

**November 2, 2014 - 11:00 a.m. Pastor
Jonathan Falwell**

What's Next? The Next Steps Of Being That Church

Scripture: Philippians 4:1-9

Summary: After a lengthy series delving into the question What if? Pastor Jonathan Falwell, expounding on Philippians 4:1-9, outlines four concepts that come from this passage that help us answer the question: What's next?

Well, it is great to be able to be with you guys today. And so excited to be here at Crossroads. This is a wonderful thing that God is doing here at Crossroads Church. I'm so excited about it; and I'm excited about it because today we also have the privilege of those back in Lynchburg right now are joining us by video. So we're going from here live back to Lynchburg. Normally it's the other way around. And so today this is kind of ground central, here, ground zero, as we're going back that way.

Excited to do it because we just celebrated three years of ministry here at Crossroads, and God has done some amazing things. I want to ask this question just briefly if I could. How many of you have been here at Crossroads since Day One? I just want you to raise your hands across the room if you've been here since Day One. Lots of hands. That's awesome.

Now I do want to ask this question: How many of you here today were actually part of Crossroads before it was Crossroads; back when it was Airlie Court? I see one over here; three over here; one right down front; one in the back. Awesome. Lots of you are here today. And so honored and so blessed to be able to be here.

Now I do know, for those of you who were here about four years ago, Airlie Court, when we met together on Sunday afternoon, I remember you were here on that Sunday afternoon. We were gathered right down here in the front and we had about 25 or so people that were gathered here that day, talking about what God had done here for so many years, and what God—what I believed and what they believed, certainly, God wanted to do here in the days ahead.

And we gathered together that afternoon with about 25 or so people, talking about, praying about what God had in store. And we believed firmly then that God wanted to see this building that had

been raised up, a great ministry that had impacted people for so many decades, that God wanted to see this place reach hundreds and hundreds of people here each and every week.

We sit here now, about four years later, and we see hundreds and hundreds of people being ministered to each and every week, and I'm so excited about it. But listen; make no mistake. I believe this with all of my heart. God's best is still yet ahead for this great church, and I'm excited about what God has already done, but man, I just know God's going to do some amazing things in the days ahead right here through the great people of this church.

Now today we had two services here, and I think that's the first time we've done that here at Crossroads. At 9:15 and 11:00 and we joined the 9:15 service back in Lynchburg. Now joining the 11 o'clock service there. And it's exciting because normally we have one service here at 11:00. We've kind of broadened that out today for two services, and it's kind of neat because I believe, Josh, this might be a great kind of foretelling of what is to come here, because I would love to see this place at 9:15 and 11:00 every single Sunday full—just like it is right now—full of people coming to worship the one true God. Are you with me on that? Do you think that's a good thing to do? Exciting? Absolutely.

And so that's what we're here to do today is just kind of celebrate three years of ministry here, but also to talk about what's coming up. What is next?

Now you know over the last six or seven weeks or so we've been asking ourselves a question about what if. What if our church, this church, what if this church was that first church since Pentecost, going all the way back to Acts 1, who truly embraced and believed that the same power that God gave to them back in Acts 1 is the same power that we can use today to impact this community—you know in Acts 1:8 where it says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."—when Jesus gave that statement, that commission to that early church, what if today we embraced that same statement and we just used that same power, that same commitment, that same passion to go out and to change our world?

Ee've talked about what happened with that group of people when they heard Jesus say that. They ran back to that upper room. They got together and they prayed and then, as we've talked about at great length and we studied in a very detailed way over these last few weeks from Acts 1 to Acts 28, as we saw what began on that hillside, as we saw what began in that upper room with 120 people, very quickly by the of the book of Acts it spread all over the world—knocking on the very doorsteps of Rome with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's make sure we understand. That was back before the Internet. It was back before Twitter. Back before Facebook. Back before cell phones. Back before email. Back before television. Back before radio. Back before all of those things. And so what happened, then? We ask ourselves the question: How could it be that 120 people gathered together in Jerusalem, that that message in a very little period of time could literally go all over the globe? And here is how it happened: because God used, in that time, the greatest technology that has ever been invented.

Do you have any idea what that greatest technology that's ever been invented is? No, it's not the Internet. It's people. People just like you and me. God allowed His people with a passion, with a burden, with a heart, to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and take that message all over the world. And what happened is that it worked.

I believe with all my heart that what God did in Acts, God can do today. Do you agree with that? I believe that God, using that group of people back in Acts 1 and 2 and right on through, I believe that He can use us in the same way, and I believe in a greater way than He did in that early church. And I believe that we can see the world changed if we would simply buy into the concept, buy into the idea. What if we could be that church and make the determination that's what we're going to because.

There is an interesting question that must follow what if. We ask the question what if, what if, what if? There's a logical next question. Can you guess what that question is? It's what's next? If we make the determination that we're going to be that church, that we're going to be that people that are going to go out to share the good news of the message of Jesus Christ and we're going to share the gospel for the world, we have to ask ourselves the question: What is next? What do we do to make sure that happens? And that's what I want to talk a little bit about today.

I want you to turn in your Bibles with me to the book of Philippians. We're going to find and read a passage here in the book of Philippians that I believe is one of the greatest statements of what's next for the church of Jesus Christ today. It's found in the book of Philippians, chapter 4. I'm going to read through this passage and then spend a few moments talking about four ideas, four concepts that come from this passage that help us answer the question: What's next?

Let's read together beginning in verse 1 of Philippians 4, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work."

Now verse 2, Paul begins to meddle a little bit, because he wants to see the church empowered. So in verse 2 he says, "Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche." And I've heard that name pronounced so many different ways. I've no idea what's right. I like to call her "Cindy." "Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement." In other words, you guys are not getting along; get along. Get over it. Move on.

Verse 3, "And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life."

Verse 4, "Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." And understand, His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing.” Paul wants to make sure he makes one last statement here, “Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.”

That’s a great passage; a passage that gives us a very interesting dynamic, an interesting statement of what the church must do. And I believe this with all my heart that this passage that was written about 2,000 years ago—a little less—was written literally as a statement to the Church of 2014 on what it is that we’ve got to do if we’re going to be that Church, that Church that just like in Acts chapter 1 and Acts chapter 2 turned the world upside down with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When I was driving down here this morning, very early, I drove down 460 and came down Williamson Road, just behind me here, and as I’m driving down the road and seeing lots of people that are walking around and walking through the street there, driving from place to place, people getting their morning breakfast and all those kind of things. I couldn’t help but think that there are so many people just within a few minutes of where we sit right here in Roanoke and even in Lynchburg, just a few moments from where people sitting there in Lynchburg, so many people that need to know who Christ is, that need to know what the gospel is all about, that good news.

When I was driving this morning very early I turned on Victory FM and I was listening to a sermon that was on their this morning. And it was a familiar voice to me, because it was a voice that I’d heard so many times before. It was my dad preaching. They’d gone back and pulled out a sermon I think from the 1970s. It was very old. He was talking about a lot of people that were around during those days that are in heaven now.

So he was preaching a message. You know what he was talking about? It’s kind of cool. He was talking about the same thing that I’m talking about here today: the need of the Church to continue to preach the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I’m just telling you, this church exists—Thomas Road Baptist Church, Crossroads Church, Dan River Church down in Danville—the church exists not just to have a place to go on Sunday morning. It exists to truly impact our community with the message, the only message that can change lives. The only message that can allow people to understand, as this passage talks about, the peace that will guard our hearts.

I think you know this is true. We live in a culture today that is difficult times. A lot of difficult things that are going on, troubles that are surrounding us, troubles all around the world. Many of the worship songs that Scott led us in this morning talking about those kinds of things. When the oceans are tumbling, when the world is turning upside down, that’s when we can see that perfect peace that only God can give.

So today what I want to do is take a few moments to point out a few thoughts, four ideas from the passage that Paul wrote, again, 2,000 years ago, but I believe just as timely and just as important as if he wrote it today, to speak to the Church and to speak to you and me; to speak to

those in Lynchburg, to tell us, “Okay, you’ve been asking yourself the question what if? Well, here’s what’s next.”

And the first thing we’ve got to get from this passage is this: If we are going to be that Church, we must stay true to His Word. The Word of God is still just as vibrant, it’s just as real and just as alive as it was 2,000 years ago. The message that they heard from Christ 2,000 years ago that caused them to literally go out and to tell everybody that they knew about who Jesus is, that message is still just as important right now today.

Now you’ve heard me say, if you’re part of this church, you’ve heard me say it here; you’ve heard me say it in Lynchburg over and over and over again that I believe that this book is the Word of God. I believe it is infallible. I believe it is inspired. I believe there is not one mistake found within its pages. I believe there is not one word that is in the pages of this book that God did not place there very deliberately. I believe it’s God’s Word.

I believe that God gave us His Word. It’s something that was true, something that was real, something that was alive. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that this book is alive and it’s powerful. It’s unlike any other book that we have. And I believe that God gave us this book under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, very deliberately, so that we would know what to do in 2014; so that we would know how to act as the Church; so that we would know how to live and how to act and how to speak and how to tell and how to share and how to minister and how to make a difference and how to make an impact. And it will not happen unless we are passionate, staying true to God’s Word.

Look what it says in verse 1, “Therefore,” Paul writes in this passage, “my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord.” In other words, don’t allow yourself to be blown about. Don’t get off track. Don’t believe in something else. Don’t listen to the lies of the world. You just stay focused on what it is that God has given you in His Word. Stay true to that. I’m telling you what’s going to happen: you’ll change your world.

The only way Crossroads Church is going to change the Roanoke Valley, the only way Thomas Road is going to change the Lynchburg community, the only way it’s going to happen is if we are the church that stays true to God’s Word in everything.

Now I know we live in a culture today where people write books all the time. You can walk into the different stores, the different bookstores. You can go onto Amazon and all these places. You can find hundreds of thousands of books that are written all the time. Books on how to do this and how to do that and how to be a better person, how to be a better dad, how to be a better church member. All of these things. You can read all of these books. You can find all these books. And a lot of them are great books. I’m telling you, though, that none of them can hold a candle to following the Word of God.

And for this church, for Thomas Road, for Crossroads, I’m just telling you, this church, until Christ returns, we are going to be fully committed, 100 percent sold out to God’s holy Word, the Bible. We’ve got to stay true to His Word.

Paul goes on to write, very importantly, a very timely message, that not only must you stay true to the Lord, must stay true to God's Word, but the next statement he says that we must live in unity. And this is tough. This is a tough thing to do, because we live in a culture where people hurt each other's feelings all the time, where people say things that both us, where we get on each other's nerves and we get into a situation where in the church there are people who are sitting over here on this side and they look across and they see somebody sitting over here and they don't really get along that well. And in fact the reason that you're sitting over here is because that person is sitting over here.

I see it in Lynchburg all the time. I'm sure, Josh, you see it here, these issues and these problems to get along, and then I'm telling you, pastors, every week I hear from people in the church that will share with me stories; they'll tell me things, and I'll just tell you, it's some juicy stuff. I mean they will tell me some stuff; I love to go out and get on the *Montel Williams Show* or something or go on *Oprah*. "Let me just tell you what this person told me of all the conflicts and all the issues and all the challenges and of all the things that are going on."

And I'll just tell you today: the greatest tool that Satan has at his disposal to stop the Church is disunity in the church. Paul knew that. He wrote in this passage, again, according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord." But then right after that in verse 2, "Now I appeal to you, get over it. Settle this disagreement. Figure out a way to take all these problems and conflicts and challenges and get over it, because it is stopping you from fulfilling God's call on your life."

And I know that there are people sitting in this room right now, there are people sitting in Lynchburg right now, people sitting in Danville right now that there are issues in your heart of unforgiveness, of anger, of maybe even hatred toward someone else maybe in the church, and it is stopping you from seeing your full potential according to the Word of God because you are not living in unity. We've got to get over it. This passage tells us: settle the disagreement.

Verse 4 says, "Always be full of joy in the Lord." Do me a favor. That first word of that verse, would you just say that out loud for me? What does that verse say? Always. Say it one more time. Always. "Always be full of joy in the Lord." Let me ask you a question: Is it possible to be full of joy in the Lord if you are harboring discontent, disunity, unforgiveness, anger, hatred toward somebody else in the church? Is it possible to always be full of joy in the Lord? Is that possible? The answer is no. Now again, let me tell you this book was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; it comes directly from God. And so when I read this passage in verse 4 where it says, "Always be full of joy in the Lord," I don't take that as a suggestion; I take that as a command. And if it's a command and yet in our hearts we're harboring bitterness and hatred and anger and discontent toward other people in the church, let me tell you what's going to happen. What's going to happen is the church is going to be full of sin, because any time you disobey God's Word, what is it? It's sin. See, we've got to get past that.

Here's the beautiful part about the message of the Word of God, though, because there is another passage—you've heard me share this, too, before—1 John 1:9 that says that, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You know what that passage really tells us is this: When you do have sin, when you do harbor

bitterness, when you do have hatred or anger or malice or discontent toward other people, all you've got to do is say, "God, forgive me," and He is ready and willing to do it just like that.

Remember when you were a kid and you did something that was one of those things where you upset your parents or maybe you had to come clean to your parents and tell your parents what you'd done and you were a little bit worried about what they might do? Maybe I'll catch them on a good day and tell them what I did and maybe they'll be in a good mood and they'll wrap their arms around me and tell me it's okay. They forgive me. They love me. Or maybe they'll pull a belt off and chase me around the house. Whatever it might be. You remember those moments.

The great thing about God is that He is always there ready and willing to wrap His arms around you and to say, "Son, I forgive you. Child, I forgive you." And there is no greater feeling. And so we've got to have unity in the Church if we're going to be all that God wants us to be.

Verse 5 it says, "Let everyone see that you are considerate in all that you do." In other words, we've got to make sure that in the way that we act, in the way that we treat others that we get along; that we make sure that we understand that there are people out there who are looking at us as people of faith, people of the church, and we've got to make sure they see something that's different.

Now I realize, we all heard that statement that because we're Christians we have love everybody. And so we like to use this statement, "Well I love them, but I sure don't like them." Anybody here ever said that? "I love them, but I sure don't like them." We've all heard that; we've laughed about that so many times.

I get that there are differences of opinion. I get that there are differences in personalities. I know that there are people that you can love with all of your heart, according to the Word of God, but you don't want to hang out with them on a Friday night. Charles Billingsley is sitting there in Lynchburg. And Charles is one of my best friends; I love him to death. I love him like a brother. He is incredible.

But you know Charles every day pretty much he goes to a place called Starbucks. You ever heard of Starbucks? I think you have. He goes to Starbucks and he's so addicted to it he'll go and actually buy a big cup of coffee. It's not big—they call it something like grande or venti or some big day or something. I don't know what it is. He's got to get this large cup of coffee in one hand, and then he gets a large cup of iced tea in the other hand, and he'll walk in—praise team, you know this—and he'll walk in every Sunday carrying two big drinks—I stood up again, sorry; get in trouble here. Jared's back there about to crack the whip on me. Walks in with two big drinks.

Now listen, I love Charles like a brother, but I'm not going to go hang out at Starbucks with Charles because I don't like coffee. Now if he wants to go to McDonald's, I'm in, but... I get that there are people that are different; that's fine. We're not saying that everybody in the church we have to totally just say, "Okay, I'll do it." No. We have to live in unity. That means we have to accept differences, but we love each other with all of our hearts. And that's how we can be that church.

So we must live in unity. Verse 7 says this, “Then,” and that word *then* is a very telling word, a very important word, because what it says here is that if you do these things, then this is what’s going to happen. Verse 7, “Then you will experience God’s” what? Peace. Do you think that we need peace in the Church today? I think we do. I know we need peace in the world. Man, we need peace so desperately.

So Paul, again, writing this passage, says, “Okay, here’s how you get it: get over your disagreements, get over your disunity, get over your anger, get over your hatred. Love people with all of your hearts. Then you will experience God’s peace that will, in every setting, guard your heart, guard your mind according to Christ Jesus.”

So we must understand that in our hearts we have to stay true to His Word. We have to live in unity. But the third thing is that we have to make sure that we pursue righteousness. Holiness. We’ve got to be different from the world. In the world, but not of the world. We are called to be salt and light in the community. In other words, when people see us, that we, according to the Word of God, that we are like a light that is set up on a hill. People need to look at us and see God’s love and God’s power and God’s forgiveness in the way that we live. It means that we can’t live like everybody else does. We can’t live according to what the world tells us we ought to do.

And so many Christians today miss out on the full potential of God’s calling on their life because they want to get so close to the edge and get so close to the world and live like the rest of the world does, because that’s what they see on TV and that’s what they see in the magazines. They go to check out at the grocery store and there are all those magazines there and all those stars that are on the front covers talking about what marriage fell apart this week and who this person cheated this person, all these things that we see, and we think that is normal. And I’m telling you that is not the norm. That is not right. And certainly not the way that the Church of Jesus Christ needs to live.

We need to pursue righteousness. Look what the passage says. “And now,” Paul writes, “dear brothers and sisters, one final thing.” In other words, “Hey, don’t miss this.” Make sure you get this one final thing. “Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”

In that passage Paul makes it very clear: if you’re going to do this, if you’re going to be who God’s called you to be, if you’re going to get past all the disunity, if you’re going to get past all those issues and live in harmony, live in unity in the church and you’re going to make sure that you’re staying true to God’s Word, one final statement that is so vital, so important. Make sure that everything that you do, fix your heart—and that word *fix* literally means like attached to, lock onto, like the old *Star Trek* tractor beam. Fix your thoughts on what is true and what’s honorable and what’s right and what’s pure.

Live lives of righteousness. When people look at us as people in the church when we’re out there in the community trying to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ, they are going to see us, they’re going to look at us, and they are going to evaluate what they see. And they are going to evaluate us, really in just one of only three ways. The first one is they’re going to see something

that is different, but in a bad way. Number two, they are going to see something that is just the same as everybody else. Or number three, they are going to see somebody who's different in a good way, in an attractive way.

That's the only three choices that we have as the Church of Jesus Christ—either to live right or to live the same or to live worse. And I'm afraid today that too many Christians are spending their time on the last two rather than on the first; that we've got to make sure that what we do, we are honoring Christ in everything that we do.

If you're in business, honor Christ in the way you do business. If you're a policeman, honor Christ in the way that you serve your community. If you are a schoolteacher—Nicole's a schoolteacher—if you're a schoolteacher, honor Christ in the way that you teach those kids and work with those parents. If you work at McDonald's, honor Christ when you make that Big Mac.

In whatever you do, honor Christ in everything. And when the world looks at you—which they will—make sure that what they see is something that is different. But number, that it is something that is real and vibrant and good and honorable and something that would make them want to achieve the same. That's what we're called to do.

So he says, "One final thing. Fix your hearts; fix your hearts on these things." We have to pursue righteousness, which leads us to the fourth, which is a natural byproduct of doing all the things we've talked about thus far. It's this: We've got to live as an example. We have to be an example of the Word of God. Look what it says in verse 9, "Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you."

In other words, "What you've seen me do, you do. And the way that I've lived, you live." Not listen, that is a great statement because Paul has given us a very clear statement and also given us permission to say that yes, we must be an example to the world around us. We like to say we shouldn't look at man; we should only look to God. I get that. I understand that. We shouldn't put people on pedestals. No, absolutely not.

But if you're a person who claims the name of Christ, people are going to be looking at you, and I pray that if we're going to be the church that God's called us to be, if we're going to be that church, then we better be good examples of the love and the hope that is found in Christ and Christ alone. Make sure that we do that which Christ has called us to do.

And I'm going to tell you something. If those are the things that we do, if we make sure that we live in that way and we pursue those things and we try to be different than the world and we try to live in the world with a message of hope and a message of love and a message of truth, I'm just telling you this passage promises us—and again, this is God's Word, so it's a promise—Paul writes, "Then the God of peace will be with you."

I believe that the only hope that the world has today is found in the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ as told by the people of the Church. That's what I believe with all my heart. I believe the Roanoke Valley has but one hope. It's not found in government, it's not found in City

Hall, it's not found in business, it's not found in economy. All those things are important, but it's not found there. The only hope the Roanoke Valley has today is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The only hope that Lynchburg has today is found in one thing: the gospel of Jesus Christ. The only hope that America has today is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The only hope for the world, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Are we going to be that church? Can we be that people? Can we be the people that Christ has called us to be? If we're that group, we will change our world.

Today is the international day of prayer for the persecuted church, and right now in Lynchburg I've asked my friend Vernon Brewer, who heads up World Help and has just returned from Iraq just a couple of days ago, he's going to come and lead you there in Lynchburg in a time of prayer for that church. He's going to share a video with you about his visit to Iraq.

Vernon Brewer: I saw on the news this morning that overnight last night ISIS went through and killed an entire community, 50 people, overnight. Many of them were children. Just indiscriminately went through and killed them. Do you think the world needs peace today? We're six weeks away from Christmas—it's hard to believe that—we're just a few weeks away from Christmas and we're all going to be singing the Christmas carols. And you know that one that says, "Peace, good will toward men"? We pull that out every November and we sing it for a while and then we put it back on the shelf at the end of December and move on.

Here's what I think. I think the Church ought to be a place that is talking about peace on Earth all the time. So today is that international day of prayer, so in a moment I'm going to ask Josh to come here and Vernon is going to come there in Lynchburg and do this as well.

Today, hundreds of thousands of Christians around the world are pausing to focus on the persecuted church and to pray for the persecuted church. Seventy million believers have been martyred since Jesus died on the cross that day in Jerusalem. Just this past year alone, it's estimated that 250,000 Christians will die for their faith—not because of war, because of their faith—in places like India, Nepal, and China and Cuba. And of course North Korea.

Last week, I was in Northern Iraq, just a few kilometers from Mosul, which ironically is Nineveh in biblical times. We talked to people who have been so persecuted. I met a family that had a 5-year-old boy, and he had seen so many beheadings by ISIS and seen the bodies lying on the street and the heads lying next to them that he became so traumatized that he can no longer speak. He's mute.

Another family had a 5-year-old boy, and they watched in horror as ISIS took a sword and cut that little boy in half in front of their eyes.

These are people like you and me who are forced to leave with the clothes on their back, some living in tents, some living in crowded rooms with strangers, just simply because they are Christians. ISIS wants to either kill all the Christians in Iraq or drive them out of Iraq. There used to be 300,000 Christians in Iraq. Now there are fewer than 50,000, and they're talking about the possibility of a country with no Christians whatsoever.

We went to this Christian village that had nothing. It was on the outskirts of Mosul. Just two nights before we got there, ISIS had bombed the outskirts of that village. We took the long way around because our security team said we need to make sure we take all necessary precautions. We had a convoy of three large trucks, and we drove into this village of Christians, who had not had any relief at all, and we brought them enough food for a month and heaters and blankets and rugs and carpets to sleep on, and food and water, and then we gave them hope. And we prayed together with them and told them that we were standing together with them here in America.

Just take a minute and see what God's doing there in this country where our brothers and sisters are facing great persecution. This past week has been one of the most heartbreaking weeks in my life to see people that God loves suffering so much. In Jordan, refugees were provided food and aid and blankets because of our teams.

And here in Iraq we're visiting tent cities and abandoned malls. We even drove up just a few kilometers from Mosul and just a few kilometers from ISIS. We were able to help an entire village of Christians by giving them blankets and food and electric heaters and giving them hope. And everywhere I've been this week, I've given one simple message: God loves you. God knows about your situation. I pray that it is temporary and don't lose hope, because God is in control.

So this week I know what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus on the ground, on the front lines, to men and women and children who are most desperate and need our help, so I'm asking you to please join with me in saying enough is enough. Will you please help me help these people that are in such a desperate condition? Will you join me in showing them the love of God and that we care and God cares and they are not forgotten? I pray that you will. Shall we pray?

Father, this morning we commit ourselves to be that kind of church that Jonathan talked about, and I pray that every one of us will examine our hearts, our lives, that we would indeed be a shining light. And Father, today we pray for the persecuted church around the world, those who are enduring suffering today simply because of their faith in Jesus Christ. I pray that you would surround them with your love and presence and power and encouragement and hope. Father, I pray that in the face of this Christian holocaust that is going on in Iraq right now that you would step in and say, "Enough! Enough!"

So I pray for our brothers and sisters who are enduring so much pain and so much suffering. Be near and dear to them today we pray. And as we go about our day, may we be reminded that we don't have to fear because of our faith and help us not to forget what we've seen and heard this day. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Keywords: Philippians 4:1-9, sharing the gospel, reaching the lost, good news of the gospel, Word of God, unity, righteousness, live as an example, hope, peace, persecution, ISIS