

Coping with stress

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[0 : 00] First of all we're going to look at the subject coping with stress and let me assure you I'll be speaking as much if not more to myself than to any of you I'm sure.

And then secondly later on this afternoon God willing we'll be looking at the subject of facing death. So I would encourage you and invite you to think with me first of all on the subject of coping with stress.

I'd like to read two passages with you in the New Testament scriptures. First of all in the sixth chapter of Matthew's Gospel from verse 25.

And secondly in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians the first chapter from verse 8. First of all in Matthew 6 these familiar verses I'm sure of our Lord and the Sermon on the Mount at verse 25.

Therefore I tell you do not worry about your life what you will eat or drink or about your body what you will wear.

[1 : 07] Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or store away in barns and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes?

See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

If that is how God clothes the grass of the field which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire. Will he not much more clothe you? O you of little faith.

So do not worry saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For the pagans run after all these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

[2 : 16] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow. For tomorrow will worry about itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own. And secondly in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 at the 8th verse. We do not want you to be uninformed brothers about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia.

We were under great pressure. Far beyond our ability to endure. So that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.

But this happened. That we might not rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril. And he will deliver us.

On him we have set our hope. That he will continue to deliver us. As you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf.

[3 : 28] For the gracious favour granted us. In answer to the prayers of many. I want to look with you at this first subject.

Coping with stress under two headings. First of all I want you to look with me at some of the common causes of stress.

And I want to highlight five. Not because these are the only five that there are. But because they are the five that seem to me perhaps to be the most important for us to consider in the time given us this afternoon.

Five common causes of stress. And eight biblical cures. You'll be glad to know that the biblical cures outnumber the common causes. So five common causes.

And then if time permits. Eight biblical cures. The common causes of stress. Let me begin by saying that it seems to me that the one thing that needs to be underlined at the outset of our study this afternoon is this.

[4 : 33] That for many Christians the common cause of stress in their lives can be traced back to an unrealistic understanding of the nature of the Christian life itself.

An unrealistic understanding and awareness of what it means to be a Christian. And what I mean to say by that is this. At its best and at its highest the Christian life is never free from stress and strain. There is no point in Christian living biblically understood where we free ourselves from the common stresses and strains of life.

And find ourselves on a higher plane where life is free of trials, free of troubles and free of stresses. That will never be this side of glory. And I'm persuaded that many Christians allow their lives to be almost rent asunder.

Because they fail to grasp the characteristic nature of true biblical God-honouring Christian living. [5 : 47] The normal Christian life is one which never rises above the trials and the troubles of life.

Think for example of the great tension the Apostle Paul highlights in the fifth chapter of Galatians. When he speaks of that tension in every believer between the work of the Holy Spirit and the remnants of corruption in our hearts.

The flesh. The flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit lusting against the flesh. And he's reminding these Galatian believers that the Christian life is a life of inward battle.

It's a life of inward tension. There's no such thing as a free-wheeling believer. If you're a free-wheeling Christian, I would suggest to you that you're not in the mainstream of biblical Christianity, but that you've wandered up some bypass meadow.

And that's why in such a passage of Romans chapter 7, Paul takes great time to spell out this inward tension.

[6 : 57] Yes, we have received the spirit of God. Yes, we have become the children of God. But yes, we continue to live in a fallen world with the remnants of corruption within us.

And we need to be realistic about these things and not imagine that there is an experience to aim at which will free us from these trials and stresses.

And I meet Christians almost daily. Who become upset with themselves and who become full of trials and stresses. Because they look at themselves and become discouraged.

They see tension and they experience trials and difficulties. And they conclude that all is not well with their soul. When often times their conclusion should be, all is well with my soul.

Because if we're taking the gospel seriously, we will find our lives besieged by the world, the flesh and the devil. Who will be doing his hellish best to disturb us, to crush us and to tear us asunder.

[8 : 05] That's why these verses in 2 Corinthians are verses I've always found very comforting. Where the great apostle can speak about the hardships he was suffering in the province of Asia.

We were under great pressure, he says. Far beyond our ability to endure. So that we despaired even of life. In our hearts, he said. We felt we even had the very sentence of death.

Now here is a man who was in the centre of the will of God. Here was a man who was forging on in the purposes of God. And yet here was a man who was under pressure.

Who was experiencing hardships. Why? Precisely because he was experiencing the antagonism of the world, the flesh and the devil.

Think of how often Paul has to encourage and comfort young Timothy. Endure hardship, he says, with us as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

[9 : 05] And I think we do need to begin here with the realism of faith. And learn what it means to be a biblical believer.

And learn not to become sidetracked in our thinking. Imagining that because we're experiencing tensions and stresses and trials and troubles, that somehow we are out of the will of God.

It may very well be that we're in the very centre of the will and purposes of God. And that's why we're experiencing such things. Because Satan is doing his utmost. To turn us aside.

To preoccupy us with ourselves. And to render us all but useless. In the great cause of our Lord Jesus Christ. An unrealistic understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

And that I think needs to be highlighted and underscored today. When many are telling us that there are experiences which await us. To deliver us from these stresses and strains.

[10 : 10] Certain formula to follow. That will deliver us from trials and troubles. My dear friends, it cannot be. If our Lord Jesus Christ in the garden.

Could experience great anguish of soul. And if men like the Apostle Paul could speak of being hard pressed beyond measure. Then we need to realise that strain and tension and stress will inevitably

belong to the very fabric.

And the very essence of true Christian discipleship. But having said that, let me highlight a second cause of stress. And that is the one that the Lord Jesus highlights in this sixth chapter of Matthew's Gospel.

It is of course the pressures and worries of life. And many Christians' lives and many people's lives are blighted with stress and tension.

Because our lives have become, as it were, immersed in our circumstances. We become overwhelmed by the pressures and the worries and the uncertainties of life.

[11 : 23] And I'm sure that touches all of us here today. And you'll notice how real these circumstances and pressures and worries can be. Verse 25 of Matthew 6.

Jesus says, I tell you, do not worry about your life. What you will eat or what you will drink. Or about your body, what you will wear. He's speaking to disciples. He's speaking to men and women. Whose lives were being touched by the uncertainties. By the worries and the cares of this life. They didn't know some of them where their next meal was coming from. It may be that they had no wardrobe to go to.

It may be that the future seemed bleak and forbidding. And they had allowed their lives, what our Lord is saying here, to be shaped by circumstances and not by faith.

And our Lord is seeking in these verses to divert them away from circumstances to faith. Yet it's one thing to say this and another thing to practice it, is it not?

[12 : 27] Take for example the very real circumstance of unemployment. Which has cast such a dark shadow over our land and over the lives of many Christian people.

Unemployment which leads to a fear of the future. A fear that you won't be providing for your family. And such an experience can bring tremendous stress into your life.

And can overspill into your family and create tensions there. And relationships become fragmented and frayed. Or it may be the experience of illness.

Which can bring uncertainty and tension into a life. Mental, psychological distress. Because you do not know what a day will bring forth. And life becomes twisted and warped.

And you develop a spiritual astigmatism. You fail to see things as they really are. Your view of life becomes twisted by your circumstances. And the great call of our Lord Jesus in these verses.

[13 : 27] It's for us to recognize the danger of becoming circumstance-centered in our living. So that we fail to see the character and the provisions of him who is our great and our gracious Lord.

There are the pressures and worries of life. There is, I think, in the third place what we might call an unbiblical idealism. That is, having unreal expectations for ourselves.

I come across this so often in Christian churches. People who do not see themselves as they should see themselves. And who fail to see others as they should see them.

And they develop a kind of unbiblical idealism. Think, for example, of the great illustration of this in the New Testament. The Apostle Peter. Remember when Jesus gathers his disciples around him. Prior to the garden experience. And he says, now all of you will leave me and desert me and betray me. And Peter says, Lord, I'll never do it. Not me.

[14 : 37] Meaning the rest might, but not me. I'll be with you to the bitter end. Even though I die. I'll never leave you. He imagined that he knew himself better than the Lord knew him.

He thought he was more spiritual than he really was. And he came crashing down into the depths. And I'm sure that the strains and the stresses that many Christian people experience is because we do not rightly see ourselves as God sees us.

We develop an unbiblical idealism. We think ourselves more spiritual than we really are. Or we think ourselves more unspiritual than we really are. And there's therefore the strain of trying to be what you're not.

Or trying to be who you're not. I remember as a young Christian getting into terrible inward tensions. Because I had read the biography of David Brainerd.

The great pioneer missionary to the Redingians. And I used to lament daily. Lord, why am I not like David Brainerd? Why when I rise at five am I sound asleep by 5.15 on my knees?

[15 : 49] Lord, why am I not like David Brainerd? And it took the good Lord months of speaking to say, because you're not David Brainerd, you're Ian Hamilton. I didn't make you like him. I made you like you.

Be who you are. And you see, so often we are trying to measure up to the expectations of other believers. Maybe godly people that we admire and respect and would love to be like. And we try to be what we imagine they would like us to be. But my dear friends, we need to learn to be what we are. With all our faults and failings and weaknesses. Glaring many of them may be. We need to learn to be what the good Lord has made us. And not try always to be living up to the expectations of others. So often there is a fear of man in the Christian church. And most prevalent perhaps in the evangelical side of the Christian church. Fear of letting people down. [16:52] Fear of not doing what is the norm and the expected. Now indeed we must be careful and conscious of not trampling upon the concerns and cares of others. But we need to live our lives before God.

I stand or fall, says Paul, before God. It matters not to me what you think about me. I stand or fall before him. Maybe some of us have that kind of unbiblical idealism. That needs to be corrected. Let's be down to earth. Let's be realistic about ourselves. Before God. Let's face up to what we are and who we are. And let's not try to be about the work of measuring up to what other people want us to be.

Or what we imagine they would want us to be. Let me highlight the fourth common cause of stress. And that is a very prosaic and mundane one.

And it's over work. We find this both in ordinary daily work. And I think also in the Lord's work. [17:57] You know I'm sure the example I'm going to quote from the prophet Elijah. Remember how in 1 Kings 17 through to 19 Elijah had done great work for God.

He had seen God do great things through his ministry. And then Elijah turned tail and ran from Jezebel. Elijah was afraid we read and ran for his life.

When he came to Beersheba in Judah he left his servant there. While he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. I've had enough Lord he says. Take my life I'm no better than my ancestors. And he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. So the great thing about that story I think is the way the Lord dealt with Elijah.

We would have said oh Elijah, Elijah you're forgetting what the scriptures say. But the angel of the Lord came and said Elijah have a bite to eat and have a wee sleep.

[19:00] Then have another bite to eat and have another wee sleep. You see the problem with Elijah was he'd become overwrought through overwork. He'd got things into such a tizzy that the Lord's answer was so as it were remarkably unspiritual.

He'd been discouraged by lack of success. And he'd wound himself up. He needed simply to be rested.

And maybe that's an answer for some. We need to learn to use our minds. To use our understanding. To recognise what we are fit for and what we are not fit for.

To see how God dealt so humbly and so quietly and so unspectacularly with Elijah's need at that time.

And fifthly let me simply highlight what is perhaps the most common source of stress for many in the Christian life. And that is the family. One of our members phoned me this morning.

[20:14] About nine o'clock to tell me that her 18 year old son had been out all night yet again drinking. He came in at 7.15 I think this morning. This young man has been to court twice already.

He was arrested a fortnight ago for being drunk and disorderly. And his parents are almost at breaking point. And his mother said to me, and I know his parents well, they come to our prayer meeting.

And they've been through much in their lives. They're fine Christian people. And his mother said to me, I had to tell him we were almost at the point of breaking. We just don't know where to turn.

And I'm sure for many people this is one of the great common causes of stress and strain in their lives. Pressures with their children perhaps in particular that build up.

And because they do not know how to deal with that and how to see the first signs of strain and stress, they allow these things to so multiply in their experience that they end up with lies that are all but torn asunder.

[21:21] By the rebellion, by the disobedience, by the thoughtlessness, by the pride and the insensitivity of their children. That's why I'm sure there's so much teaching in the scriptures about

how families are to relate to one another.

How parents are to relate to their children. Fathers, do not exasperate your children. You know, some of us parents are very strong on children. Obey your parents. Honor your father and mother indeed.

But also the apostle, there's a counterbalance to that. It is father, do not exasperate your children. These common sources of stress.

But I wanted really to spend a little more time on cures for stress than causes for stress. And I want simply to highlight eight biblical cures for stress that might help us in our thinking this afternoon.

One or two I've perhaps touched on already. The first is simply this, and it's very obvious as to perhaps just be missed. Our great need could simply be to cultivate rest and relaxation.

[22 : 34] Let's not begin to look for the spiritual if there are reasons in the ordinary way of living. As I mentioned the example of Elijah, how God responded to the stress and the tension and the pressures that Elijah was under.

Elijah, have a good meal and a good sleep. Or think of the example of our Lord Jesus. How often we read in the Gospels of him setting time aside.

To be with his father, to rest. Think of why the Lord has given us his day. The Sabbath day, the day of rest. Maybe our great need is to use the means that God has given us.

To be recreated and refreshed and renewed. I think it's amazing how some Christians use the Lord's day for the most frantic activities. God has given us day that we might rest in his presence and be inwardly recreated and renewed and revived.

There may simply be the need to cultivate rest and relaxation. Secondly, I would suggest that one of God's great cures for strain and stress is the fellowship of the saints.

[23 : 47] We're very prone, I think, to keeping things to ourselves. Of locking up our burdens within ourselves. You'll know these verses, I'm sure, in Galatians chapter 6.

Where Paul says to these Galatian believers. Carry each other's burdens. And in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Bear one another's burdens. Come alongside one another. Get under the load and share with one another. And beloved, we need to learn to develop the kind of quality of Christian fellowship.

Where we really are sharing heart to heart. And bearing our souls with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. For according to the apostles, this is one of the great means of grace.

Bear one another's burdens. Bear one another's burdens. That's why earlier, in that passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 1. You'll remember Paul says, On God we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us.

[24 : 53] That is, deliver us, rescue us from these great pressures and trials and tensions we're undergoing. He will continue to deliver us as you help us by your prayers.

He wanted them to know what he was going through. So that they could stand with him and pray. And God, through their prayers, would bring relief and help and blessing to the apostles.

God's blessings for us often come through the fellowship of the saints. And Paul goes on to give the great illustration of that in 2 Corinthians. When in chapter 7 verses 5 and 6 he says, When we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest.

We were harassed at every turn. Conflicts on the outside. Fears within. And how did God deal with that? But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

I found that often a great source of tremendous encouragement. He is the apostle. Conflicts on the outside. Fears within.

[26 : 08] Harassed at every turn. But God brings comfort into his soul. And how does God do it? He did it through the ministry of Titus. A brother came with good news that lifted his heart.

And you see, that's how often God works within the fellowship. He makes us the kind of people who are alert to the needs of others. Who have a word in season.

And who are able to come alongside and be the means that God would use to bless and build up and encourage the flagging hearts and the fainting spirits of his people.

There is the fellowship of the saints. Thirdly, we need to cultivate a right understanding of the sovereignty of God.

You see, in Scripture, the sovereignty of God is not a doctrine that's merely to be believed. Not even less a doctrine that is meant to be argued over.

[27 : 17] It is rather seen in Scripture to be a truth that breathes support and peace into the troubled souls of the people of God. It's a doctrine of immense pastoral encouragement.

I wonder if you've discovered that in your lives. In your daily life. As a housewife. Working in a factory. At the school. How this great doctrine of the absolute, unending sovereignty of God over all things is a doctrine that can breathe the sweetest of pastoral blessings.

into your heart. Think of how it can operate for pastors and elders. You know the pressures that such men are under as they labour in the cause of the gospel.

And how at times work can seem so discouraging. We feel we are labouring on. We feel that God is enabling us and yet we are seeing nothing to encourage us. And then we remind ourselves of the words of our Lord in the sixth chapter of John's gospel.

All that the Father gives me will come to me. And you're able to set your feet again on solid ground. God is sovereign.

[28 : 37] God has a people. God has a people. Or when Paul came to Corinth after that disastrous to him experience in Athens. He was greatly discouraged. Yet you remember how the Lord came to him in a vision in the middle of the night and said, Paul, I have many people in Corinth.

That verse has sustained me often when I've had times of great discouragement in New Mills. we labour on there in a situation of great nominalism, of indifference to the gospel.

And how I've often taken my soul to that verse. I have many people here. And you see how you're able to take your mind and fix it on the fact that God is not caught out by circumstances.

That God knows what he is about. That he is in charge of it all. And we're able, as it were, to rest our souls in that tremendous encouragement. That God is Lord.

Or think how it operates for families. Think of families with all the tensions and the pressures and the uncertainties of the family that experiences unemployment and illness.

[29 : 53] We take ourselves to the great gospel truth. That all things work together for good to them that love God. To those who are the called according to his purpose.

Yes, we see all the discouraging, disheartening circumstances. God has not come with a heavenly helicopter to lift us out of them. But he comes into the midst of them with us.

And he says, now take this to heart. I'm not caught off guard by any unemployment or redundancy. I'm not caught off guard by any severe illness or future uncertainty because all things work together for good to them that love me and who are called according to my purpose.

And you know, when life seems so tangled that you hardly know where you're going or what you're doing, we're able to take ourselves back to the truth of God and able to anchor our souls in the great sovereign purposes of our God.

Or how it operates for individuals at home and at work and at school the same principle. Young folk at school who find themselves up against it. Who find themselves being looked upon as being awed because they they go to church.

[31 : 13] They go to church at night. They come to a prayer meeting and folk look upon them as being awed and the great pressures to conform to this godless world. Our young folk need to come to the word of God and to rehearse their souls in these great truths.

That God has put them there for a purpose. That he is in charge of all that is going on. That nothing happens unknown to him or unpurposed by him. A right understanding of the sovereignty of God.

Fourthly a right understanding of union with Christ. One of the most blessed of all truths in Holy Scripture is that when someone becomes a Christian they become united to Jesus Christ.

They are indissolubly united and made one with the Son of God. And that is to say at least that whatever circumstance we find ourselves in he is there with us in the midst of them.

You know those great words in Isaiah 43 when you pass through the waters I will be with you.

When you go through the fires I will be by your sight for I have redeemed you you are mine.

[32 : 39] And how often we need to remind ourselves of this that over our lives if we are Christians God has printed the words mine. And wherever we are whatever circumstance we find ourselves in he is there with us.

That's why the psalmist was able to say yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me. The great unseen presence of our living and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

that's why we can take to heart his words when he says come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and

humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls rest for your souls when you come to me. What a great source of encouragement it must be for the Christian when he or she finds themselves up against it. When at times perhaps you think that you're all but going to crack asunder and then the words of our Lord come fear not I am with you.

Fifthly I simply mention these maybe we can come back to them later. Fifthly there is a right understanding of the Holy Spirit's ministry. Again the apostle highlights this in Romans chapter 8 where he writes in the 26th verse in the same way the spirit helps us in our weakness and he uses illustration here of prayer we do not know what or how to pray as we ought but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

[34 : 32] The spirit helps us in our weakness and the word literally means the spirit comes alongside us and shoulders up the burden with us. Not that he takes the burden from us that's not the import of the word but that he comes alongside us and he bears up his end of the burden and enables us to carry it on.

That's why Martin Luther wasn't it spoke of the Holy Spirit as the alter Christus the other Christ Christ's other self if you like who comes as it were to invade our lives and to inhabit our being and to bring all the resources of the triune God to meet our every need.

He is the great helper. I will not leave you orphans says our Lord Jesus I've not left you alone. I will give you another comforter another counsellor to be with you forever even the spirit of truth.

That's why we are able to say in the midst of all the direst experiences of life I can do all things through him who gives me strength.

Not that we are super human or super spiritual but that we have a super spirit who has come within us to enable us and help us and bear us up because God would have his grace triumph in our lives in the midst of our trials and circumstances.

[36 : 04] I wonder if we sufficiently have recourse to the ministry of the spirit to the present enabling help of the third person of the trinity whose great office in life is to glorify Christ and to bear up the people of Christ.

Sixth thing the sixth cure for stress is the one that Jesus focuses on almost exclusively in Matthew chapter 6 those verses we read and that is a right understanding of the fatherhood of God.

If you were to be asked what is the highest blessing the gospel brings blessings I wonder what your answer would be. I don't think I would have any hesitation in saying along with Professor John Murray the highest summit to which the gospel reaches is that God makes rebel sinners into sons and daughters.

Adoption is the great summit of gospel blessings and that's what Jesus is seeking here to impress upon these people. Here they were worrying about their lives and what they were going to eat and what they were going to drink and what they were going to wear and Jesus says to them look why do you worry about clothes verse 28 see how the lilies of the field grow they do not labour or spin yet I tell you not even Solomon and all his splendor was dressed like one of these if that is how God clothes the grass of the field which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire will he not much more clothe you oh you of little faith the pagans run after all these things but your heavenly father knows that you need them he is taking their minds and directing it to who God is who is this God who has brought us to himself in the gospel he is supremely said

Jesus the father the heavenly father and because he is such a father he has a father's heart and all fatherhood is patterned after his perfect fatherhood and because his heart has the perfect heart of a father he cannot but care for all the needs of those who are his children your heavenly father knows that you need them how often we forget I'm sure when we're going through the mill when life is full of tensions and stresses to remind ourselves that our heavenly father knows what we're going through he cares that we're going through it and that he has gracious purposes and resources to enable us to cope in the midst of it that's why

[39 : 16] Jesus can say here oh you of little faith you've forgotten who you are and you've forgotten who your God is you see the concern here is faith in who God is that is to say not so much little faith but your faith in God is so impoverished allow who God is to restructure your thinking in life you see that's why the doctrine of God is the very cornerstone of Christian living I meet people who say to me oh you people are always on about Christian doctrine I'll tell you why because if you do not grasp Christian doctrine you'll never begin to live for God as you are called to live for him it is Christian doctrine which is the very foundation of godly Christian living grasping who God is and what he is about and his character and his ways that's where our lives are forged but simply in

nodding when people say do you believe this about God but do you know God to be this to be a father who has a perfect and a loving care for his children a right understanding of the fatherhood of God suddenly we're almost there another of the great biblical cures to stress and strain is clearly the practice of prayer

I was struck reading again in Philippians chapter 4 this week these words from verse 6 where Paul writes to the Christians in Philippi do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your request to God and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus do you see the connection here between prayer and peace do not be anxious about anything you can think of all the things we might be anxious about the future our jobs our families don't be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer present your request to God and the peace of God that's why we so often sing take it to the Lord in prayer because prayer is one of the great means of grace that God would use to bring his peace into our hearts think of the great biblical example of that of our Lord Jesus Christ in the garden as he faced the sheer incomprehensible immensity of bearing the sin of the people of God on the cross his soul we are told was deeply troubled and he was in great distress what did our Lord do he went to the garden to pray and it was as he prayed to the father and poured out his heart to the father that the peace of God that passes all understanding came and touched his heart and it was after he rose from prayer with all the composed dignity of the son of God he could say arise let us go for the hour has come he knew where to go and he knew what to do in the midst of that deepest of all trials and if such was the great example of our Lord Jesus how ought it to be with us I wonder if we take prayer as seriously and as faithfully as we should and finally the eighth biblical cure distress and strain is the one that Jesus concludes with in Matthew chapter 6 verse 33 but he says seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well here we are surrounded by a multitude of trials and troubles here we are with perhaps redundancy looming illness threatening family disintegrating what would Jesus have us do he would have us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness now is he saying something here that sounds so utterly pietistic as to be unreasonable no you see stress is one of satan's great tools to divert us from the heart of the battle he wants to turn us in upon ourselves he wants to narrow our horizons because we are human and fallen albeit redeemed we are so prone to satan's wiles and no matter how how troubled or how stressful our lives are we need to cling even if it be by our fingertips to seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness and his