

A Worry-Free Life¹

Our theme for this morning is peace. We all need peace. We want peace. Yet, we have to recognize that there are different things trying to steal our peace. Worries and anxieties are one of those things that try to destroy our calmness of mind and soul.

Lately, many thoughts have been occupying my mind day and night. What I just tried to say in a very nice way, is that I have been worrying about certain things.

I know you are familiar with the feeling. When this happens, you don't stop thinking. You go to sleep worrying, and you wake up the same way. You keep finding alternatives to possible future problems. You don't know how things are going to work out. You worry if the medicine is going to do the job or not. You worry about your new phase in life. You worry about your children, your finances, and your family. If there is one thing that seems to never stop coming our way it is worries.

A group of believers were living a life full of worries. The Christians in Philippi were under several attacks. Their environment had all the necessary conditions for their minds to be permanent playgrounds of fears, uneasiness, anxiety, etc. In the city of the Philippians, preachers served for selfish gain (1:15-17). Power struggle threatened the unity of the church (4:2). False teachers preached a cross-less gospel (3:2-2, 18-19). Some believers struggled to find food and shelter (4:19). There were persecutions outside and problems inside. These people had enough things to worry about when Paul wrote to them, "*Don't fret or worry (in nothing be anxious). Instead of worrying, pray.*" **Philippians 4:6 MSG**

In the midst of a really difficult life, God, through Paul, was making a staggering proposal to his people: "Don't worry about anything." These words were not meant only for the Philippians. This instruction from God is also for us today. You may be thinking: "*Yeah, right. Are you kidding me?*"

Jesus certainly was not kidding when he asked his disciples, "Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" (Matthew 6:27). In the last verses of Matthew chapter 6, we see Jesus teaching on this subject, and the title of his sermon was "Do Not Worry." If you carefully read Jesus' words you will notice that Jesus uses two words to summarize his opinion of worry: *irrelevant and irreverent.*

Worry is irrelevant because it alters nothing. Tell me when was the last time you solved a problem by worrying about it? Tell me if you have ever heard someone saying, "I got behind in my bills, so I am going to worry my way out of debt. You know what, after a few sleepless night money appear on my desk." You know it does not happen that way. Worry changes nothing. It

¹ Material presented in this sermon has been taken from the book, "Come Thirsty: No Heart Too Dry for His Touch" by Max Lucado, chapter 11, *Worry? You Don't Have To* (p 99-106).

produces nothing, except heartburn, and mental and spiritual exhaustion. Listen to these amazing, revealing facts regarding the things about which we fret:

- 40 percent of the things we worry about never happen
- 30 percent are associated with unchangeable deeds of the past
- 12 percent focus on the opinions of others that cannot be controlled
- 10 percent center on personal health, which only worsens as we worry about it
- Only 8 percent concern real problems that we can influence

Let me put it in numbers: 92 percent of our worries are needless. Worry is irrelevant. It does not benefit you; instead, it harms not only your physical and emotional health but also your spiritual vitality because worry is a form of distrusting God. **Worry is irreverent.**

Let me read to you what Jesus told the people when he was teaching them about this same issue.

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Matthew 6:28-30 NIV

Can you see how Jesus is relating worry with lack of faith? Like it or not, when we worry, we unconsciously doubt God. This is the reason why Paul is telling us to be anxious for nothing. God cares for us; and apprehension is the result of not trusting in his care. **Your level of fretfulness is a good indicator of how much you trust God.**

Let me make a parenthesis. Certainly Paul is saying, “*Be anxious for nothing,*” but he is not promoting an irresponsible, careless life. We are not to be like the procrastinating preacher. “I won’t worry,” he told himself. “The Holy Spirit will give me a message.” All week long he avoided his work saying, “The Holy Spirit will give me my message.” Finally, on Sunday, he stood before the church and prayed aloud. “All right Lord. Give me a message.” Much to the surprise of the church, a heavenly voice filled the sanctuary. “Tell the people you didn’t study.”

“*Be anxious for nothing*” means “*manage your problems, but don’t let your problems manage you.*” A person with a worrisome heart is a person managed by his/her problems. You cannot afford to live a life full of worries. Worry distorts your vision; it steals your peace; it divides your strength, perception, and energy. So, here is the question: How can we stop worrying?

The apostle Paul offers a two-pronged answer. This is what Paul wrote, “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*” **Philippians 4:6 NIV**

The first part of the answer should not be a surprise to any believer. It includes prayer and gratitude. If you want to worry less and less, to the point that your degree of anxiety becomes zero, you have to pray more. Rather than look forward in fear, look upward in faith. Jesus told his disciples to “pray consistently and never quit” (Luke 18:1).

Paul told believers, “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Colossians 4:2 NIV). James wrote, “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray” (James 5:13 NKJV). This is the principle: “**Rather than worry about anything, pray about everything.**” The spiritual practice of prayer will help you breathe God in and exhale your worry. Remember, worry diminishes as we look upward in prayer.

Our attitude in prayer is as important as prayer itself. Praying has nothing to do with putting together a shopping list or formulating a list of complaints. We are called to pray with gratitude. Tell God your needs and thank him for what he has done.

When David was getting ready to face the giant, Saul worried about the young kid. But David said to Saul, “Don’t worry because I am not worried at all. *Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.*” **1 Samuel 17:34-37 NIV**

Do you see how David is recalling those prior events, where he experienced God’s deliverance? When facing the giant, instead of worrying, recall the times when God made you defeat the lion and the bear. Don’t look forward in fear; look backward in appreciation. Remember the unexpected tax refund, the timely counsel (prognosis), the surprising call, the generosity of that complete stranger who saved your life, the time you knocked out cancer, the time you have been free from that uncomfortable disease, etc. Remember, be thankful, and your worries will be replaced with a sense of security in God. If we do our part (prayer and gratitude), God will do his. He will provide you with “peace and protection.”

If you do this, you will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4:7 TLB (Living Bible)**

Believing prayer ushers in God’s peace. Not a random, earthly peace, but his peace. A peace that is imported from heaven. The same tranquility that marks the heavenly throne, God offers to you. His supernatural peace will over-shadow you like a protective vault, guarding your heart. No outside thoughts of anxieties will enter your heart because the peace of God will filter them out.

Church, this is something you have to do with determination. Peter wrote, “**Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**” **1 Peter 5:7 NIV**

Pay attention to the verb Peter is using. “**Cast...**” Peter is not saying place, lay, or occasionally offer. With a commanding voice, Peter is telling us “cast”. The same verb is used to describe the way Jesus treated demons. Here is the idea: With one hand on the collar, another on the belt, and a “Don’t come back” throw your worries upon God. He will take care of them.

Worry is an option, not an assignment. God can lead you into a worry-free world. Here is what you need to do. Be quick to pray. Focus less on the problems ahead and more on the victories behind. Do your part, and God will do his. He will guard your heart with his peace...a peace that passes understanding.