are aware of the fact that we have sinned and we're aware of that because God himself in the form of the Holy Spirit lives within us and so we grieve knowing that we have a Father who longs to forgive us, who longs to cleanse us. He says this in *1 John 1:9*, he says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So understand, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you are spotless and sinless. It means that we understand that when we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, someone who is speaking out on our behalf. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father*



-- *Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* So that's the key, you see, because we know we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own, we are now free to eat from the table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. He lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserve to die so that we could be made worthy of heaven. As you are considering, as you are thinking, as you are meditating this morning, we want to consider the cost of identifying with Christ and his kingdom. Take a moment or so and meditate on that.

*1 Corinthians 11:23 says: For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Take, and eat.*

*John 14:27 says: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." I've spoken about the peace that God gives us first, an end to the warfare that everyone on this planet is engaged in; secondly, that it is the peace that you no longer have when you finally make a break with the world; and thirdly, there's the peace that God alone can give. "My peace I give to you," Jesus says, "not as the world gives do I give to*

you." See, the peace that Jesus gives to us is like nothing the world has ever offered to you. And where so many seem to make a mistake about understanding what it means to be a Christian is that they think that the peace of God is something it's not. It's almost never designed to take us around the difficulties and struggles in this world but rather to take us through them. You know, many a Christian has been shocked to find that faith in Christ is an invitation to trials and tribulation rather than a pathway out of them, and that's why *1 Peter* warns us: *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.* See, after the initial joy of finding peace with Christ, we find out that life as a Christian is not simply a bed of roses. We as Christians learn what Paul knew when he wrote to Timothy in *2 Timothy 3*: *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* Now those who are genuinely his sheep find his grace in the midst of these trials and they find the means to survive and even prosper; but to those who were never his sheep, those trials have another function, they're a means of pruning away from the tree of life those branches that were never real in the first place.

You know, Jesus told a story about a sower and seeds and in that story he describes four different types of soil that the seed of the gospel falls in. Three of the four soils yield no fruit whatsoever. Even though two of those soils look extremely promising at the beginning, this is what Jesus said in *Matthew 13*, he says: *"As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up."* That's the gospel not even getting a start. It says: *"Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants."* Those soils represent people who were never saved to begin with. And the stony and the thorny soils all produced what appears at first glance to be fruit but subject at once to trials and then to the entanglements of the world, they quickly reveal themselves to produce fruit which is fruitless. They are basically fruitless branches. And Jesus says of branches like that in *John 15:6*: *"If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."*

Now, I don't want to be a rocky or a thorny soil Christian. I don't want to be a fruitless branch. And I want to know that when

I am going through a trial, when I am going through a struggle, that I too can have the peace of God working in my life. And to do that, we need to see God's peace, and that takes a special, special kind of sight. And to see it we also need to seek it, I mean, to literally have the discipline and desire to go after that peace; and thirdly, we need to speak it, that is, we need to express what the peace of God is doing in our lives for his glory. And so when it comes to the peace of God, we need to see it, to seek it, and to speak it. And we notice that when Jesus offered this peace to his disciples, well, it was on the eve of the worst day they would ever have in their lives. It was also the worst day Jesus would ever have in his life.

And so we ask how did Jesus himself see peace, seek peace, and speak peace in the midst of his trials? And how can we? And we look at *Hebrews 12:2* which says by: *Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* See, what God tells us first of all is that when we are in struggle, when we're looking for peace, our vision needs to be fixed on Jesus first. Okay. Well, what do you mean by that? Well, Jesus went to the cross and he demonstrated how to do that, he went to the cross with his eyes fixed on the joy that his sacrifice would produce. There would be the joy of his

Father glorified, the joy of his sheep ransomed and rescued by his sacrifice, and it was that future joy that Jesus fixed his eyes on that enabled him to press through the present trauma that was inconceivably awful. So Jesus saw his peace and then he sought out a source of peace, but he didn't seek it for himself, he sought it for his disciples. And leaving his disciples he promised them this resource, he said in *John 14:25*: *"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."* See, Jesus is focusing on the joy that his sacrifice is going to bring and then he tells his disciples that the Holy Spirit is going to bring to their remembrance all that he has spoken, all that he has taught over the last three years. Well, we too have the very same resource. See, when I am in desperate need of peace, when I'm experiencing stress or fear or panic or doubt or depression, well, I, too, can trust God. I can place my trust firmly in him to bring into my remembrance the very same ability to see that Jesus promised to the disciples. That's the Holy Spirit; that's the resource that he promised us and he gives us the ability to see a much bigger picture than what I am looking at directly in front of me. I'll tell you what I personally do in those situations. I mean, when I sense the enemy is trying to steal my peace, when I sense that he is trying to threaten my present or my future, I

simply imagine the very worst thing as taking place. The worst. I just shoot right to the very end, okay, what's the very worst thing that could happen and I then I imagine to myself, understanding that God is still sufficient. I mean think about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. This is exactly what they did. This is the technique they embodied when they were staring into this fiery furnace. You know, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, unless you bow down to this idol, I'm going to throw you into that furnace. And their response to Nebuchadnezzar indicates that they had clearly considered the very worst possible outcome; they're going to be roasted alive. They considered the very worst possible outcome and they said, you know, even in that God is sufficient. This is *Daniel 3:16*, it says: *Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."* And what they say -- what they're saying there to the king essentially is no matter what you do to us, no matter what you think is the worst you can do, our God is still sufficient.

You know, the enemy loves to fill us with fear by suggesting all kinds of bad outcomes and dreadful circumstances that he wants to

cripple us with. And one way of dealing with those fiery darts is to consider the possibility of the worst taking place and then saying to ourselves, okay, even so, my God is sufficient. And essentially we're saying to the devil what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said to Nebuchadnezzar, he said, do your worst; my God's sufficient. It's a technique that was employed by many Old Testament saints. In fact, it's a technique I'm certain most of us in this room are already familiar with even though we don't realize it. In fact, I would suggest to you that most of us in this room have already memorized the scriptural examples we need to, we've already committed them to memory and we probably don't even realize it. See, David was a man who was absolutely beset by circumstances that could steal his peace and he understood how easily circumstance could rob him of that peace, whether it was Saul seeking his life, whether it was the Philistines or whether it was his own son Absalom. We know that David had many, many opportunities to see peace just vanish out of his life, and when that happened, David saw his peace in God and he sought his peace with God and then he spoke his peace about God. This is how he was able to recapture his peace, and my guess that most of you in this room already know the scripture that David spoke. It's *Psalm 23*. He said: *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.* Look what David is doing. See what he's

doing here. He's describing his fears first of all. He says:  
*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.* You don't get more fearful, you don't get more stressed out than that. My guess is you've already got stored in your memory what David's answer was to that, when I say: *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,* you remember what the next verse is. It's: *I will fear no evil.* I mean this is David stating categorically that no matter what the enemy, an enemy or the enemy, no matter what it sends him, he's not going to give in to fear. He will instead cling to the peace that is his. And you know why that peace is his? See, when I say what David says when he says "*I will fear no evil,*" what comes next is the reason why David has no fear. He says, "*I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.*" You see what David is saying, you hear what he is saying, it's really no different what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were saying. What they're saying is nothing, nothing that the enemy, an enemy or the enemy can bring that is greater or more powerful than the God who is with me, the God who promises to comfort me, the God who will walk me through this no matter what "this" is. You know, David summed up his fears with this very apt phrase: *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.* Well, when you fear no evil including the shadow of death, you have a peace and a power that passes understanding.



As the elders begin distributing the cup, let me give you some examples of what I mean. You know, I spoke last week about brother Wayne. I got a phone call from -- from a man last week who was stuck in Port Jervis, he needed a ride to East Stroudsburg. It's a long, long story, you'll have to look at the tape to get all the details. But the man was from Los Angeles and he phoned me to ask if I would help him somehow or other get to East Stroudsburg. And we -- as I'd mentioned before, the man was in terrible shape health-wise, he had full blown AIDS. And I could see -- I went to pick him up at the Days Inn in Port Jervis to take him to East Stroudsburg, and just the very effort of putting his luggage into the car left him panting. He was previously 240 pounds, he was down to 140 pounds. This is a man whose health was gone. And you know, we had gone through how he had gotten to find us, and I said, "What would you have done if nobody had responded to your call?" He said, "Well, I would have just started hitchhiking." Hitchhike, I mean, you would never survive that. And I said that, I said, "How in the world you ever do that?" He says, "Well, the doctor says I have four or five months at the most to live," he said, "so what do I care?" So I mean he literally pictured himself just getting out on the highway and sticking his thumb out. And what's in the back of his mind is if I die, God is still there. Does it get worse than dying? I mean does it get -- that's the max. You don't go beyond that, and here's somebody saying I don't care. I'm

just going to trust God, and if I die, I die. I mean Wayne could literally stare death in the face because all of the distractions of the world now had an eternal perspective for him because he only had months to live. He could now see the peace of God with crystal clarity because he knew without a doubt that God was with him and that his rod and his staff would comfort him. See, there's a freedom and a power in that that only God's people can experience and it comes from knowing that the power of the shadow of death has been swallowed up in Christ.

Donald Grey Barnhouse once gave an excellent description of what that shadow consists of. Tim Keller in his book *Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering* explains this, it says this:

Donald Grey Barnhouse who was a pastor at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia for many years lost his wife when his daughter was still a child. Dr. Barnhouse was trying to help his little girl, and himself, process the loss of his wife and her mother. Once when they were driving, a huge moving van passed them. As it passed, the shadow of the truck swept over the car. The minister had a thought. He said something like this, "Would you rather be run over by a truck, or by its shadow?" His daughter replied, "By the shadow of course. That can't hurt us at all." Dr. Barnhouse replied, "Right. If the truck doesn't hit you but only its shadow,

then you're fine. Well, it was only the shadow of death that went over your mother. She's actually alive -- more alive than we are. And that's because two thousand years ago, the real truck of death hit Jesus. And because death crushed Jesus, and we believe in him, now the only thing that can come over us is the shadow of death, and the shadow of death is but my entrance into glory."

See, what Barnhouse is doing here? He's doing the exact same thing that David did, that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did, he's facing a horrifying, peace-robbing future. You know, his young wife is dead of cancer and he's now tasked with raising his children alone and he finds peace by first what? Seeing it. Like he said, his wife had been hit with the shadow of death while Jesus himself had been hit by the truck itself. He saw in his mind's eyes that his wife's life was more real than even his. And he sought the peace of God that comes from realizing that fact. Having embraced it, he could then speak it to his young daughter, and that's precisely what he did when he said, "Two thousand years ago the real truck of death hit Jesus and because death crushed Jesus and we believe in him, now the only thing that can come over us is the shadow of death, and the shadow of death is but my entrance into glory." See Dr. Barnhouse was a very wise man. He saw peace in Christ and he sought peace through Christ and he spoke peace to his daughter having experienced it firsthand. I mean he

saw exactly what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego saw and he sought what David sought and he spoke what brother Wayne spoke about. You know he realized he was walking in the valley of the shadow of death and he instantly also realized how and why he could fear no evil. He knew that God was with him, he knew that God's rod and staff would comfort him and that's where his peace came from. See Jesus left his disciples knowing precisely what comfort they were going to need. And Jesus alone knew that within hours he was going to be stripped and beaten and mocked and nailed to a cross and yet because he could see right through the horrors that awaited him to the joy of knowing he had glorified his Father and ransomed and rescued his sheep, he had the power to proceed. Well, that power and that peace is what belongs to us in Christ. That's what Jesus is offering us. He says: *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*

As you begin to take the cup, consider the peace that just might be alluding you this morning. And think about your own circumstance and situation and ask yourself some questions, ask yourself am I seeing Christ in this? You may be walking right now through the valley of the shadow of death. Can you see that even if the very worst takes place that God is sufficient, that God is with you and yet you will not be abandoned.

Next we ask ourselves: Am I seeking Christ through this? Have I gone to God's word? Have I gone to God's people? Have I gone to prayer to seek God's presence in this to know that his rod and his staff will comfort me, to know that God is faithful? You know, I think of brother Wayne, the fellow that called me, I mean, he was stuck in a hotel two thousand miles, almost three thousand miles from where he lived. He lived in Los Angeles. He's here in Port Jervis, New York, out of funds, out of time, out of money, out of health, and I said, "How did you find us?" He said, "I just Google searched 'reformed churches, Port Jervis' and your name came up." He trusted that in the very worst of circumstances, which those were pretty close to the worst, that God would be faithful. And what do you know, God's faithfulness led him to us. That's not to our credit, that's to God's credit. He will not abandon you. And thirdly, can I speak of the glory of Christ in and through this? And again, I wonder how many times has God used the comfort that he has given you to comfort somebody else? You know, *2 Corinthians 1:3* says this: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.* So we ask, how many times has God used you as his rod and his staff to comfort someone else? Think on that for a moment.

*1 Corinthians 11:25 says: In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. Take, and drink.*

This is the part that we call head, heart and feet. This is the part where we try to draw some practical applications to what does it really mean to remember Christ and his sacrifice? And I think the lesson that God is really speaking very loudly to us is that he is our peace, he is the rod and staff that comforts us, but sometimes, often times the rod and the staff that comforts is us, it's the body of Christ. It's the task that we have been tasked with to be that rod, to be that comfort, to be that staff. You know, we have a prayer list which we pass out every week and on that list is the latest of prayer requests of people who really, really need prayer. You probably got the letter this week about Megan and her fiance Devin. You know, they're walking through the valley of the shadow of death right now. It's a fearful, difficult thing that Devin is a young man about to get married and he's been gainfully employed and all of a sudden he has this incredible bout of he doesn't even know what where he's in such pain and they can't figure out where it's coming from, and it's spreading from his feet to his hands, to his side to his -- and he's wondering where is this going to end? What's going to happen? You tell me that's not

a frightening thing? And yet Devin understands and he understands a part of what the Old Testament saints did, part of what we see happening over and over again is the ability to say, you know what? Whatever the devil does, whatever circumstance does, whatever the worst is, my God is still sufficient. Now, part of being the rod and staff that comforts him is us coming around them, is us praying for them, is us sending them a note. You know, ask Fred for their email, just shoot them an email and just say we're praying for you. You're not alone in this.

You know, we had a number of other -- you know, I was looking at the prayer sheet and there was a couple Christi and Michael who just lost their four-month baby, they were pregnant four months, they lost the baby, she had lost the exact same -- a baby in the exact same circumstances like a couple of years ago and had gone through a long bout of depression, now lost this baby and we think oh, this is just too awful. How do you deal with that? Well, you pray for them. You find ways to comfort them, you surround them, you say let us be the rod and the staff that comforts you. This fellow Chris Dudick who is the engineer, Steve is working with him on trying to get the additions to the building fixed and he said, "Are you an active church?" He asked Steve, "Are you an active church?" I don't know what he means by that, I guess he means do people really care? And he said, "Yeah." He said, "You know, my

wife needs a liver transplant. She's going to die if she doesn't get it. Would you ask them to pray for me and pray for her?" And so we pray for Chris Dudick's wife. This is the way that we can not just express our concern but to actually flesh out what it is that God is trying to have us as a body do and be. He wants us to pray for those people who are hurting, but he also wants us to be his rod and his staff that comfort them. Consider that this morning. Let's pray.

*Father, I just again, I lift up -- I live up Devin and I lift up Megan, I lift up their circumstance. I know that there's a great deal of fear that accompanies this and I pray that you would comfort them, that they would just like David, as they're walking through that valley, understand that they don't have to fear because you are with them and that your rod and your staff are comforting them. I pray the same for Christi and Michael and the loss of their baby. What a terrible loss that must be. Surround them and give them comfort. I pray for Chris Dudick and his wife, I pray for healing and that there would be the ability of a liver transplant but that you would use these circumstances to draw him closer to you and as well as his wife. And I know that in this congregation there are lots of people right now that are walking in that valley, they're fearing something, they're thinking this is terrifying, I'm not going to be able to get through this, I'm not*



going to be able to do this. Lord, I pray that you would give them the ability to understand that in Christ they can say, "devil, give us your worst. Not me, but my God is sufficient. My God will get me through anything; not around it but through it." And so I pray for anyone in this building right now who is going through that valley, I pray that they would sense and know that God is here, God is with you, God is not abandoning you, you are part of the body of Christ, God loves you, God wants to be his staff, his rod, and his comfort. Understand that, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.