

MARK & FRIENDS PROGRAM RESOURCES

Living in the Tension of Two Worlds

Keeping Our Eyes on Jesus While Engaging the World with
His Love and Truth

Pastor Jason Schifo

Wednesday, July 29, 2026

Program Summary

In this Mark & Friends classic conversation, Pastor Jason Schifo and Mark Burns explore Philippians 4:8 and the calling of believers to live faithfully in the tension between heaven and earth. Rather than withdrawing from the world, followers of Jesus are called to keep their eyes fixed on Christ, resist being shaped by the world's patterns, and carry the Gospel into everyday relationships. The conversation reminds us that storms come to everyone, but those who build on Christ can stand firm and bring His peace, truth, and love into places of uncertainty and need.

Key Takeaways

- Philippians 4:8 calls believers to deliberately focus on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.
- Christians are not called to isolate themselves from the world, but to engage it without allowing its patterns to shape them.
- Romans 12:2 warns us not to be conformed to the world; instead, God renews our minds so we can influence the world for His kingdom.
- People outside the Christian faith may display admirable qualities, but everyone still needs the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Like Peter walking on the water, we begin to sink when the wind and waves become larger in our attention than Jesus.
- The storms of life come both to those who build on sand and those who build on the Rock; the foundation determines whether we stand.
- The place where faith meets a hurting world may be uncomfortable, but it is often exactly where God has called us to serve.
- When believers live near people who do not yet follow Jesus, those people encounter Christ through the believer's presence, love, and witness.

Scripture References

- Philippians 4:8-9
- Romans 12:2
- Philippians 3:12-14
- Matthew 14:22-33
- Matthew 7:24-27
- Galatians 5:22-23
- John 17:14-18

Quote of the Day

“Stop allowing the world to work on you, because you are called to work in the world.”

Broadcast Notes

Pastor Jason begins with Paul's repeated use of the word “finally” in Philippians and suggests that Paul loved the church so deeply he could hardly stop writing to them. He then contrasts the dismissive modern use of “whatever” with Paul's expansive invitation to think about whatever is excellent and praiseworthy. The conversation moves into the relationship between Christians and the wider culture, emphasizing that Jesus regularly ministered beyond religious circles. Jason explains Romans 12:2 through the Greek idea behind “conform,” describing the danger of allowing the world to fashion us when God has called us to be transformed and to serve within it. Peter's walk on the water and Jesus' parable of the two builders illustrate that faith does not remove life's storms; it gives us a sure foundation and a fixed point of focus. The believer's calling is to stand where heaven and earth meet, holding firmly to Christ while reaching others with the Gospel.

Practical Applications

- Begin each day by asking God to renew your mind before the voices and pressures of the world begin shaping your thoughts.
- Use Philippians 4:8 as a filter for what you watch, read, discuss, and dwell upon.
- Identify one relationship with someone who does not yet follow Jesus and intentionally invest in that person with genuine friendship and prayer.
- When anxiety rises, name the 'wind and waves' competing for your attention, then consciously turn your focus back to Christ.
- Examine whether your desire to be separate from sin has unintentionally become separation from people who need the love of Jesus.
- Ask whether the fruit of the Spirit is visible in the way you respond to cultural disagreement, frustration, and fear.
- Stand faithfully in the uncomfortable place where God's truth and human need meet, trusting that Christ is present with you.

Today's Challenge

This week, choose one place where you normally withdraw, become defensive, or allow the world's pressure to shape your response. Enter that situation with your eyes fixed on Jesus. Look for what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy, and ask God to use your presence to bring His peace and Gospel influence into that space.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for placing us in this world with a purpose. Keep us from being shaped by fear, anger, pride, or the patterns around us. Renew our minds through Your Word and help us fix our eyes on Jesus when the wind and waves rise. Give us courage to stand firmly on Christ, the Rock, while reaching toward people who need Your truth and love. Fill us with the fruit of Your Spirit so that our lives make the Gospel visible. Use us in the place where heaven and earth meet, and let Your peace guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Pastor Jason Schifo

Pastor and Bible Teacher

Pastor Jason Schifo joined Mark Burns for this classic Mark & Friends conversation, originally recorded nearly fourteen years before its 2026 rebroadcast. Drawing from Philippians, Romans, the Gospels, and pastoral experience, he offers a thoughtful and practical challenge for Christians to remain rooted in Jesus while faithfully engaging the people and culture around them.

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Proofread Broadcast Transcript

Mark & Friends Welcome Song

We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here,
Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.

It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear,
Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here.

Reading from Philippians chapter 4, verse 8. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. That was Philippians chapter 4, verse 8. O magnify the Lord with me, let us exult his name together. It's Wednesday, July 29th, 2026. Welcome to a special Mark and Friends classic conversation.

From time to time we like to revisit some of the most meaningful conversations from the Mark and Friends archives. As our great news radio office manager Karen Harrison likes to remind us, if it's good enough to hear once, it's good enough to hear twice. And perhaps God wants someone to hear this message again today.

This conversation was originally recorded nearly 14 years ago as Pastor Jason Schifo joined me in the studio to discuss the tension of two worlds. Although the conversation was recorded a long time ago, its biblical truths are just as timely today. Thanks for carving out some time, whether you're listening to the morning edition, the re-airing in the evening.

Maybe some of you have your iPhones out and you're listening to it through our streaming audio. We have streams at greatnewsradio.org or at our archive programs link. So lots of ways to tune in.

And as Jason and I just finished praying, we always, each and every time we gather to share, and whether it's dividing God's word or telling some stories or using illustrations or life examples on how we see God at work or what God's doing in our lives, we always pray that by something that's said or shared or explained or communicated that you're drawn closer to God, that somehow his kingdom purposes are accomplished, that there's various ways that he can use the program. And we always just pray God empower it. So that's always our desire as we pray very specifically for you, our listener, those of you that are part of our radio listening family, that something will be an encouragement to you.

And I know each and every time Jason gets here, as I've said many times before, we spend about 30, 40, I think today about 50 minutes just telling some stories,

some highlights. We got to meet over at Mel and Meg's and enjoyed one of these, what Meg would describe as, oh, I'm just going to throw together a few things. And it was like a bountiful buffet.

I could eat the rest of the day. Yeah, I know. I was stuffed too, but it was great to have some time with good friends and family members and gathering.

Hopefully yours was also filled with times of not only fun, but times of reflection, honoring those that have provided the freedoms that we can oftentimes take for granted. And if you have ideas for future people we should maybe interview or talk with, whether they're authors, artists, musicians or whatever, give me a call or write us and maybe I can track down these people. As long as they have a God honoring story that will draw people closer to God, we're interested.

So, hey, Jason, I missed you on Sunday, so I really didn't get to know what you preached on, or I know what you're going to be preaching on this coming Sunday. What was discussed or divided or shared on Sunday? We tied up the end of Philippians and we did the last little bit. And then I read a letter to the church that I had written to the church because Paul writes letters to the churches.

And I think there's a great power in writing letters. I mean, there's something special when I put words to the page and each word intentionally crafted and authored for you. You know, it's a part of my soul and who I am and what I am, and then it is delivered to you.

And I think that that's what Paul does in all of his letters. He doesn't write them because he has to. He writes them because he wants to.

And he writes them, too, I think, because in his union and communion with the Holy Spirit, he's convicted to continually love and pour into these people at these different and various churches. So I want to do the same for the church that I pastor. Now, I heard a child ran up with it.

It was like in a scroll form and he was dressed up. It kind of caught people off guard. Yeah, well, what I did is I wanted to make it fun because we were going to move to a very, I think, a meaningful time.

I mean, the letter was written in such a way that I wanted to express a lot of my hearts and thoughts for the church, who we are, what we are, who they are, who I am, how we've lived together, and then what it looks like going forward.

Because we've been in Philippians 11 months, and that puts it at almost a year for me at the church. So we're coming up on this anniversary of my family coming and being called to this church.

So we wanted to share that. But I wanted to make it kind of a fun intro. So I had one of the teens dress up like first century.

You know, they had a robe and they had a shawl on. You know, I kind of motioned and he had it on a big scroll and he kind of ran up. He goes, I have a message.

You know, sort of like it would have been like somebody running up and going, Paul's written to us. I have a message. And then I took copies of that letter and individually rolled them and tied them so that you could then take home.

So you would then individually get a letter. So had I been alive back then, I would have been the first Gideon, you know. So we just tried to do that.

But in Philippians chapter four and verse eight, where we ended this week, Paul says, Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things, whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put into practice and the God of peace will be with you. Now, that's interesting. Now, I want to start out with one thing that I found fascinating to me, is in chapter three and verse one, Paul says, Finally.

And then again, in chapter four and verse eight, he says, Finally again. Now, if you scan the total of the New Testament in 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 11, at the end of Corinthians, he says, Finally. Ephesians 6.10, he says, Finally.

1 Thessalonians 4.1, he says, Finally. 2 Thessalonians 3.1, he says, Finally. 2 Timothy 4.8, he says, Finally.

This is the only New Testament letter that Paul uses the word Finally twice. So, when I was looking at this, I was thinking about, number one, there's a linguistic thing. So, as I studied it, there's a linguistic thing happening here.

There's a reason why Paul says Finally and then Finally again. But for me, that doesn't take care of why he says it every other letter once and here he says it twice. You know why I think he says it twice? I think it's because he can't stop talking to the Philippians.

I think it's like the sleepover where you go to sleepover at somebody's house and you're consistently talking all throughout the night. You go like, Okay, it's time for bed. And then you hear the giggling and the talking and the giggling and talking.

It's time for bed. Giggling and talking, giggling and talking. I think that Paul loves the Philippian church so much that in chapter 3, maybe he genuinely wants to say goodbye.

And then he's got so much more to say to them because he loves them so much. He wants to guide and instruct them in what it means to follow Jesus, follow God, and live that out in their lives. So, I really grabbed a hold of him and love the fact that he says that.

Now, he goes on to say, To give you, I call these the whatever's. Whatever's true, whatever's noble, whatever's right, whatever's pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy. This to me was fascinating in terms of our cultural metaphors because in our culture today, whatever means nothing.

Whatever is like flip it, like whatever. You know, whatever. I mean, whatever encompasses nothing.

It means I don't care, don't bother me with it, I don't want to worry about that. Whatever means pfft. Yeah, usually the eyes are rolling like whatever, mom.

So, in our cultural message, whatever means nothing. But to Paul here, whatever means everything. Paul says everything, all these things, whatever is this, it's excellent, it's praiseworthy.

Think about these things. And what's really fascinating here because I said, I think when I preached it, I said to the folks, I said, Who here thinks this is what

Paul is kind of saying? Hey, Christians, this is how you're supposed to orientate your life. You know, look for these things.

And, you know, about three-fourths of the hands went up. And I said, That is excellent. But that's not really what Paul's doing.

These things that Paul is listing here were actually what was the pattern of the Greek moralists or the Greek ethical way of living. So what Paul is actually doing here is Paul is saying, he's pointing to culture. He's saying the Greek culture, they live in nobility, in truth, in righteousness.

They want to live, the Greek mindset wants to live in what is pure and what is lovely and what is admirable and what is excellent. I mean, look at when Luke writes in Acts and Luke writes in his gospel. He begins it by saying, Most excellent, Theophilus.

So this idea of excellence was a Greek way of living. This is what Paul is saying. Paul is saying in all his letters, he says, Look, I'm talking about the virtues and the vices, the struggles, the saving grace, the lows and highs of all my Gentile and Jewish Christian believers.

That's what he's talking about within his letters. But Paul is dipping here even bigger into the culture, and he's telling us that there are people outside of that Christian circle that touch that circle. You know, quite often in our lives, especially in our Christian lives, what we do is we go, You know what? And, Mark, I'm going to apologize ahead of time.

But we say, You know what? I only listen to Christian radio. I only read Christian books. I only go to the Christian bookstore.

I only have Christian friends. I only get excited about Christian things. And we forget that there is a circle outside of that circle.

And when I read the Gospels, Jesus operated outside of the circle all the time. If Jesus was here today and you would say, Hey, Jesus, I just want to talk to you about Christianity. Jesus would go, What do you mean? He goes, Because I see a big blurry line between those two circles because I'm called to minister to the people outside of that circle.

You know, Paul is connecting the ethics of the outside community with the power of the faith working itself out inside a believing community. How many of you out there have non-Christian friends? If you're not driving, raise your hand if you have non-Christian friends, which most of us should have. I don't know any of my non-Christian friends who don't want to live truth, who don't want to be noble, who don't want to have a righteous life, who don't want to be pure, who don't want to be lovely.

These qualities that Paul talks about, these are the qualities that everybody seeks to want to have in their life. I don't know anybody who wakes up in the morning and they go, How can I have the worst day possible? How can I be so immoral today? I mean, there are some people, but the greatest breadth of people don't want to live that way. I don't know anybody who wants to live that way.

You know, I'm thinking of a friend, and I've shared this illustration over the year a number of times, but this one friend actually is more of a Christian than many Christians I know, and he's not a believer yet. He's seeking after spiritual things. He's trying to grow and understand some of the concepts that I take by faith, and he still wrestles with that.

But I got to tell you, when I need a go-to person, he's usually one of the first people I think of because he's very caring and compassionate and sacrificial in his giving. He displays, and I've even told him this before I say his name. I said, You're sometimes more of a Christian than most of the Christians I know, and he kind of gets intrigued by that, and I explained to him.

I said, You know, I believe God's working in and through you, and you may not realize it yet, but I think he's built qualities and characteristics in you, and as you would draw near to him, I hope that you'll begin that relationship. And he's always kind of intrigued by that, but isn't it true how God wants us in the world, not of the world, participating, rubbing shoulders, getting to know people, working in their lives, allowing them to work in our lives, and not cutting us off from anyone that believes differently than us or maybe doesn't believe what we believe at all. Now, I'm going to offer you a logical corrective to what you just said.

Yes. We would generally say our non-Christian friends live of the world. You even just kind of alluded to that, and you said that.

I think that our non-Christian friends are good people. Generally, those people are good people. They're just not gospel people, and that's the difference.

They lack the changing, transforming power of the gospel of Jesus. You know, they're near the fence, but they need to be carried over the fence, and the only person who can do that is Jesus. Now, I get really amped up because I hear this more and more lately.

I hear people say, We need to live not like the world. We don't need to be like the world, and you even alluded to that. I think it's a silly statement.

You know why? Because it's inevitable. We're in the world. Right, right.

So we're here. So to say I don't want to live of the world is to say, Well, where are you going to go? Because if you go, then you're not here anymore. Yeah, I think in the world but not of the world.

So maybe what I'm thinking more is just the mindset. Of course, we got to work and earn a living and participate in school and do the various things. But I think there's that real importance that we put God first and seek his ways first and foremost.

But because of our love of God, we'll take that all the way over here to the nth degree. And then we'll start to go, Well, I can't do that because that's of the world. Well, let me tell you what.

If you don't do those things that some of us would coin, and I run into people who do this. If we don't do those things that we would coin of the world, we're never going to meet those people that we believe live in the world. Therefore, we're never going to bring them out of the world.

It's a self-defeating prophecy that we're living within if we don't do that. In Romans 12, 2, Paul says, Don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And that's where most people who say, We don't live with this world.

That's where they go. They go Romans 12, 2. Now, Paul uses the word do not, which is a strong directive. It's like he's stamping his foot down and he's saying, Do not do this.

And then he uses the word conform. Now, the word conform comes from a Greek word called schema, schema, which means to be fashioned. It's a term of kind of fashioning and putting something together, working on something.

What Paul is saying is, Stop allowing the world to work on you because you're called to work on the world. You're spending so much time allowing the world to work on you that you forget you're called to work in the world. You know, we get that one backwards.

It's interesting. This word schema for the conform is tied to the word in First Corinthians 7:31, where it says the devil will rope you into his scheme unless you surrender your body to God to be by him delivered. So what that is saying is the devil will throw that rope around you and he'll begin to fashion you to be more.

Look, you're going to be more and more like something. So what are you going to allow yourself to be more and more like? If you are not orientating your heart and mind towards God and you are not allowing God to fashion you, then you are going to allow something else to fashion you. It's inevitable.

It's one or the other. And Paul says, Don't live any longer. What Paul is saying is, Look, you have freedom from this, but don't forget where you've been.

Don't forget your address. Your address right now is in this world. So in this world, you have a mission.

And Jesus didn't plant you in this world so that you can just kind of go through it with inevitability of going, Well, you know what? I mean, I go to church on Sunday. I read my Bible. I did this Bible study.

I pray every day. So, man, I just can't wait to get to heaven. Because you know what? He's called for you to do something in this world.

And if you stand there and you go, I'm not going to be like the world. I'm not going to be. I ran into a guy last week.

And I mean, he was like angry almost. He was like, I'm not going to be like the world. I'm not going to do this and this and this.

And I'm not going to be like the world. And I looked at him and I go, My brother, I love you. You look an awful lot like the world with that anger in your eyes.

You look an awful lot like what you consider you will not be. I said, I do not see the fruits of the Spirit right now, the patience and peace and love and joy and forgiveness in your heart that you should have as you exist in the world. You've allowed that to work on.

You've taken something which is good. And you've allowed it to become something other than what God would want you to be. And I'm like, you can have freedom from that.

You know, in Matthew chapter 14, it's a great story. We all know it. Peter's in the boat.

They see Jesus walking up. All the disciples freak out. They go, Whoa, it's Jesus.

And then Peter stands up and he goes, Lord, Lord, if it's you, tell me to come out onto the water. And Jesus says, Come on. And Peter jumps out of the boat.

And as he's walking across the water, he sees the wind and he sees the waves and he begins to sink. And Jesus reaches out his hand and he grabs a hold of him. And he says, I mean, it says immediately he did.

So right away, those of us who are struggling know Jesus reaches out immediately. And he says, You of little faith, why did you doubt? You know, I want to point something out to you. Peter got out of the boat.

And the minute he got out of the boat, he allowed the world to begin to work on him. He allowed the wind and the waves to become bigger than. I want you to understand something.

Jesus was right in front of him. This is not metaphorical. This is physical.

Jesus was right in front of him. Those of us who are struggling day to day, we don't have Jesus physically in the flesh right in front of us. We have by his spirit he is present.

But Peter could reach out and grab a hold of Jesus. And even in that moment, he allowed the world to work on him. I think also what happened is he took his eyes off of Jesus because he looked to the left, looked to the right.

I mean, he obviously observed the wind and the waves and all this. And that's that pattern that we all fall into. We take our eyes off of Jesus.

And then what happens? We start to fall. Well, and that's what Paul says earlier in Philippians in chapter three. He says, But this one thing I do, pressing into that which has taken hold of me, Jesus.

So Paul's saying, Look, I got to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus, because if not, later on, he says, The world's going to kind of begin. He alludes to this in this passage in chapter four. The world's going to begin to work on me.

And we see it in the life of the disciples who were there with Jesus. And even if you go to Matthew chapter seven, Jesus tells us a story. He tells us of two guys who built houses.

And he says, This one guy built his house on sand, and this other guy built his house on rock. And we know the rock is analogous for Jesus Christ being the rock. You know what's fascinating about that parable? The storm comes to both people.

Just because this guy built his house on the rock doesn't mean that all of a sudden he got like some holy dome over his house. And it's always 71 degrees with a light breeze. It's always sun shining.

His hammock's in the yard. He never has to fold up his tents. No, the storm comes to both people.

And you know what? The same storm that comes from the people who live outside of your circle, the people who don't know Jesus yet, comes to you who lives inside the circle and who know Jesus. And you know what? Right where those circles touch is the hardest place to live. Because that's the place where we're all called to be.

That point of tension where we stand between heaven and earth. Where we stand between God who's sovereign and stands above all. And we stand between those people who do not know Jesus.

And we reach out with the gospel of Jesus and grab a hold of them and usher them more and more close to the kingdom of God. And that's that place of tension. I mean, that's why most of us have such trouble standing there.

It's because that's the place of greatest tension. You stand between the gospel and that. You stand almost in that place where you see daily the winds and the waves.

You see the storms coming. And you say, look it, I'm standing on the rock who is Jesus Christ. And I am going to stand firm.

Because like Paul says, this one thing I do. And that, I think, my friends, is the difference between whatever and whatever. And what's the promise of God? That when your whatevers mean whatever.

That the peace of God which transcends all understanding comes upon you. I mean, I don't know how many times I've prayed for people who are non-Christians. And they go, you know what, I don't know about God and I don't know about Jesus.

And I don't know about this Bible that you're talking about. But I feel better and I can't explain it. Well, the Word of God says this peace you won't be able to understand.

It transcends all understanding. But you know what? When you stand in that place of tension between heaven and earth. And you reach out to your Christian brothers and sisters if it's in practically or in prayer.

You usher the kingdom of God into their living room. If you follow Jesus and you're hanging out with somebody who doesn't follow Jesus. They're hanging out with Jesus whether they know it or not.

And that's a powerful place to be. So I would just encourage each of you to stand in that place. To not view it as a place like, man, I got to stand where the storm is.

I got to stand where the wind and the waves are. I got to stand in this place of discomfort. And instead go, I'm standing in a place that God has called me.

And you know the secret of standing in that place? Is that you keep looking for the whatevers. You don't go, whatever. But you stand in that place and you go, whatever is pure, true, noble, praiseworthy, lovely.

I'm going to focus on that. By the way, all those things, they're all the qualities you'll see when you look towards Jesus. And that place is the world.

It's not removing yourself from the world. It's being in the world like Jesus at that wedding. Where he did that first miracle turning the water into wine.

And the Pharisees and the religious people. Oh, he's with all these unchurched, these unsaved, these pagans. And it's like those are the people God wants us to intersect with.

So that we can press kingdom influence, power, and authority into that place. Into that environment. And hopefully draw them closer to God as a result.

I like that word schema too. I'm going to think about that the next time I start getting a scheme in my mind. Knowing that, wait a minute.

My scheming has to be done to the glory of God. Thank you for joining us for this special Mark and Friends classic conversation. Today, Pastor Jason Schifo reminded us that followers of Jesus are called to live faithfully in the tension between heaven and earth.

Keeping our eyes focused on Jesus while reaching into the world with his love and truth. Although this conversation was recorded nearly 14 years ago, its message remains just as relevant today. We invite you to continue learning by visiting the Mark and Friends page at greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org. There you'll find today's broadcast, the program transcript, and additional resources to encourage you in your walk with Jesus.

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