

# Philippians - December Class

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 14 December 2011

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Okay, well thank you all for being here today. I know it's a busy time of the year and there are folks who perhaps ordinarily would be with us but are unable to because of the busyness of December.

So welcome to our December session in Philippians chapter 4 and we intend to be concluding the chapter this morning. So let's look to the Lord, shall we?

Father, we're grateful for the season of the year and what it means to each of us and thank you that for those who know Christ it has a far deeper and a far richer meaning than what the world is ever able to give to it.

Thank you for the text that is before us and for the life of the Apostle Paul who lived the very things that we're talking about and we desire to emulate him in every way that you make possible.

Thank you for the meal that we've enjoyed and for the time of fellowship, for the sweetness of family and friends that each of us enjoy. We commit this time of examination and study and application to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

[ 1 : 0 6 ]     A couple of things before we get underway with new material. So I want to make sure that we do not need to revisit and if we do need to, we'll be glad to because it's more important that people get concerns and questions answered than it is that we cover a certain amount of material.

But in our last session, we spent almost the entire time on the subject of prayer based on Philippians 4.6. And if you want to look at that again, I'll just read it where Paul says, Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Anybody have any questions or any follow-up information you would like about that?

I think we spent most of the time on that. And it is very, very important because prayer life and all that it enjoins is one of the most important aspects of being a believer.

And as I pointed out to you, this verse and its teaching was a real breakthrough for me when it came to the subject of prayer because there are a few things that are so confusing, sometimes discouraging, perplexing, as are prayers.

[ 2 : 3 0 ]     And very often they seem to go unanswered and we don't know why. But I won't pursue that unless anybody has questions or comments and wants to follow it up, which case we will.

Otherwise, we'll go on. Anybody? Yeah. Polly? So you can pray for the same thing over and over, but it says have peace. You know, when you...

Can I pray for it once and then have peace or do I need to continually pray for the same thing? Well, I don't want to just personalize this, but you know, our Lord in the Gospels, He actually chided the Pharisees for their repetitious praying.

And He said they think that for their many offerings and their many prayings they will be heard. And I...

Well, I'll just give you the way this has worked out for me. And you can take it for what it's worth and you can feel free to question it. And I'll be glad to pursue it. But when the text says to let our requests be made known to God and the peace of God will pass...

[ 3 : 52 ] which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, I'm not saying that we should not pray more than once about the same thing.

We've all heard instances where someone has prayed for a loved one, maybe a wife or a husband or something like that for 30 years, you know, that he might come to know the Lord.

And sometimes it takes a long, long time for that prayer to be answered. So I'm not depreciating that and the value of that.

I think, to a large degree, I think our prayer life is governed by the burdens that we feel. And in the case of a loved one, their health or their eternal well-being or whatever, it's a pretty powerful motivator.

And from a human standpoint, I don't think we can resist because it's so before us and so on our mind. I don't think we can resist bringing them and their need before the Lord repeated times.

[ 4 : 59 ] But at the same time, I think we need to recognize that God has given to each of us a volition.

And each of us is responsible for what we do with that volition. And when it comes to the prayer for an individual for their salvation, can you think of any place in Scripture where an individual is prayed for by name for their salvation?

Can anybody think of one? There are very general prayers, and the Apostle Paul mentions many of those.

But in almost every instance, Paul's great concern is for spiritual enlightenment, for spiritual enrichment, for growth in grace, etc., rather than the salvation of some individual.

And I'm not saying that we shouldn't do that, because like I said, our prayer life is often governed by our burdens. But at the same time, this peace that passes understanding, I think, has to be related to what I view as the importance of perspective.

[ 6 : 21 ] And that is not only in keeping with the prayer situation, but with what we're going to be talking about regarding giving today. John? In chapter 10 of Romans, Paul says, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.

So he was praying for all of his Jewish brethren to be saved. That was his heart's burden. Well, it was his heart's burden, and it was very deep.

Because when Paul would go so far as to say, For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belong this and that and all the rest of it.

That's an expression of a tremendous burden. But do you know something? That prayer that was uttered 2,000 years ago by the Apostle Paul still hasn't been answered, has it?

My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, he's talking about a nation, not an individual, is that they might be saved. Now, is God just ignoring Paul's prayer? I think not.

[ 7 : 33 ] But part of this perspective thing that I'm talking about is the fact that God has a timetable, and it almost never corresponds to our timetable.

And I found that to be true personally, and I'm sure many of you have too. I've often said God has never done anything as quickly as I've wanted him to. And that's because he has his own perspective.

But God's perspective, this means God's way of seeing things, is first of all flawless, and it is unlimited, and it is all-inclusive.

Our perspective is so limited and so flawed, we don't even have the assurance of the next five minutes. But God does.

And I think that when you keep God's perspective in view, that's what provides for the peace that surrounds our hearts.

[ 8 : 33 ] Knowing that, now I don't know, but he knows. And my concern is great, and I want this, or I wish this, and I pray that. And we would, we would if we could, let me put it this way.

If there was any aspect about the will of God that you could change, would you? No, no, not really.

Why? Because, don't you know that just his being who he is, his way, is the right way. His way is the better way.

Even when it hurts. Even when it's the opposite of what we would ask for. Because his perspective sees the end from the beginning. And we are so limited in ours.

Can you believe that? Can you rest in that? Can you trust in that? Because if you can, that's where the peace of God that passes all understanding comes from.

[ 9 : 36 ] It's in the realization of that. And the opposite of it is frustration. Maybe even anger. Maybe even, like Job's wife, charging God foolishly.

Don't you know when you've had enough? Curse God and die, she said. Get it over with. And her perspective was very limited. But Job had, even though he had a flawed perspective, he had a better perspective than his wife did.

And he said, you foolish woman, ought not we who have received good from the Lord take the adversity as well? The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Job was actually tapping into that perspective thing there. And in the midst of all of his misery and disappointment and heartache and the losses and everything, he still had a perspective that would not allow him to curse God and die.

Despite all of his miserable friends too. Do you have something, Marie? Well, I was thinking about 1 Timothy chapter 2, 1 to 4. The word of praise, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving and thanks covers a lot of things there for kings.

[ 10 : 48 ] A beautiful purpose that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life. And then four, who would have all men to be saved. So it seems to include several different reasons.

It's not for one person, but it's a command really for us. And God's desire is for all men to be saved. And he demonstrated that by providing salvation for all men and making the way available, the way of access available.

So, I am confident that God enjoys and wants us to pour out our heart of concern and supplication to him for things that we see that in our perspective are a need.

And I think he delights in his children expressing their wishes, their desires, their concerns to him in the same way that a loving parent appreciates a child coming to them with their burdens and their heartaches and their concerns.

And I think it works the same way with God and us. But at the same time, when a child goes to a parent and expresses their concerns, we may look at it as an adult and think, I wish that's all I had to worry about.

[ 12 : 11 ] That's really not a problem. But you know, to them it is. To them it is. And I'm sure that God views us that way too. God has never had a problem. And he's never been in a position where he didn't know what to do.

But he knows that we often are. And he can sympathize with us. And I think that this is the Thanksgiving mode that needs to come into play here. Let your requests be made known unto God.

And we touched a little bit on this last time, but I think it's so important that it bears repetition. So, pardon me for mentioning it again.

But there is a huge difference, a huge difference between resigning ourselves to the will of God and affirming the will of God.

And when we resign ourselves to God's will, we look at the situation that we're facing and the way it's going and what we're saying is, I don't like this, I don't want this, but I'm going to have to live with it because I have no choice.

[ 13 : 22 ] So, I will just resign myself to it. What we're really saying is, I will resign myself to it, but you better believe if I could change it, I would in a heartbeat.

I'd change it right now. that's not acceptable. That's not acceptable for a mature believer. A mature believer is to say, this would not be of my choosing, this is not something that I would want, this is something that I had hoped would not happen, but it has, and I believe the will of God is operative in all instances in my life, and this is God's will for me, and it cannot be improved upon just because it's his will.

So, I want to affirm it. I want to amen God's will and just enjoy the peace and the serenity that comes from that.

Now, this is a heavy trip. This is hard to do. In fact, it is so hard to do that most people don't do it. Most people would rather fret and fuss and fume and question and ask God why and what have I done to deserve this and on and on and on.

And we've all been there in the pity party thing. So, if you can think in terms of affirming the will of God rather than resigning ourselves to the will of God, it makes a huge difference.

[ 14 : 56 ] And I can testify that for me, and this doesn't mean that it works for you because it worked for me.

Because the test is not to be what works for you. The test is to be what's biblical and what's scriptural. But the night when the doctor came in and said we've got you scheduled for open heart surgery tomorrow morning, I didn't have much time to think about it, pray about it, or anything else.

And I remember lying there and I said, well, they performed dozens and thousands of these operations all over the nation, you know. And the surgeon who's going to be operating on me is one of the best in the area.

And I'm probably going to come through this okay. But if I don't, I'm going to be with the Lord and that's fine. And I just prayed and I said, Lord, I don't know what you have in mind here, but I want to second it.

And if you want to take me home so that I don't wake up from this surgery, that's fine with me. I could not improve upon that decision. And if you want to bring me through it so I've got more time for ministry, that's fine too.

[ 16 : 13 ] So, I knew it was already at his disposal. And I knew God didn't need my permission to do what he wanted to do. But I think the believer should kind of put himself in the imaginary position of God wanting your permission to do what he wants to do.

He doesn't need it. He's not dependent on it. But I think the smartest thing you can do is put your signature on a blank check and give it to the Lord to fill out for whatever he wants.

How can you go wrong with that? I don't think it's possible to go wrong with that. And that's the basis for the peace that passes all understanding. And man, I just went to sleep and relaxed and I said, if I wake up in the morning, great.

If I wake up in glory, that's great too. How could I lose? How could I lose? To me, that's one of the most precious things about being a believer. That's what my prayer life has come to over the years.

And I don't spend much time at all asking the Lord for anything. I just really don't. Because I believe whatever you want me to have or don't have, that's what I want.

[ 17 : 32 ] I don't want anything else. Just what you want me to have. That's what it is. So that kind of removes from me striving, preferences, demands.

You know, it's just a wonderful relaxation. Whatever. Whatever the Lord wants. Barbara? That didn't come overnight. No, you're absolutely right. That makes time.

You're right. Through different things in your life that comes along. Absolutely. It does not come. And it does not come easily. It does not come quickly nor easily.

But it's so important. And for me, one of the most wonderful things, exhilarating things, was to be delivered from the syndrome that so many Christians have in what I call, give me prayers.

Give me this, give me that. Do this, do that. And you see so much of this stuff in the media, and on television. And this is the health-wealth thing where you make demands, if you will, and you so-called exercise your faith and take charge of this and that and make these demands.

[ 18 : 41 ] And to me, there's no biblical basis for that and there's certainly no peace in it either. Anything else about this before we move on? It's a very important thing. Very important.

And by the way, it goes without saying that what we have shared here by way of this explanation of prayer, as I see it in this passage, is considerably removed from what Christ talked about in the Gospels.

Whatsoever you ask in my name, that will I do. And when you consider the context to whom he's speaking, he's talking to the apostles. He's not talking to the Christian community at large.

He's talking to a very pointed audience. And they're having a discussion about these things. And all of that has to be taken into consideration. And it was against the backdrop of their eventually when he, the Holy Spirit, has come, he shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I've said unto you.

Why would they need that? They need that for the inspiration of the Scriptures. Because they're going to have to recount those things that the Lord said. And the Spirit of God is going to enable them to do that.

[ 19 : 51 ] And that's what inspiration is all about. It is writing the record as regards what Christ told them and what happened. So it has to be kept into context.

Anything else? All right. There was one other item I wanted to address. Because when Paul says in Philippians 4, beginning with verse 10, and maybe that's where we ought to begin our new material.

Well, look at verse 9 again. Those things which you have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do. And what will be the result of that?

And the God of peace shall be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. And I'm just reading the King James, which happens to be the bold print, but you can see the other renditions that are offered there.

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me has flourished again, wherein ye were also careful, but you lacked opportunity.

[ 21 : 05 ] And that triggered something in the mind of someone. I don't know who it was, but they mentioned it to me. And I thought we would go back and just revisit that a little bit. So, in your Bible, if you go back to Philippians chapter 2 and verse 30, because some thought that Paul was criticizing the Philippians for not meeting his needs and not contributing to his legitimate concerns, and that seems to go against the tenor of the whole epistle.

And I'm convinced that Paul was not finding fault with them or rebuking them at all. But the way this is worded makes it sound a little bit like this. Verse 29, he's talking about talking about Epaphroditus, I think, isn't it?

Here in the earlier verse. Yeah, verse 25, it's Epaphroditus. And in verse 27, he says, Epaphroditus, for indeed he was sick, nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him, I sent him therefore the more carefully that when you see him again you may rejoice and that I may be less sorrowful.

Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness and hold such in reputation because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply your lack of service toward me.

And I suppose on the surface some might think that Paul is saying, well you people really let me down. I mean you failed to come through for me and Epaphroditus was my only salvation.

[ 22 : 50 ] But that's not what he's saying at all. And if you look at some of the alternate renderings, Coney Bear for instance says that he might supply all which you could not do in ministering to me.

So there is a huge difference between having the ability and the wherewithal to meet someone's need and not doing it as opposed to not having the ability to meet someone's need.

And I'm sure that the latter is the case. Weymouth translates it in endeavoring to make good any deficiency that there might be in your service to me.

Well he's just calling a spade a spade. It was a deficiency on the part of the Philippians in what they could not provide. But it wasn't because they didn't want to.

It wasn't because they didn't have a heart for what Paul was doing. It's simply because the ability to do so was beyond them. And Paul was not faulting them for that.

[ 23 : 53 ] In fact he was acknowledging that. And then the last Philip surrenders it or Williams renders it to make up your lack of opportunity. Now there's an explanation to minister to me.

And Philip says to do for me in person what distance prevented you all from doing. So all Paul is doing is not finding fault at all with the Philippians.

In fact these people are a great source of Paul's joy and thanksgiving as you go through the whole epistle. He is very grateful for these people. And he is just acknowledging that there were occasions where your ability to help was just not possible.

And he recognized that. So any other questions about that? Okay. Then in verse 11 of Philippians 4 4, not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned.

I have learned. I have learned. And he didn't learn it overnight.

[ 25 : 12 ] In whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. And there's that perspective thing again. 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. And let's flip the page there. Both to abound and to suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. There again is that powerful concept of perspective. You know, whenever you are facing a situation, especially one that is dealing you a real disappointment, a real adversity, a real problem, a real heartache, if you can just have the presence of mind to remind yourself of this one word, it can change everything.

Perspective. How many times have I had to tell myself, Marv, look at the perspective. And when I do, it changes my attitude just like that.

It's just like a fresh wake-up call. Remember perspective. Remember perspective. God sees it. And what the whole Bible is all about is God's perspective.

[ 26 : 50 ] The whole of Scripture gives us God's viewpoint regarding everything. Everything that matters. His perspective is reflected in the Scriptures.

And this is a principal reason why the study of the Word of God and the understanding and appreciation of it is so important. Because you don't get that perspective anywhere else.

All we get around us is the world's perspective, the world's viewpoint, the world's view. And we know how terribly distorted it is. But in the Scriptures we get God's perspective.

And you've got to keep coming back to that. This is your basis for stability, for spiritual sanity, for motivation, for comfort, for enlightenment, for everything.

And it's all linked to God's perspective. How is it that I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me? It's because of that.

[ 27 : 51 ] That perspective. It's just amazing. Absolutely amazing. Notwithstanding, you have done well that you did communicate with my affliction.

Now, you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, that is, in the beginning of the proclamation of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you only.

Why do you suppose that was? why do you suppose there weren't other churches that got behind him in his ministry?

Any ideas? One, maybe they weren't in sympathy with him. You know, Paul had a lot of opposition from a lot of different places.

Maybe some regarded him as just a loose cannon who's gone off the deep end and he's not worthy of our support. And no doubt, some might not have had the wherewithal to communicate with him regarding giving and receiving because they were up against hard times themselves and they didn't have anything appreciable to share.

[ 29 : 13 ] That's always a possibility. Could be that Paul had been sufficiently bad-mouthed by a number of Judaizers. We know that he had all kinds of opposition, particularly from his Jewish brethren, who saw him as a renegade Jew and they would not support him.

And then of course there are believers who are just simply uninformed and do not have the opportunity. And then there's a possibility that Paul in his ministry just wasn't well enough known or they weren't familiar enough with it to be able to support it.

So there may be a number of legitimate reasons here. but the impression that is given here in what is used in the Greek has to do with support on a regular basis.

And most of them don't pick up on that except good speed gives us a little bit of enlightenment. And I think this really touches the heart of the matter. He says no church but yours that is there at Philippi went into partnership and opened an account with me.

How would that translate? I think that translates into regular systematic giving on a predictable basis so it provided Paul with something that he could count on.

[ 30 : 37 ] I think that's the meaning here. And Williams translates it no church but yours went into partnership with me to open an account of credit and debits.

Well that's really kind of spelling it out. But I think that's the heartbeat of it. I think Paul is talking about regular ongoing support because I don't think there is anyone who had the ability to trust the Lord for whatever than Paul but at the same time that does not mean that he was not encouraged and strengthened by being able to count on regular support from somebody.

and he said earlier yet when it doesn't come and the offerings and the giving is really lean and I'm doing without that's okay that's okay that's not the issue and when there is an abundance so that I have more than enough that's okay too I can live either way it doesn't make any difference because Christ is the one who strengthens me and supplies my need and whatever he chooses to send or withhold that's fine with me that's great do you know what that does that just brings a calm and a relaxation over his person so that he's not fretting not stewing not anxious be anxious for nothing and he's just living out what he is preaching to these people at Philippi even in Thessalonica you sent once and again to my necessity not because

I desire a gift but I desire fruit that may abound to your account someone has said the gospel is free but it costs money to propagate it indeed it does and the way God often chooses to meet our needs is in connection with us meeting the needs of others and this is exactly what he is saying here in verse 19 my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus and the reason Paul was confident of that was because the Philippians were providing for his needs the way God often chooses to meet our needs is in connection with us meeting the needs of others but we often don't think of it that way we tend to think of it kind of one-sided

God meeting my needs and the concept that our Lord gave in the gospels is a principle that is true Old Testament Gospels New Testament Pauline dispensation all dispensation it is it really is more blessed to give than to receive the one who is on the giving end always receives more than the one who is on the receiving end it's a beautiful thing so Paul says in verse 17 not because I desire a gift that's not money that I'm anxious for I desire fruit that may abound to your account I seek the fruit which accrues therefrom to your account and it's interesting because Paul breaks into here in the Greek and what we might call a bookkeeping kind of mode and this is precisely what is reflected in the original languages it has to do with transaction of funds and moving around the funds the accounting and the bookkeeping that goes with it and he uses that kind of terminology

[ 34 : 32 ] Moffat translates it 20th century New Testament says I am anxious to see the abundant return that will be placed to your account this is nothing more than like casting your bread upon the waters and it will return to you and Paul is saying you're making an investment you're making an investment in my ministry and I am eager to see what the payoff is going to be for you and indeed that's the whole basis of Christian giving Moffat says I am anxious for it is the interest that accumulates in this way to your divine credit God keeps a set of books and they are very accurately kept Knox renders it rich increase and the new American standard says I seek for the profit which increases to your account and this is the principle that those who those who benefit from the spiritual things that are provided should contribute in a physical way for those who are providing them and that principle is as simple as don't put a muzzle on the ox that treads out the grain he is entitled to what he has worked for but I have all and abound more than enough but I have all which

I require and more than I require I have enough of everything and despair I am full this is a satisfied mind a happy man a contented man someone said that a contented person is someone who can enjoy the scenery when they're on a detour and that's the kind of man that the apostle Paul was and he was just so satisfied with who he was and what Christ had made him this was a man who was more filled with joy and complete contentment than perhaps anyone who has lived since I am full having received the things which were sent from you an odor of a sweet smell a sacrifice acceptable well pleasing to

God isn't it amazing how God gives us the ability to appreciate and enjoy things like like an odor I mean there are negative and positive odors you all know what a skunk smells like but if you didn't have the ability to smell a skunk you wouldn't have the ability to smell that sweet smelling odor I can remember over the years coming home and stepping into the house and smelling that aroma of fresh baked goodies cookies bread of a roast in the oven or something like that God gives us this ability we have a friend well many of you know Ed Drummond and several years ago

Ed had a really super serious bout with cancer and it was in his sinuses and it involved some very delicate very extraordinary surgery and he had all kinds of water treatments where he had to go to a high estate and was in this tank of water and it was very exotic kind of treatment and he survived it and there was question there for a while whether he was even going to make it because it was really nip and tuck but one of the things that the treatment did resulted in is it destroyed his olfactory nerves and he can't smell anything and that affects his ability to taste he can't taste anything and the radiation virtually eliminated his salivary glands so it doesn't create moisture in the mouth and he has to constantly be taking liquid and water to keep his mouth dry and he was telling me one day

I had no idea how important and how much I appreciated the ability to smell and to taste things that's one of the things that God has created as part of our humanness and it's part of the equipment that comes with creation and here Paul refers to that as an odor of a sweet smell a sacrifice acceptable well pleasing to God even the aroma of the sacrifice the animal that was placed on the altar in the Old Testament and offered as a sacrifice to God we are told that that odor was a sweet smelling savor to the Lord how can that be how can God get any kind of satisfaction out of smelling out of an odor emitted by an animal burning and the whole idea is it is what is all behind that because the sacrifice was offered as an act of obedience to

[ 40 : 24 ] God and it isn't the odor of the animal or the aroma of the cooking of it that caused God to be pleased it was the fact that that represented the obedience of the people and if you want to do something that makes God excited in a positive way nothing does it like an obedient heart in the same way that a parent derives great mileage and benefit from a child that is obedient it is the same way with God nothing pleases God more than our obedience and you know why because God loves us so much and he recognizes that our obedience is always in our best interests and God is more concerned about our best interests than he is anything and it's a beautiful thing consequently because of the manner in which you have conducted yourself toward me

I am confident that my God shall supply all your need and it will be based upon his riches in glory by Christ Jesus and how great are those unsurpassable in his conclusion now unto God and our Father be glory or honor or recognition forever and ever amen salute every saint in Christ Jesus give my greeting to every one of the people Christ Jesus remember me all to my fellow Christians etc as he closes out and all the saints salute you chiefly they that are of Caesar's household and most scholars are of the opinion that those of Caesar's household are his own private guards this would be the praetorian guard these are the crack troops that are assigned for the protection and well-being of the emperor apparently some of these were also assigned to

Paul they were literally chained at the wrist 24-7 while Paul was under house arrest during the time he was writing Ephesians Philippians Colossians and Philemon he was in his own hired villa as Acts 28 tells us there in Rome and around the clock he was chained to a different guard they changed their guard every six hours and another one would come on and can you imagine being handcuffed to the apostle Paul in six hour stretches what do you think Paul talked about I can assure you it wasn't the weather and when he says that all the saints salute you chiefly they that are of Caesar's household well they're not saints they're pagans well probably not when Paul got through with them because I'm confident that he gave them the gospel and he categorizes them as saints and that they are of

Caesar's household simply means they are government workers former pagan Roman soldiers or former pagans and still Roman soldiers Caesar's household are on Caesar's payroll and then the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with you all so I want you to keep this in mind if we allow our circumstances to determine our perspective we will have frequent cause for complaining and for doubting our perspective must be determined by doctrine not our circumstances it is spiritual maturity versus immaturity and for the few minutes we've got left I want you to think just a little bit about the Christmas story and

Mary and Joseph here Mary had just received this announcement from Gabriel in Luke chapter 1 that she is to be the mother of the Messiah and the only problem is Joseph wasn't clued in about it and Joseph was acting in accordance with the circumstances and as far as he was concerned the circumstances spelled out the case very precisely and it had to be this Mary had been fooling around and fooling around with somebody else because Joseph knew he was not the party that much he was certain of so what do you do when you're faced with what appears to be a very obvious kind of conclusion that is demanded from the circumstances well he was going to act on the best information he had even though it was insufficient and the same angel that appeared to

[ 45 : 49 ] Mary appeared to Joseph and said those immortal words that the angel almost always utters before they say anything else and that is fear not Joseph to take unto thee marry thy spouse wife for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit well that immediately changed Joseph's perspective his circumstances were changed and his perspective was changed because he thought he had the right one to begin with but because his perspective was so limited and he was so unknowing when he got clued in on what the real scoop was it changed everything and now here Joseph and Mary and she's about what almost probably eight and a half eight and three quarters months along with this with this Christ child and she's probably big as a barn and now they've got orders that they have to go to

Bethlehem and can you imagine riding on the back of a donkey and how far is it from Nazareth to Bethlehem the city of David where they had to go for the census it's a fur piece let me tell you that and to have to travel on the donkey or on foot what do you think those circumstances looked like to Joseph and Mary probably pretty demanding very unfair yet I am confident that they were not going to allow their circumstances to determine their frame of mind and what were they counting on why were they going through all this and can you imagine the public embarrassment I mean when did it become obvious to the local community that Mary was expecting and how were they going to explain this and can you imagine just try to think in practical terms now

Joseph has got some friends he's got some buddies some pals and they see this good friend of theirs Joseph and he's going to marry this woman who is great with child and if somebody comes up alongside Joseph Joseph you old rascal you Joseph said what what do you mean you're not the father no I'm not the father but you're going to marry this girl I mean just try to look at the practical aspects of this what must have that gone down like I mean why were they willing to subject themselves to this on an ongoing it was because they had a perspective and their perspective was informed by God so when you know that your information is right and you know the source of it is impeccable you can take whatever the world has got to throw at you and it doesn't make any difference this is what we've all got to keep in mind when you know what you know it doesn't make any difference what people think and here they're making this journey they get to a place where they're put up for the night and we all know the story about no room in the inn that's not a problem so they go out in the animal stalls and by the way that wasn't all that uncommon in that day

I'm sure they weren't the first and they wouldn't be the last to live in conditions like that and they probably didn't make a big deal of it or think about how they were sacrificing or how they were being put out or how embarrassing it was or anything else I think they just went along with it for what the situation offered and thanked the Lord for it and it was just no big deal because of their perspective amazing changes everything the way you see things changes everything that you see and we need to keep that in mind especially as we close out a year and face a new year any comments or questions anybody has feel free anyone okay it's I'm going to let you go eight minutes early if you promise not to tell anybody yeah John I'm not sure

I thought about Colossians it seems like a logical place to go but I'm certainly open to suggestions because I don't want to teach just what I like to teach or what I want to teach but I would be a whole lot more comfortable if I were assured that we are scratching where people itch and I don't want to scratch where nobody is itching so if there are topics or issues that you would like discussed I would appreciate any input and would certainly give it a go feel free to offer any suggestions that you may have anyone or or give me a call if you think of something that you would like to discuss that would be pertinent and helpful would certainly give it consideration as far as I know we will be meeting here again for the month of January and pass the word and feel free to invite others to join us and we'll call the study

[ 51 : 32 ] TBA to be announced ok let's close with prayer father we are really grateful that you provided us with an ongoing perspective and a revelation of your word and so often we are deficient in understanding it sometimes we don't even want it because we all have a nature that tends to want what it wants when it wants it and we know that this is spiritual immaturity speaking and we want to see each one committed to you in such a way that we will be growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and we'll have developed a new and a healthy perspective regarding your perspective and the supremacy of it and the preference of it in every way thank you again for the presence of each one here and for the truths that we have considered and we pray that they will sink deeply into our hearts so that the next time which may be yet even today will be called upon to implement this principle of perspective it'll be there and we'll use it and we'll derive from it the peace that passes all understanding we're so grateful to you for it in

Christ's name amen