

## **Worry: the Acceptable Sin of the Believer**

Let's face it, there are some sins we have a propensity to defend rather than denounce – worry is one of them. Worry is probably the most overlooked sinful activity that we not only accept, but at times embrace as “spiritual.” How is this done? We re-invent our worry as a burden. In other words, if we worry about the right things, it is not really worry. We often pray for revival and ask God to send His Spirit moving in our midst. We never think that our worry could grieve the Holy Spirit to the point of His withholding blessing. Let me lay it on the line - this is the besetting sin with which your pastor struggles. The Bible teaches us, “...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). The phrase, “which doth so easily beset” in Greek is “” and refers to a competitor thwarting a racer in every direction. The Scripture pictures us in a race; Paul said, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” (I Corinthians 9:24). As we run the race, there is a bothersome and reoccurring sin that we easily fall prey to. It is likened to an antagonist who tries everything in his power to divert us from the prescribed course that God has chosen for us. Again as Paul said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (II Timothy 4:7). A competing runner is assigned a corridor or lane to run in. Satan would love nothing better than to remove or at least hinder us from running our race. God's will is that we run effectively, efficiently and thoroughly to the end, so that we may say as Paul did, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Worry stands on the side to capture our attention and at times stands in our pathway demanding that we take care of the business of anxiety. And like a bird to the prey, we fall for it and neglect the race that we are supposed to be running.

How do we accept worry as sin and deal with?

### **1. Define worry.**

Worry is to way to anxiety or unease; allow one's mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles. It comes from Middle English *worien*, from Old English *wyrġan*; akin to Old High German *wurgento* strangle, Lithuanian *veržtiti* constrict. Worry has the ability to strangle the joy right out of your life.

Dr. Edward Hallowell, psychiatrist and author of *Worry*, argues that while “worry serves a productive function, anticipatory and dangerous worrying” (which he calls “toxic worry”) “can be harmful for your mental and physical health.” He claims that “toxic worry is when the worry paralyzes you, whereas good worry leads to constructive action” such as taking steps to resolve the issue that is concerning you.

I would not treat worry with a good side and a bad side. I would differentiate between worry and burden. Worries are detrimental and negative, whereas burdens are gifts from God that are constructive and positive. Paul expressed a burden when he declared, “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved” (Romans 10:1). This kind of burden leads us to witness with an oral presentation and a holy presentation of our life unto God not only for Jesus' sake but that the lost may see Jesus in us. A burden is a load, a weight, or a cargo you carry. Jesus said this about the burdens He gives: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Our precious Lord clearly tells us that when He gives a burden, it is not toxic; it is regenerating and we find rest instead of fretfulness.

## **2. Declare worry as wrong.**

We often nurture that which is offensive to God. This danger is so prevalent and prone to happen that the Psalmist requested, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:23,24). Worry is a thought process that must be considered a wicked way because God’s Word says with dogmatism, *“Be careful for nothing...”* (Philippians 4:6). The archaic expression carries a different shading of meaning than we normally use today. In the 1828 Webster’s, this definition is added: . Full of care; anxious; solicitous. *“Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things”* Luke 10.

Filling with care or solicitude; exposing to concern, anxiety or trouble; full of cares.

God gives no excuse for worry; He allows for none. Jesus said, *“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”* (Matthew 6:31-34). In this passage our Lord says worry is an evil. He does not give us room for argument. We may object by saying it is natural to worry. This is true, but when we are born again, Christ gives us supernatural power to do right. *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:13). To deal forcefully with worry, we must call it what it is. It is sin. Worry is a lack of trust in God to take care of us, our loved ones and our “things.” It is our duty to seek God first and trust Him to take the care of the rest. Without this clear, clean line of demarcation we will not be able to fulfill the third and final point of our message.

## **3. “Dreadnaught” worry.**

When I attended Lakeland High School in Lakeland, Florida our school team was (and still is) called the Dreadnaughts. In 1923 they were undefeated. At the close of the season, the principal, a Scotsman who had fought with the British Army, reflected on that mighty warship of the early 20th Century called the Dreadnaught, which was faster and larger than preceding ships and fully equipped with large caliber guns. The LHS history records, “usual, when McKay (the principal) approached the lectern and raised his hand, complete silence fell over the assembled students, and he spoke. He recounted the exploits of the team and spoke for the players and all the others who had contributed to the undefeated season. Then, in the oratorical style of the day, he compared the team to a mighty Dreadnaught, rolling over the opponents as just a massive ship steams through stormy seas.” Eighty-six years they have worn this nickname.

I want to make a verb out of this noun and say, if we are to overcome worry, we must tenaciously “dreadnaught” worry. Don’t court it, walk with it or entertain it. Blow it out of the “sea of your life.” Say with David, *“What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me”* (Psalm 56:4)

- Pastor Pope -

**[Back to Pastor's Word](#)**