

## Living Free From Worry Pt. 2

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Philippians 4:4-7

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Because we are all fallen, we all struggle to differing degrees with sinful, inordinate self-concern - worry. For the problem-solving types this morning, let me give you an equation for worry: preoccupation with self-concern + distrust in the character of God = worry and anxiety. As we will see from our text this morning, we struggle with worry and anxiety ultimately because we struggle with distrust. Though we may never verbalize our distrust in these particular words, our thinking and our actions (worry and anxieties) demonstrate that we struggle to believe two fundamental truths about God: first, that He is sovereignly in control of every circumstance that comes to pass in my life. Secondly, that He cares and desires to be intimately involved in the circumstances He ordains for me.

Let's turn our attention to our text for this morning. Let me encourage you to stand, if you have the ability, as we read our text. Matthew, recording Jesus' teaching, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, pens the following words:

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Brothers and sisters, "The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" Isaiah 40:8.

### **I. WORRY AND ANXIETY ARE THE RESULT OF MISPLACED JOY, SIGNIFICANCE, AND SECURITY. (v.4)**

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.*

Worry and anxiety are merely a symptom of a much greater problem. They serve as a gauge that tells us what we treasure. I've said before that anger is the result of failed idolatry. In other words, anger is the response when we fear something we inordinately love will be taken from us. Worry and anxiety are also the result of failed idolatry – they are just the other side of the pendulum. Both are rooted in a deep seated desire for *control*. When you feel like the treasures of your

heart are beyond your control to protect, you will either respond in explosive anger or impulsive worry, anxiety, and fear.

Let me use three common idols (heart treasures) to help unpack this truth. If finances are your idol, if they are your treasure, what you have attached your significance, identity, and value to, then you will worry that misplaced treasure might fail. If relationships and reputation are your idol, if they are your treasure, what you have attached your significance, identity, and value to, then you will worry that misplaced treasure might fail. If control is your idol, if it is your treasure, what you have attached your significance, identity, and value to, then you will worry (when things seem out of your control) that misplaced treasure might fail. You see, our worry and anxieties are just indicators that we have misplaced treasures.

We were designed to find our significance, identity, and value in Christ. We were designed to anchor our hope in Christ. We were designed to worship and serve Christ, but sin has warped our value system such that we seek to find our significance, identity, and value in people and things. We anchor our hope in people and things. We worship people and things. And because we have misplaced our treasure, we worry that all we have invested, all the time and energy that we have given to protecting our idols, could crumble and fall. You can trace every moment of worry and every anxious thought back to an idol. The next time you are tempted to become anxious, ask yourself, "What is the treasure that I am trying so desperately to protect?"

Paul Tripp, wrote an article written a couple of years ago entitled *Thinking Biblically About Worry*. He notes that there is an ongoing war in each of our hearts. A war is between the Kingdom of self and the Kingdom of God. He says the kingdom of self is driven by a pursuit of earth-bound treasures and anxiety-bound needs. The Kingdom of God, on the other hand, is driven by the pursuit of eternal treasures. There is, in each of our hearts, a war to invest in what is temporary vs. what is eternal. The reason we worry is because we have assigned inordinate value to temporary things.

Jesus cautions us to be careful about what we assign value to and what we name as our treasure, because our treasures control our hearts, and what controls our hearts will control our behavior (worry and anxiety). He said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." In light of that truth, you will rest the most (experience the peace of God the most) when your treasure is the most secure, and you will worry the most when your treasure is the most at risk. If you think back over the last week, what does your worry reveal about the treasures of your heart? You will tend to worry when you plug your life into the outlet of:

- A. Things you don't actually need (misplaced treasures / idols).
- B. Circumstances you can't ever control.

You will also tend to worry when you are confronted with a legitimate need, but distrust that God is a faithful and gracious provider. We must put off self-sufficient, self-protective thinking and instead obey the call of Jesus to, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, [as your treasure above all earthly treasures] and all these things [legitimate needs] will be added to you.” Worry and anxiety are the result of trying to protect your heart treasures from failure. So, worry and anxiety are really evidence of a treasure problem – it is essential that you understand that. As long as we are not declaring war on our earthly heart treasures and seeking to put them to death, we will live in the spin cycle of an anxious life.

## **II. EITHER YOUR VIEW OF GOD WILL ECLIPSE YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES OR YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES WILL ECLIPSE YOUR VIEW OF GOD (v.5)**

*Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is near (at hand);*

Look at verse 5. Paul says, “Let your reasonableness [gentleness] be known to everyone. The Lord is near.” Think with me here for a second about the context surrounding this verse. Where was Paul when he wrote the book of Philippians? Was he reclining in a beach chair somewhere along the Aegean Sea? No. Paul wrote this letter from the confines of a Roman prison. Talk about “bummer” circumstances. You can imagine that there might have been cause for concern. Are they going to kill me or are they not going to kill me? But do we find Paul paralyzed with worry and anxiety? No. Instead, we are reading the letter of a man who was rejoicing in the midst of less than desirable, even fearful, circumstances. You see, joy isn’t a feeling; it’s the deep-down confidence that God is sovereignly controlling all things for the believer’s good and His own glory, and that despite the circumstances, according to God’s agenda, all is well.

It is interesting to note that Paul’s exhortation to, “Let your reasonableness [gentleness] be known to all,” can actually be translated, “Let your contentment be evident to all people in all circumstances.” When the deck seemed stacked against Paul, instead of focusing on himself and his difficult circumstances, instead of trying to protect idols and wasting away in worry, we find him enjoying the peace of God that is found when we trust God is sovereign over all our circumstances and will take care of all of the protecting that we need.

If your view of your circumstances is bigger or weighs more than your view of God, you will worry. Let me say that another way: if your God is smaller than the world you live in and the events of your everyday life, you will be riddled with worry. You see, worry and anxiety are *practical* atheism. At its core, the worry-riddled life is lived as if the promises of God were non-existent. Oswald Chambers once said, “All of our fret and worry are caused by calculating without God.” That is, all of our worry and anxiety fails to take into consideration the character and promises of God. Let me share six grace truths we need to park our hearts and minds in:

**A. God is sovereignty in control of every circumstance of your life.**

Paul reminds us that our lives have been, “Predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will” Ephesians 1:11.

**B. God is bigger than any trial you are called to walk through and His grace is sufficient for you.**

Jesus says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. “Paul replied “Then I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

**C. God cares and is intimately involved in your life.**

Peter writes, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” 1 Peter 5:6-7.

**D. All things work for the good of those who love God.**

Paul writes, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” Romans 8:28. A.W. Tozer once said, “When I understand that everything happening to me is to make me more Christlike, it resolves a great deal of anxiety.”

**E. God will never leave you nor forsake you.**

Even if your worst fears come true, God hasn't left. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that God, “will never leave us nor forsake us” Hebrews 13:5.

**F. God is faithful, even when you are unfaithful.**

“[Even when] we are faithless, he remains faithful...” 2 Timothy 2:13

Unfortunately, when we face trials, we often seem to forget what we know about God. We lose our confident trust in Him and, as a result, we feel defeated. Here is a helpful exercise to reorient our focus on God's promises. When I am anxious about \_\_\_\_\_, I am disbelieving that God \_\_\_\_\_. We become worried, anxious, and fearful because we, at least momentarily, don't trust in God's wisdom, power, or goodness. We fear God is not wise enough, strong enough, or good enough to prevent whatever it is we fear.

You see, the anxious mind parks in a LIE. It believes that it's up to me to take care of this situation or circumstance. When we distrust the promises of God, it is no wonder that we worry. Thinking you have to bear the weight of the world all by yourself is a lonely place to be. David Powlison says, “When you are worrying, it is like being in a universe where no one is home – it's just you and your struggle...but [then] God plants a grace bomb, He is near!”

Paul says, "Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. *The Lord is near.*" There is no greater source of spiritual stability than the confidence that the Lord is near. Our view of God has to trump our view of our circumstances. Paul knew that, which is why he encourages us with God's nearness. Instead of parking your mind in a lie that your circumstances are somehow bigger than God can handle, get a good look at God - He is near! Sinclair Ferguson says, "It is only when we want to take our lives out of the Father's hands and have them under our own control that we find ourselves gripped with anxiety. The secret of freedom from anxiety is freedom from ourselves and abandonment of our own plans. But that spirit emerges in our lives only when our minds are filled with the knowledge that our Father can be trusted implicitly to supply everything we need."

We need to park our minds in the TRUTH. God is sovereignly in control of every circumstance in your life. God is bigger than any perceived difficulty in your life and His grace is sufficient for you. God cares and is intimately involved in your life. All things work for the good of those who love God. God has a perfect plan for your life. God will never leave you nor forsake you. God is faithful even when you are unfaithful. And that God...is near! You see, when we get our eyes off our circumstances and on to God's glorious grace, it changes everything. I am reminded of the lyrics:

*O soul, are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Savior,  
And life more abundant and free!  
Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things [cares] of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.*

### **III. THE WAY TO FIGHT WORRY AND ANXIETY IS ON YOUR KNEES. (v. 6)**

*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

Look at verse 6. Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." I want you to notice that Paul didn't tell us to be anxious for nothing and then remind us that God is near. No, he first reminded us of who God is (v.5), and then he communicated the imperative "Do not be anxious about anything." Again, our view of God has to weigh more than our view of our circumstances. But, when you are tempted to worry, when you are tempted to pull your eyes off the sovereign God who is in control and cares, put your knees on the floor. The way to fight worry and anxiety is through prayer. D.A. Carson notes, "I have yet to meet a chronic worrier who enjoys an excellent prayer life." When worrisome and anxious thoughts creep in, we have two options:

A. Entertain worry with worry.

B. Bring our sinful, disbelieving, earthly treasure-loving hearts before the throne of grace.

The writer of Hebrews calls us to, “Draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” Hebrews 4:16. We need to humbly come before God and pray like this: God, I’m being tempted to worry and I need your grace to trust your promises. Help me keep my eyes fixed on you (cf. Hebrews 12:2). Help me to fix my mind on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy instead of what is temporary (cf. Philippians 4:8). Help me to see my circumstances in light of your sovereignty. Help me to trust that you are committed to me and even though I am struggling to see beyond the here and now. I know that you are using my circumstances to complete the good work that you started in me (cf. *Philippians 1:6*). Thank you that you are near to me.

The Psalmist, in Psalm 73:28 said, “But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge...” Question: Where is your refuge from worry and anxiety? Where do you run? Where does worry drive you? Does it drive you to deeper wells of worry, or does it drive you to the promises of God? I want to encourage you to pray the promises of God! Praying the Word of God helps to saturate your mind with truth. And that is where we want to park our minds.

## **TALK TO GOD ABOUT #1 IN LIGHT OF #2**

Another way to say that is: Talk to God about your worries in light of His character. Frame your prayers in the light of *Who* it is you’re talking to. If you don’t couch your prayers concerning things that worry you in light of God’s character, your prayers can become just a *recital* of what you’re worrying about. Have you ever considered that your prayers can actually be anxiety-producing agents themselves because there’s not enough of God in them? If you’re not careful, the worry itself can overshadow everything else you pray. Proper prayer infuses the presence of God back into the scenario. State your worries in light of who God is.<sup>1</sup>

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THANKSGIVING**

Did you notice Paul connects our lack of anxiety to thanksgiving? Look back at verse 6. He says, “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*” Let me ask you a question - when was the last time that you thanked God for your trials? Worry is often attached to a particular trial in your life. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, which is a great passage to memorize, Paul says, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ

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<sup>1</sup> David Powlison, *Anxiety: Philippians 4:4-7* (Lafayette, IN: Biblical Counseling Training Conference, 2004)

Jesus for you." Let me ask you another question - What if the answer to your trials is, "My grace is sufficient for you" 2 Corinthians 12:9? How will you respond? What if, in God's wisdom, He has determined not to turn down the trial, but instead to turn up His grace? Sometimes God calms the storm, but sometimes God lets the storm rage on and calms His child. If we understand that God is in control, and He is working all things for our good, then we can say with Job, "Though He slay me, I will hope in him." In the rain and in the pain, He's our Tower and our Power.

#### **IV. THE FRUIT OF SELF-SURRENDERED, GOD-CONFIDENCE IS A PEACE THAT SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING. (v. 7)**

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Look at verse 7. Paul says, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Three brief things I want you to notice here:

##### **A. The peace of God is available.**

As we are rejoicing in the Lord, fixing our eyes on His character and promises, and praying with thankful hearts, God will faithfully supply the peace we could never generate on our own. This peace is a *confident trust* in His *flawless wisdom* and *infinite power* that provides the calm among the storms of life. With God, even the deep end of life is safe. Isaiah adds an incredible adjective to the peace of God. He says, "You keep him in *perfect* peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" Isaiah 26:3.

##### **B. The peace of God surpasses all understanding.**

God's grants a peace that cannot be gained anywhere else and cannot be explained by any other means than He is its source. If God can make peace with a guilty sinner, then God is big enough to provide a peace that is greater than all our troubles in this world. He is able to provide a peace that that doesn't dull or fade. John MacArthur says, "God's peace is not subject to anything that happens in the worldly realm. It is not built on any human relationship. It is not built on any human circumstance. Rather, it's built on an unchanging divine relationship, and a divine plan and promise from an unfailing God. Peace is unbreakable, unassailable, and transcendent."

##### **C. The peace of God will guard your heart and mind in Christ.**

As we confidently, by God's grace, apply the truths of Scripture to our minds, that truth will put what is eternal into perspective and will guard our hearts and minds from worrying about the things we have no control over, but more importantly, we can trust God to take care of for us.

## WHAT IF YOUR GREATEST FEARS COME TRUE?

The greatest deliverance Jesus accomplishes for us is saving us from our greatest danger - God's holy and just wrath toward our sin. For most of us, this isn't the felt fear that plagues us each day. But this tells us something about just how disordered our fears can be. Trusting God doesn't mean our worst fears won't happen. Rather, it means that what we should fear most won't happen. Because Jesus stood in my place on Calvary's cross, because He bore the wrath reserved for me, because He died and rose again, and because He, this very moment, stands in heaven interceding on my behalf (cf. Romans 8:34), what should be my greatest fear, the wrath of God, is relieved. Paul wrote, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" Romans 8:35-39.<sup>2</sup>

On the cross, Jesus calmed the only storm that could truly sink us – the storm of God's wrath and judgment. If Jesus settled that storm, He, the God-man, can be trusted to handle every other temporal storm we may encounter. To voyage with Jesus is to voyage in peace even in the midst of the storm. What worry and anxiety do you need to bring to the cross? What idols have you been trying to protect? What God-given responsibilities have you been neglecting because of fear and worry? Bring them with confidence to the throne of grace, there you will find mercy and grace to help in your time of need.

### CLOSING BENEDICTION

As we bring our corporate worship to a close, hear this benediction from 1 Peter 5:7. Peter reminds us to anchor our hope in God when he writes, "Cast *all* your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you." And all God's people said, "AMEN"! Go in peace!

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<sup>2</sup> Excellent article: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-if-my-worst-fears-come-true>