

Philippians 4:4-7

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 9/13/2009, a replacement for the same passage preached on 10/14/2007

Overcoming Obstacles to Faith in Christ: Worry

Prayer

Father, it is so easy for us to think so lightly about what Your Son has done, to sing “Amazing Grace” and to truly forget what really happened, to truly not (not that we have forgotten the events) but to forget the significance. That You sent Your Son. That Your grace appeared, bringing salvation to all men. Not that all are saved, we know that Lord God. But that You brought the truth in Christ to mankind, who is desperately in sin and in need of a Savior. Thank You that You are gracious, that for no reason from us, You did this because of Your great love, Your mercy and grace. Thank You for sending Christ to die for us. And Father, Thank You that You not only sent Him to die for us but He now lives for us, that He lives and intercedes for us. He is our great high priest. That we can boldly come before Your throne and receive grace and find mercy in time of need. That we have an advocate with You, Jesus Christ the righteous. Father, thank You for Your Word. I thank You that You have left us, given us Your Spirit and given us Your Word that we might grow in the grace and knowledge of Your Son. And I pray that that is what happens today. That we would be fed by Your Word, we would grow into Christlikeness. So now we commit this time to you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Sermon

Well, folks, if you think about it, there is much to worry about. There are so many circumstances, there are so many unknown variables. This life is not constant. And certainly those who do not know Christ have much to worry about because as you know, we cannot control life. We cannot control our circumstances. And the one without Christ realizes they cannot control the circumstances surrounding them in their lives. And they have no other alternative but to worry and be anxious. Worry and anxiety are part and parcel for those who do not know Christ. Now some live in a state of denial, alleviating worry for a time. But eventually the cares of this life catch up and worry sets in. Worry and anxiety are part and parcel for those who do not know Christ.

But what about for the believer in Jesus Christ? We just sang the hymn, “Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come.” And if you are a Christian or have been a Christian for very long, you realize that this life is not one of ease but of difficulty. Now nonbelievers and believers both encounter the same circumstances that life brings. But also for believers, we have the temporal trouble that Jesus made clear would come to those who trusted in Him. “Indeed, in this world you will have trouble,” Jesus said. The Apostle Paul telling Timothy said that “those who desire to live godly will be persecuted.” We have the normal concerns and cares of life but we also have the difficulties that are brought about from obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. And often these difficulties can cause us to subtly have our eyes pulled of Christ onto ourselves and thus we are tempted and we do yield to it at times. We are tempted to worry and be anxious also, just like the world.

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Now with any temptation, the world and Satan offers a solution that is tantalizing to our flesh. A way to address anxiety and worry apart from faith in Christ. And we are seeing these days more and more Christians on medication to deal with anxiety. It is just a fact that that is the way the world says, "If this is what is going on, here is what you need to do." But is that the solution to worry? The world says it is. The world says that there is an imbalance and, "You must take this medication and it will help you." That is what the world says.

But what does Scripture say? What does God say concerning this issue? What does God have to say concerning anxiety? And ultimately, what does God have to say about His peace? A couple of weeks ago, we are going through the book of Matthew, and we saw, "Blessed are the peacemakers." And we looked at God's peace manifest in Christ. And we looked at that, true believers will be manifesting that truth concerning peace with God through faith in Christ. That they will be exhibiting His peace as far as they can within themselves, with those relationships that they have.

And today we are going to see that God's peace extends beyond that to the sphere of our worry, anxiety, and concerns. So would you turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians 4, and we are going to look at verses 4-7, as we take a little break from Matthew. We will get back to Matthew next week.

And I believe we are going to see today how we can overcome obstacles to genuine faith. And specifically, how can we overcome worry and anxiety? Folks, we have all worried, right? Who has not worried? I say, "Have you ever worried?" Everyone is going to raise their hands, right? Because we have all worried. It is something that I think we are all very tempted to do.

Now as you are turning to the book of Philippians, I want to briefly give you the context of the book of Philippians. We went through the entire book about a year and a half ago, maybe two years. Close to two years now. And if you will remember, for those of you who were with us, the Apostle Paul is under house arrest in Rome. He is chained to a Roman guard 24/7. And the Philippian church and the Apostle Paul were very close. They were very close to one another. And the Apostle Paul in this book has already shared his circumstances. That he is imprisoned, but the Gospel is not imprisoned. He has shared his attitude in the midst of this. "To live is Christ and to die is gain." His understanding that in everything, he desired Christ to be magnified through his circumstances. Whether it was through life or death, that Christ would be magnified. And oh, if we would think that way!

Then at this point, he addresses the Philippians' attitudes, that they were to be united, they were to be humble, they were to be like Jesus. They were to have the mind of Christ, "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus." And then after giving the perfect example of humility, Jesus Christ who humbled Himself by being obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, we see that Christ was highly exalted to His rightful place. And it will be recognized for who He truly is, Lord of all.

After giving the perfect example of humility, Jesus Christ, we see that the Apostle Paul commands them to work out their salvation, for it is God at work in them. "Work it out with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you." That they should be obeying because God is at work. And then we had the

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command, "Do not complain and argue. Do all things without complaining and grumbling." And at this point in the book of Philippians, Paul gives three selfless examples of those who are working out their salvation in obedience. First of all himself, Timothy, and then Epaphroditus.

Then in chapter 3 in the beginning we see that we will, the Philippians specifically, but we believers will face opposition among daily living out these truths that Paul had shared about Christ. That there are make-believers, there are false brethren who ultimately worship in their flesh, not in the Spirit of God, who glory in self and rely on themselves.

With this in mind, Paul contrasts who he was before and who he is now in Christ and his desire to be like Christ and to know Him. And with that in mind, we were commanded to be motivated to ultimately imitate Paul, to have that all-consuming desire, to press forward to the upward call, the goal in Christ Jesus. Knowing that we are not like the many who have set their mind on earthly things, but we have a heavenly citizenship. Therefore, we need to press forward to the upward call. And then the Apostle Paul sums all these truths together in chapter 4:1, where he says, ***Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, (Notice their closeness.) my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. [Philippians 4:1]***

These Philippians were Paul's joy and crown and he commands them in the midst of these trials and temptations to stand firm in the Lord. And it is at this point the Apostle Paul, I believe, moves to the final obstacles that are in the way of trusting in Christ. So would you turn again in your Bibles with me to Philippians chapter 4? And we are going to start in verse 4. And again, we are going to see, I believe, how we can overcome worry and anxiety. And some of you are probably very anxious about this message right now. I understand. But the wonderful truth in this passage is that God is gracious. He is a good God and He will deliver us as we will see if we trust Him.

Philippians chapter 4. Let's go back to verse 2. We just read verse 1. Verse 2,

² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. (Literally, "Be same-minded." Same thing, "Have this mind," but they translate it "in harmony.") ³ Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵ Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds (And your minds!) in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:1-7]

Now some of you probably recognized I added two verses to the message here. And I believe we need to see these. We will look at them briefly. But we need to see the first thing the Apostle Paul addresses here is a conflict between two women in the body. And I am just going to briefly go through verses 2

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and 3 because I believe it is impossible to - it is an illustration - it is impossible to be anxious for nothing if we have got sin in our lives. And these two women had an issue between them, and the Apostle Paul brings about and urges as we will see their reconciliation. He says, "I urge Euodia, I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord." To be, literally as we saw in Philippians when we went through it, to be same-minded.

Now, as I shared, I do not think this is unrelated because if your eyes have left Christ via conflict and disunity, it is impossible to have joy and peace. And the opposite is true. When we are worrying and lacking joy, conflict is inevitable. When you are worrying and lacking joy in Christ, there is conflict abounding because we are self-centered and self-focused. Do you see why it is so important? He exhorts Euodia and Syntyche. And you know what? The Apostle Paul, he gives and these names here! These are two ladies in the church and he is not shy about it. He says, "I urge" or "I exhort" - "I exhort Euodia, I exhort Syntyche, be same-minded. Think the same way." And as we saw earlier, it is having the mind of Christ that we can think the same way. Evidently, these women had become at odds with one another. And the solution was not to address their issues. The solution was for them to renew their minds through whatever it might be, repentance and faith in the Word of God and Christ through the Word of God, that they might be thinking the same way and be in unity.

And folks, we need to recognize that we need to be clean before the Lord. And I think that is an illustration here, that before we can have peace, before we can be right before the Lord, before we can experience His peace, we need to have clean hearts and pure hands. And I think so many people, so many believers, claim these promises, "⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." [Philippians 4:6-7] "But I am still anxious!" Most of the time it is because we have unconfessed sin in our lives. And I think that is the illustration here to start with, is they need to be same-minded, they need to be right with the Lord.

With that in mind, as we come to our passage now, where I believe we can see how we can overcome obstacles to genuine faith; and I think the first thing we are going to see is we need to be rejoicing, finding joy in the Lord. Verse 4, "⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" This is an imperative command stated twice for everyone. He says, "Rejoice in the Lord, you all!" Second person plural. It is everyone. The entire Philippian church is commanded to rejoice in the Lord. And that is all the time. And he says emphatically, "And again I say, rejoice!" Exclamation point!

Now I think this seemingly unrelated command does flow from the first command, which we saw for them to be reconciled, Euodia and Syntyche. If you are unreconciled and in conflict with other believers, you are not going to be joyful. And likewise, if you are not joyful, conflict is around the corner. This is a present tense imperative command. You could actually translate it like this, "Keep on rejoicing in the Lord always, and again I will say, keep on rejoicing!" And this is not a new command for them. Chapter 3:1, "Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." And this leads to the question: Can we obey a command

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to rejoice in the Lord always? When God commands us to do this, can we obey that? Yes! But how can we do it? Notice the command is to rejoice “in the Lord always.” Rejoice in the context of the Lord, in your relationship with the Lord.

And who is the Lord? We saw this in Philippians 2. He is the wonderful Savior.

⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus (Or literally, “The name that Jesus bears.”) every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [Philippians 2:6-11]

Rejoice in the Lord. It is the Lord Jesus. In the midst, are we commanded to rejoice in circumstances here? No. Are we commanded to rejoice in the Lord? Yes. We are to recognize as we will see the very source of joy Himself is the Lord Himself.

Now just briefly I want to go through what biblical joy is and share a couple passages and then move forward to our portion, and ultimately move to the portion in which we are commanded to not be anxious. But I wanted to share a couple passages. First of all Psalm 16:11. The Psalmist writes, ***In Thy presence is fullness of joy...*** If you remember Nehemiah 8:10, ***Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*** Psalm 5:11, ***But let all who take refuge in Thee be glad, Let them ever sing for joy...*** It is connected to a relationship with the Lord. “Rejoice in the Lord.” It is connected with Him. A wonderful passage, Psalm 32. Why don’t you just turn back with me to Psalm 32 in the middle of your Bibles. A wonderful, wonderful passage where we see joy and forgiveness are inseparable. The forgiveness that is in the Lord. Psalm 32:1,

A Psalm of David. A Maskil. ¹ How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! ² How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! (“How blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven!” Then skip down to verse 10.) **¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him. ¹¹ Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones, And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart. [Psalm 32:1-2, 10-11]**

“How blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven!” “Rejoice, be glad in the Lord all you who are upright in heart!” We rejoice because of what Christ has done. We rejoice in the Lord! Psalm 43:3, **³ O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me; (Have you ever prayed that?) Let them bring me**

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to Thy holy hill, And to Thy dwelling places. ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy...[Psalm 43:3-4a]

Psalm 51:7, we see that David had lost the joy of his salvation because of his sin. And we will see that a sinning Christian is not a joyful Christian. You cannot have joy when you are sinning. David writes, Psalm 51:7,

⁷ Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice. (Maybe some of you have got broken bones in the sense that you are suffering physically because of sin. Just call it what it is and confess it. I am not saying that everyone that is sick is sinning, but I am saying that God makes it clear that sometimes we suffer physically when we sin. He says,) **⁹ Hide Thy face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me away from Thy presence, And do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation...[Psalm 51:7-12a]**

Psalm 71:23, **My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to Thee; And my soul, which Thou hast redeemed.** Psalm 95:1, **O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.** I tell you right now, if some of those Psalms did not bring joy in your heart, I would examine your hearts because those Psalms were about Christ at the cross. That should bring joy to your heart in what Christ did for you. And it is our sin that gets in the way of our joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!"

One pastor (Harry Ironside) writes,

Now he (speaking of Paul) again refers to that which was so much upon his heart. He would have the saints always rejoicing in the Lord. Joy and holiness are inseparable. A holy Christian is able to rejoice even when passing through deepest afflictions; but a believer who, through unwatchfulness, has permitted himself to fall into unholy ways, loses immediately the joy of the Lord, which is the strength of those who walk in communion with Himself.

I totally agree. And I want to ask you, have you lost your joy? Have you lost your joy? Has sin caused you to lose sight of Christ and what He has done for you? Are you shriveling under the weight of sin? You need to repent. You need to tell the Lord you are sorry. And then, and only then, will you be able to rejoice in the forgiveness in the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have such great reasons to rejoice! We are commanded to rejoice! "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." And a lack of joy, I believe, is like a spiritual thermometer. It will tell you where you are at with the Lord. I am not talking about circumstantial happiness, but true joy based on what Christ has done and who He is as revealed in His Word. So I want to ask you first of all, are you joyful? If not,

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you are a perfect candidate for the cruel taskmaster of worry and anxiety. If you are not rejoicing in the Lord, if you are not walking in the context of the joy of your salvation, you are a perfect candidate for worry and anxiety.

We have such great reason to rejoice. The Lord says, "Rejoice in the Lord." We are commanded. And now he has another command, which I believe he backs on this one. We should be rejoicing.

And then in verse 5 we see that we should be yielding. ⁴⁵ "Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near." [Philippians 4:5] Now if you have an NIV, it says, "Let your forbearing spirit," it is translated "your gentleness." And the New King James translates it, "your forbearance." And I need to let you know that this term "spirit" is actually not in the Greek text. That is why they have it in italics. But why all the differences here as we look at this? This Greek work translated "forbearance" is an interesting word. It means "gentleness." It means "sweet reasonableness." It means a "gentle yielding." Another pastor (Gill Rugh) shares it this way,

The word which is translated forbearing is a broad word and there is no one word in English that fully translates it....The word is described as forbearance, yieldedness, and congeniality, kindness, gentleness, mildness, magnanimity, and generosity. All of these words would be instrumental in expressing the meaning of this Greek word. It indicates a willingness to give up your personal rights and show consideration gentleness and kindness to other people.

This word "forbearance" means a "sweet gentleness," a "gentle yielding." And he says, "Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men." You are saying, "Well how does this have to do with anxiety?" And I believe we will see this in a second.

And by the way, this forbearing spirit originates in Christ and not in man. Second Corinthians 10, ¹**Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and** (here is our word) **gentleness of Christ...[2 Corinthians 10:1a]** And God's Word is gentle. James 3:17, ¹⁷**But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle...[James 3:17a]** This is sweet reasonableness.

And here in our passage he says, "Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men." Well how is it we can do this? Some of you are saying, "I do not have a forbearing spirit." How can we do this? How could the Apostle Paul say this to them? I believe we will see the answer in the voice of this verb, the Greek voice, and also the statement "the Lord is near." The term "be known," "Let your forbearing spirit be known" is in a passive voice in Greek. You are not to make it happen. It is to be manifest. You are not the action of the verb. It is to be manifest. You are a passive participant. You could translate it this way, "Let your forbearing spirit be allowed, allow it to be manifested." Why? Because "the Lord is near." Let your forbearing spirit be known, manifested to all because the Lord is near. That word "near" – He is at hand. He is near. The same word is used, ¹⁴**The Word is near you and in your mouth and heart... [Deuteronomy 30:14]** ¹¹**...salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. [Romans 13:11b]** The Lord is near.

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But what does that mean? Two possibilities. Either the Lord is near personally or His coming is at hand. And either way, I think, this passage is so important for us. And it is so important for us understanding how to overcome worry. What I think he is saying here is "Let your forbearing spirit be known." You do not need to vindicate yourself in difficult situations. You do not need to assert your rights. The Lord of the universe, the King of kings, is near. Let your forbearing be manifest to all. You do not need to hold to your rights. The Lord is near! He is the Lord of all. Every knee will bow to Him. He is watching us. He will vindicate us. So do not try to defend yourself in these situations. It will be a testimony, that forbearing spirit, a testimony to all. Isaiah 54:17 ¹⁷ ***"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD. [Isaiah 54:17]***

So passively let this sweet yieldedness be manifest to all because Christ is near. Do not try to yield. Do not try to be sweet. It never works, right? Recognize the Lord is near! Fear Him, trust Him, obey Him, and what will be manifest from you is a sweet reasonableness to all around you. And folks, if we would just recognize the Lord is near. He is fair. He is righteous. He is just. Nothing slips by Him. And folks, He died for you. And if the one who would give His life for you is near, He will take care of everything when life treats you unfairly. "Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near."

And I think that leads us to the main passage today, where we see that as we yield and trust that the Lord is near, taking care of everything, we see the next command, that we should be praying rather than worrying. Verse 6,

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
[Philippians 4:6-7]

And folks, let me say this to begin before we start here, that contrary to the current view in many churches, maybe in some of our hearts – worry is some one of the most heinous sins we can commit because at the root of it is a lack of trust in Christ. It is a heinous sin. It is a doubt of God's goodness. And oh, how worry is the cause of so many divisions and conflicts and fights. When we worry, we cannot trust the Lord. When we worry, we cannot be joyful. When we worry, we cannot truly worship. When we worry, we have no peace. And worry is a cruel taskmaster. If you are caught up in this sin of worry, it is a cruel situation you are in. And we are all tempted. But God is so gracious. He is so good. He wants to free us from that and He died for us to free us from sin.

Now worry always carries with it many other sins. Why? Because it attacks the core of our relationship with Christ, which is faith. When worry is present, faith is not present. And when faith is not present, we are a huge open target for the fiery missiles of Satan. No wonder Paul in this passage comes down so hard on this sin, and it is for our good. Remember, conflict often leads to worry, and worry often

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leads to conflict. And do not be deceived. Worry often completely deflates our testimony and our witness. It makes us no different than the unbelieving world.

If we who know Christ – “The Lord is near” – are worrying about our circumstances, we are not different than those who do not believe in Christ. And we need to be convicted by it. But yet God is gracious to change us too, and to help us. He is a gracious God. He will help us. So when we worry, we are just like, and we all are tempted to do so every day, we are just like those who do not know Christ. But as I have shared, God is a gracious God. He is a kind God. He is so kind. I see His kindness in this body. I see it extended to myself and others. I see the kindness of Christ. But beyond that, Christ is so kind and loving and gracious that He would die for us. He is good. And He looks out for our best interests; and He loves us just as a loving father would come along a son and command him, whom he deeply loves. And God commands us, as we will see, not to worry but to pray instead.

And folks, if you are a worrier, God does not give up on you. Now, you may be convicted because it is a heinous sin. We need to see it for what it is. It is terrible. But God is good. He wants to make us like Christ, that we would stand firm in the Lord, pressing forward in Christ-likeness. So do not let this passage leave you with a guilt trip, unless you are not saved, because you can do nothing to stop your worrying if you are not saved. But if you are a believer, do not let it leave you with a guilt trip. “Oh, it is such a heinous sin!” Yes, it is. But with that conviction, allow the Lord to correct you and restore you and use you for His glory.

So then what do we worry about? We worry about the future. We worry about finances. We worry about family. We worry about friends. We worry about work. We worry about vacation. We worry about safety. We worry about ministry. We worry about church. We worry about what people think. Why is it we almost never worry about what Christ thinks? We are usually not very concerned about what our Savior thinks. But we are often tempted to worry about just about everything.

And this sin is so serious that the Apostle Paul, in the end of this letter to a congregation that he loves greatly, he says in verse 6, “Be anxious for nothing...” It is an imperative command. It is a command to us. God is commanding us, “Be anxious for nothing.” And every one of us understands. I do not need to describe what worry is. We all have worried. We all have sinned that way. We have all been tempted. And worry is a strong emotion. It not only affects our minds, but it affects us physically at times. But here in our passage, the God of the universe, Who holds you together, Who created all things, says, “Be anxious for nothing.” Another pastor (J. Vernon McGee) says,

“Nothing” is a very interesting word. If you have something, it’s not nothing—.... Nothing is nothing, and you are to worry about nothing. Does this mean we are to look at life through rose-colored glasses, that we are not to face reality? Are we to believe that sin is not real, that sickness is not real, that problems are not real? Are we to ignore these things? No. Paul says that we are to worry about nothing because we are to pray about everything.

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His command is a continual command. Continually, habitually do not be anxious for anything. It should be a conviction in our hearts when we are anxious. When we begin to worry, God's Word should come to light in our hearts and convict us. "I am sinning. Sorry Lord."

This word "anxious" can be translated "care" or "concern" or "worry" or "anxiety." And it is used in a positive context. There is nothing wrong with a biblical concern for the body of Christ. That is not worry. Remember earlier the Apostle Paul said that Timothy was – this is a sad state - he was the only one who would genuinely "concerned" (same word) for the Philippians' welfare. Worry is different. "For nothing be anxious." Can I be anxious about my physical condition? God says "for nothing," right? Can I be anxious about my job? No. Can I be anxious about church? I can be concerned, right? So as long as we depend on the Lord and trust in Him. Can I be anxious about death? No. Can I be anxious about health issues? No.

Now I am not saying take foolish risks and put the Lord to the test. We are not to test the Lord thy God. But we are to be anxious about nothing. As we go about our business, we are tempted to be anxious. As we go about His business, which should be our business, we are tempted to be anxious. But we are to worry about nothing. Why? One, the Lord is near! He is the Sovereign, He is the Lord. He is in control of everything. He is our God. And He gave Himself for us. And we can go to Him. And we are to go to Him in prayer.

We are to worry about nothing. And let me ask you something. Do you give yourself a pass when you worry? Just confess it. Another pastor (Dwight Pentecost) shares, he says,

Do you ever find yourself worrying? Do you know that Scripture calls worry a sin? When you realized that you were worrying, did you go to God and confess it as a sin? Worry is just as much a sin as adultery, or murder, or theft. Yet how often we as believers treat it lightly when we find our stomachs tied in knots because we have worried ourselves into a nervous frenzy. We don't realize that we have fallen into sin.

Bob read this earlier - the Lord Jesus Christ made it clear that we are not to be anxious in Matthew 6. ²⁴ **"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.** (You cannot serve money and God.) ²⁵ **"For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life... [Matthew 6:24-25a]** And He goes through and shares how God cares for the smallest elements of His creation. How much more will He care for us? Thus we should "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." We believers are not allowed to worry about anything. If you name the name of the Lord, you are not allowed to worry about anything. We tell our children, "You are not allowed to do that." And we punish them, we discipline them when they do "that." For their good! And God says, "Be anxious for nothing."

All worry is sin. If we are worrying, we are sinning. We are not trusting God. And that is really core. We are not trusting the Lord. It really shows us where our faith is at times. And we need to be honest with the Lord. Some of you probably say, and you have probably understood this, "I cannot stop." You might

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say that. "I cannot stop worrying." Now this is a completely true statement if you do not know Christ. But for those of us who have a relationship with the Lord, He is commanding us, Your Lord is commanding you and me to be anxious for nothing. And with His command comes the empowerment and instruction to show us what to do instead of worrying. So what is the solution?

Instead of worrying, humbly pray about everything. Instead of worry, pray about everything. Verse 6, "⁶ Be anxious for nothing, (in a contrast) but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." [Philippians 4:6] Ok, we are to be anxious for nothing. But we have a contrast. "...but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Do not worry about anything. Pray about everything. Everything! That is what this verse is saying. The antidote to worry is prayer in the context of a right relationship with the living God! Prayer to a God who loves you so much He gave His Son to die for you. Prayer to a God in whom you now can boldly come before His throne and receive grace and find mercy in time of need. Prayer to a loving God who can sympathize with your weaknesses, having become like us but yet without sin. We are commanded to worry about nothing and pray about everything. And I want to ask you, are you obeying this command? We have all failed right? But we want to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Christ wants us to be more like Him. And He wants us and commands us to be anxious for nothing.

Ok, so we are to pray about everything. But what is the context of these requests? Do I just spit out a laundry list of what I want God to do? "Ok God, I am not supposed to worry. So You need to do this for me. You need to do this, You need to do this." Is that what I do? He says, verse 6, "⁶ Be anxious for nothing, (in a contrast) but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Two words in parallel, "by prayer and supplication." "Prayer" – *proseuchē*– speaks of a general prayer, a petition to God. "Supplication" speaks of a humble request. We are His creation. He is God. A humble request. "Lord God, there is a whole bunch of stuff. And I am tempted to worry about it, and I am sorry. Lord God, help me to know what Your will is in these things. Help me to trust You." Pray about everything. Humbly pray about it.

First Peter chapter 5:6-7 really tie the idea of humility and casting our cares together. You see, when we are worrying we are being quite prideful, by the way, because we believe we can control it in some sense or fashion or form. We are trying to attempt to deal with our circumstances apart from trusting God. First Peter 5:6-7, ⁶ ***Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,*** ⁷ ***casting all your anxiety (your care) upon Him, because He cares for you.*** [1 Peter 5:6-7]

Humble yourself! Cast your cares upon Him! To hold your cares is to be prideful. Pride is the issue. You need to go to the Lord, "I am being prideful. I am sorry. I am thinking in some way, shape, or form that I am going to be able to deal with this somehow even though I know I cannot deal with it." "Casting all your care upon Him (why?) because He cares for you." He cares for you. He loves you. He is a good

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God. He is a gracious God. He wants to help you. He will help you if you obey Him. He will not help you if you do not obey Him. He does not give you the help then you obey. Obey Him and He will help you.

We need to humbly come before God in prayer rather than worrying. So how are we to pray? First humbly.

Secondly it is in the context of thanksgiving. ¹⁶ “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” [Philippians 4:6] We need to pray in this context, with a thankful heart. And this is where we fail the most. “Oh Lord, I got this going on, and I got this. Oh oh oh!” We are praying, right? But we are not being thankful. You need to pray with a thankful heart. First Thessalonians 5:16-18, notice how these things are together. ¹⁶ **Rejoice always;** (We heard that today right?) ¹⁷ **pray without ceasing;** ¹⁸ **in everything give thanks;** (What a nice summary of our passage here.) **for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18]** Do you want to know what God's will is for you? “Rejoice...” That is in the Lord. “Pray without ceasing.” Do not stop praying. Be walking with the Lord. “In everything give thanks.” How can you give thanks in everything? Because God is sovereign over all; He is the Lord. He is a good God, and nothing comes before you that He has not allowed. And if we sin He will discipline us for our good that we will share in His holiness. We can be thankful. And did you know thankfulness is an evidence that you are in His will, being controlled by His Spirit?

Turn back a little bit to Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians 5:17. The Apostle Paul has just basically said, “Those who (continually and habitually) practice sin are not saved. Do not let anyone deceive you, do not be like them. Therefore, let Christ shine through you.” And then he says, Ephesians 5:17,

¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, (Do not let wine control you. Do not let your desires control you, as magnified through that.) **but be filled with the Spirit,** (And then here is the evidence.) ¹⁹ **speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;** ²⁰ **always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God... [Ephesians 5:17-20a]**

That is an evidence that you are right with the Lord, that you have a thankful heart, that sin has been taken care of, that you are not walking in sin. And a sinful Christian is not a thankful Christian. If you have not confessed your sin, you are not going to be truly thankful. Thankfulness is an evidence you are in His will. But it is also an evidence that you are saved. An unthankful heart is one of the evidences that you do not know Christ. Romans 1:21, ²¹ **For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks. [Romans 1:21]** We see the wrath of God is upon them. They did not give thanks. And some of you are believers, and we are tempted to be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We forget what God has done. Psalm 100,

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A Psalm for Thanksgiving. ¹ **Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.** ² **Serve the LORD with gladness;** (Notice there is joy here.) **Come before Him with joyful singing.** (It is not saying we are all jumping around and everything. It is saying we should have joyful hearts when we sing about the Lord.) ³ **Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;** (Do not think you are anything. He made us.) **We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.** ⁴ **Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name.** ⁵ **For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, And His faithfulness to all generations. [Psalm 100:1-5]**

How often do you enter His courts in prayer with thankfulness? So often it is a laundry list of what is wrong in my life, and it should not be that way. We need to pray about everything humbly. "Lord God, I have no ability or idea how to deal with this. I trust You. You are a faithful God. I thank You because I know You are good. And I know You work all things together for good. I cannot see how it will work, but I trust You. You are a good God, and I am thankful for who You are and what Christ has done." ⁶ "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." [Philippians 4:6]

I want to ask you: are you a thankful person? We live in a generation of unthankful people. Have you noticed the youth these days, (not all of them, but most), are very unthankful? They are just like the world these days because they are in the world, right? Unthankful. And we are tempted to be unthankful too. Are you a thankful person? If you are not, you are out of His will. You have been hardened by sin. I do not know what sin it is, but you have been hardened by it. It is an evidence. You have forgotten Who God is and what He has done. I bet when you are worrying, you are not saying, "Give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness is everlasting." You are probably dishonoring Him. Well you are dishonoring Him when you do not give thanks.

We are to be petitioning the Lord. We should be praying about these things. "Oh Lord, I do not know what to do. I am sorry I am tempted to worry. I am sorry I have worried. I have failed, Lord God, and I am sorry. Oh Lord God You are so awesome and so wonderful. Please, show me in Your Word what I should do, how I should think, what Your will is. Thank You for Your faithfulness." Are you a thankful person? Romans reveals that those who did not give thanks are those in whom the wrath of God is upon.

Maybe you are a believer and have been hardened by sin. Confess it. Confess it. Just say, "I am sorry." You will be freed! The chains will fall off when you confess your sin. Satan does not want you to understand that when you just confess, repent of your sin, the chains fall off! You are free! And whom the Son makes free, you are free indeed.

Now what are we ultimately to do instead of worrying? We are to make our requests be made known to God. "With thankfulness let your requests be made known to God." Let God know about your

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request. God wants us to talk to Him. You say, "But God already knows my request because He is God." And we know that, that He knows before we ask (Matthew 6:8). So why do we make our requests known to Him when He knows them already? One of the reasons is because we are acknowledging He is sovereign over everything. He is in control. That we are yielding these things to Him. "Lord God, I can't. I am powerless. I do not know what to do. Yet our eyes are on Thee." ⁹ ***"For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. [2 Chronicles 16:9]***

Instead of worrying, pray. Make humble requests to God, knowing He cares for you. Cast those cares upon Him. You need to continually! It is the good fight of faith. You have to believe what He said. It is difficult to believe what He said. It is easy to worry. ⁶ "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." [Philippians 4:6]

I want to ask you: are you obeying this command? If you have not, you should feel guilty. You should be convicted, but then God gently corrects you and He makes you right again. He wants to correct you. He wants to help you. He wants to help us.

Then lastly, trust in His promise. Believe what He said. He will guard your heart and mind with His peace. Again, verse 6 and then 7. ⁶ "Be anxious for nothing, (There is the command) but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (And here is the wonderful, wonderful, true, wonderful, wonderful promise.)" ⁷ "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, (You will never be able to figure it out in advance. And if you do, you will never experience it. If you think you do.) shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." [Philippians 4:6-7]

This is so important. The Lord is saying that through His Word, if you are not anxious but pray instead, humbly with thanksgiving, making your request known to Him – the promised result is (God promises this result) peace and a guarded heart. Now remember the context. There is no sin in your life. You have confessed your sin. You are not in conflict (Euodia and Syntyche). You are rejoicing in the Lord. You are letting your forbearing spirit be known to all men because He is near. And you are not being anxious. Peace and a guarded heart.

Isn't that what you want in your conscience is peace? Isn't that what you want? What a tremendous, fantastic promise. And notice it is not man's peace. "And the peace of God (God's peace), which surpasses comprehension..." It is God's peace. This is nothing you can conjure up to help you. There is nothing no one else can do for you. No meds can give you this peace. No counselor can give you this peace. Man's way does not take care of the problem. It just medicates the problem. It takes care of the symptoms but not the problem. And it festers and gets worse as all sin does.

But as we see the great promise, rather than worrying we are to pray. Then God's peace will guard our hearts and minds. It is God's peace, which is beyond anything you can imagine, which surpasses all comprehension. You cannot comprehend the peace that God will give you when you obey Him in this

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fashion, by not being anxious and praying about everything, in the context of humble, thankful petition. You cannot comprehend it, when you obey by faith what He has said. Do not try to figure it out, what God will do. Just trust Him and obey Him. Then you will receive God's peace. It is an absolute promise.

Now I want to remind you, as I have shared before, some of you are praying this. You are going through this verse, you are recognizing this; but you are not experiencing His peace. Maybe it is because you have got sin in your life that is unconfessed. Maybe it is because you are not rejoicing in the Lord. You do not have joy in your salvation. Maybe it is because you are not believing and recognizing the Lord is near. Maybe your lives are dirty with sin. You pray all day, yet you do not have any peace. Cleanse your hands and your hearts. Pray. Do not worry. And God is faithful to His promise. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension (what will it do?) shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." [Philippians 4:7]

God's peace, guarding my heart and mind. I need my heart and mind guarded. My heart and mind is where the problem is. I am thinking about all this stuff. I am worried about it. I am confessing it. I need it guarded from those temptations. I need it guarded from myself. The word "guard" speaks of a Roman garrison of soldiers, and Paul was chained to a Roman guard. God's peace is going to militantly guard your heart. Those threats are coming, and God's peace is guarding my heart and mind.

We have no excuse for worrying as believers. This is a promise from the living God for our good. Absolute promise. And notice it is "in Christ Jesus." It is never apart from a relationship with the living God. It is not the world's peace. It is God's peace. John 14:27, the Lord Jesus shares with His disciples, ²⁷ **"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."** [John 14:27] And then He would share that He is going to give them a Comforter, His Spirit. And God's Word, Spirit-empowered Word, comforts us.

Do you want peace that is not bogus and will really help? If you go the world's way, brother and sister, you will reap the consequences. Do not be deceived. "Whatever a man sows, this he will reap." The world says, "You need drugs to help your chemical imbalance." God does not talk about chemicals. He talks about anxiety. And He says, "Be anxious for nothing." You say, "But wait a second! You have got a chemical balance – it is ok." He says, "Be anxious for nothing." God addresses anxiety.

And I am going to give you one caveat. I am not a doctor or a psychiatrist. Do not run out and stop your medication if you are on it. Do it under a doctor's care, or you will go crazy. These are powerful drugs. Powerful drugs. But I tell you, if you are taking medication for anxiety, depression, it is just addressing the symptoms. It is not the solution. And you will get the world's peace, rather than God's peace. And I guarantee it is not working. I guarantee it. Trust in the Lord. Obey Him. Do not short circuit faith with sin. It does not work.

And it has been such a blessing to see people in our body who have, through God's strength and power, been weaned off medication for anxiety and depression; and now are fighting the good fight of faith (It is a fight, it is a battle!) and are trusting Christ in the midst of this. And I know if you came to me, they

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would love to talk to you about it – what the Lord is doing in the midst of that, how He was faithful and is faithful. Isaiah 26:3, **You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon You because He trusts in You. [Isaiah 26:3]**

Is your mind stayed upon Jesus or on the problems? Some of you have never experienced His peace ever because you do not know the Prince of peace. There is no peace for the wicked, those in their sin. You do not know what real peace is. If you repent of your sin and trust in Christ, you will have real peace. Your sin is forgiven. You will be at peace with God. And some of you might be saying, “I have done all this but I cannot stop worrying. What now?” Do not forget the command follows on the heels of these commands – be reconciled, be same-minded, rejoice in the Lord, let your forbearing spirit be known. Are you a worrier? Repent and pray. Choose to experience His peace by diving into the safety of Christ.

How can we overcome obstacles to genuine faith? Be reconciled. Rejoice in the Lord. Trust the Lord. Find your peace in Him. And lastly, we do not have time to go through this, I wish we did; but Paul continues in verses 8-9, and I think he is talking about renewing your minds.

⁸ **Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable,** (And that is sure not what I am worrying about, right?) **whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise,** (What things are worthy of praise? What Christ has done, and who He is) **let your mind dwell on these things.** ⁹ **The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me,** (That is Paul, who has given them the Word.) **practice these things** (Do these things!); **and the God of peace shall be with you. [Philippians 4:8-9]**

Absolute promise. We do not have time to go into that portion. But it is obvious that we renew our minds with the things of Christ from the Word. Live out these truths and the God of peace is with us. Again, some of you today have no peace. Your hearts are not at rest. There is no peace because you are in sin. Some of you are laboring for the kingdom but you do not know the King. And the King says to you, **“Come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest.” [Matthew 11:28]** You need to repent of your sin. “I have sinned against You, oh God. I am a sinner. You have a right to judge me. You have a right to pour Your wrath out on me. I thank You that You have poured it out on Christ. That He died for my sins and that He rose from the dead.” Cry out to Christ to save you. “Lord Jesus, save me.” Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

And some of us believers, we have sinned greatly with worry. We have been living in terrible sin for a long time. And God wants to free you up from that terrible sin. You need to confess it. You need to say what it is. “Lord God, I have disobeyed Your command here, to not be anxious. I am sorry. I have not trusted You. I have allowed my emotions, my attitudes, my actions to dishonor You. I am sorry. I am sorry. I have looked at the world’s ways to address an issue of my sin, and I am sorry.” Step out and obey Him. Trust in Him and “the peace of God, which surpasses comprehension will guard your hearts

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and minds in Christ Jesus.” [Philippians 4:7] It is the good fight of faith. “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon You because he trusts in You.” [Isaiah 26:3]

Prayer

Father, You are so gracious. And when we are in the midst of our sin, it is so impossible to see that You will really do this. Our view of You is skewed. Our faith in You is strained. Lord, help us to confess our sin, to be convicted, confess it, and then to turn from it. “Lord God, I am sorry for worrying. I have sinned so greatly against You. I am sorry.” And help us to just trust Christ. Oh Lord, it is so wonderful to just trust You. It is so wonderful to walk in Your peace. It is so wonderful. I am so thankful for Your grace in Christ. And I pray that those here who truly know you would confess this sin. When we are tempted, we would know You are faithful to provide a way of escape that we may endure it. And I pray for anyone who has been caught up in this heinous sin. Father, I pray that you would humble their hearts, that they would cast their cares on You because You care for them. I pray that they would trust you. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You that Your peace shall guard our hearts and minds. A military garrison, guarding our hearts and minds. Thank You, Lord God. May we believe what You say. May we not dishonor You by not trusting You and obeying You. Thank You for Your Word now. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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