

"Be Anxious for Nothing"
(Philippians 4:6-7)

Introduction: The Lord's coming is near for each one of us, whether it be in His glorious Second Coming to put an end to history as we know it and to set up His eternal kingdom, or whether it be for each one of us at death. It is much nearer than we sometimes imagine. This was true for the Philippians as well, and because it was, Paul exhorted them to cultivate the spiritual fruit of gentleness on the vine of their lives towards all men. They were to let their kindness and patience be one of the most compelling witnesses in their lives to the reality of Jesus Christ. And they could afford to do this even in the light of the worst of persecutions which they might face, because the Judge of all the earth would soon come and settle the accounts of His servants with those who would do them harm.

But Paul now moves on to give to the Philippians two more commands which would also cultivate the gentle fruit of peace in their hearts and minds, that of being anxious for nothing and that of praying in all things. This is perhaps one of the most practical of all truths that each of us needs to hear and put into practice this morning, for many, if not all of us, have struggled and are struggling in this area. We are all concerned about many things. But often times our concern has gotten out of hand so that it has become worry. We are worried about our health, our strength, our loved ones, our finances, and our personal relationships. All of us have real concerns, but many of us become consumed by them, and then lash out at others because of them. The situation then was not terribly different from what it is now. The Philippians had many things that they could be tempted to worry about as well as we. But the direction Paul gives to them is the solution for us both, namely, "BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING . . . LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD." Anxiety, worry is sin. But God has a cure for this sin, as He does for all sin, namely, the grace which comes through prayer! And what this passage is teaching us this morning is this,

The best way to cure any anxiety in your life is to entrust all of your situations to the Lord in prayer!

First, I want you to see that worry is sinful; secondly, that going to the Lord in prayer is the biblical cure for worry; and lastly, what the fruits are which prayer brings to overcome that worry.

I. *You Are Not To Worry at All About Anything.*

A. *It Is Not Sinful to Be Concerned About People that Are Close to Us and Situations Which Arise, but It Is to Be Overly or Unduly Concerned About Them.*

1. *All of us have real and legitimate concerns.*

a. *We are concerned that when our children grow up they may depart from following after the Lord and follow after the devil and have their portion with him in the lake of fire. Or perhaps you have children who have already departed.*

- b. We are concerned for our health that we might get, or already have, heart disease, or cancer, or some other life threatening or incurable disease.
 - c. We are concerned that we are, or might someday, be out of a job and have no means of providing for our families.
 - d. We are also afraid of various conflicts which have arisen, or might arise, that we will have to face someday. As we think about what Luther had to face in the midst of his difficulties at the time of the Reformation, he too had reason to be concerned.
 - (i) His convictions on the Scriptures had reached a point where he could no longer remain silent in the church. He had to speak against the excesses, the moral corruption and the loss of the Gospel which was prevalent in his day.
 - (ii) His outspokenness on the matter had led to his debate at Leipzig in 1519 against Johann Eck, which, although Luther had the better argument from Scripture, Eck was able to maneuver Luther into being identified with the heretic John Hus, who was burned at the stake by the church a century earlier for holding the same views.
 - (iii) When the debate with the church had reached its climax at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther was called upon to recant of his writings. And when every attempt that he had made to argue his points publicly from the Scriptures had failed, he asked for 24 hours to think over his decision.
 - (iv) Was Luther concerned about his decision? Indeed he was.
 - (v) Could it be, he reasoned, that I alone am wise? Why do I alone see these things when so many doctors of the church cannot seem to. Luther was very concerned.
2. But oftentimes concern crosses the line and becomes sinful worry.
- a. There is concern with is good. Timothy expressed a righteous concern for the church in Philippi. Paul says of him, "FOR I HAVE NO ONE ELSE OF KINDRED SPIRIT WHO WILL GENUINELY BE CONCERNED FOR YOUR WELFARE. FOR THEY ALL SEEK AFTER THEIR OWN INTERESTS, NOT THOSE OF CHRIST JESUS" (2:20-21).
 - b. But it becomes worry when it begins to consume us.
 - (i) Sometimes we justify our worry by calling it by other names, such as a reasonable concern, or simply Christian prudence.
 - (ii) But we know that we have crossed the line when it begins to engulf our hearts and minds.
 - c. Jesus warned us against things that we would be tempted to worry about.
 - (i) He warns us about worrying over food or

clothing, "FOR THIS REASON I SAY TO YOU, DO NOT BE ANXIOUS FOR YOUR LIFE, AS TO WHAT YOU SHALL EAT, OR WHAT YOU SHALL DRINK; NOT FOR YOUR BODY, AS TO WHAT YOU SHALL PUT ON. IS NOT LIFE MORE THAN FOOD, AND THE BODY THAN CLOTHING?" (Matt. 6:25).

- (ii) He warns us about worrying how long we will live, "AND WHICH OF YOU BY BEING ANXIOUS CAN ADD A SINGLE CUBIT TO HIS LIFE'S SPAN? IF THEN YOU CANNOT DO EVEN A VERY LITTLE THING, WHY ARE YOU ANXIOUS ABOUT OTHER MATTERS?" (Luke 12:25-26).
- (iii) He warns us not to worry about matters which will happen in the future, "THEREFORE DO NOT BE ANXIOUS FOR TOMORROW; FOR TOMORROW WILL CARE TO ITSELF. EACH DAY HAS ENOUGH TROUBLE OF ITS OWN" (Matt. 6:25).
- (iv) Don't be consumed by these things. They are legitimate concerns, yes, but we ought not to be unduly concerned about them.

B. Paul Tells Us This Morning that Worry Is Never an Option for the Christian. "BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING."

1. Worry betrays in us a lack of confidence in the Lord.
 - a. Jesus said, "LOOK AT THE BIRDS OF THE AIR, THAT THEY DO NOT SOW, NEITHER DO THEY REAP, NOT GATHER INTO BARNES, AND YET YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER FEEDS THEM. ARE YOU NOT WORTH MUCH MORE THAN THEY?" (Matt. 6:26).
 - b. Furthermore, He said, "AND WHY ARE YOU ANXIOUS ABOUT CLOTHING? OBSERVE HOW THE LILIES OF THE FIELD GROW; THEY DO NOT TOIL NOR DO THEY SPIN, YET I SAY TO YOU THAT EVEN SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY DID NOT CLOTHE HIMSELF LIKE ONE OF THESE. BUT IF GOD SO ARRAYS THE GRASS OF THE FIELD, WHICH IS ALIVE TODAY AND TOMORROW IS THROWN INTO THE FURNACE, WILL HE NOT MUCH MORE DO SO FOR YOU, O MEN OF LITTLE FAITH? DO NOT BE ANXIOUS THEN, SAYING, 'WHAT SHALL WE EAT?' OR 'WHAT SHALL WE DRINK?' OR WITH WHAT SHALL WE CLOTHE OURSELVES?' FOR ALL THESE THINGS THE GENTILES EAGERLY SEEK; FOR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS THAT YOU NEED ALL THESE THINGS. BUT SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU" (Matt. 6:28-33).
2. God has told us not to worry about anything, but to trust Him in everything.

II. So What Can We Do to Overcome Worry?

- A. Rather Than Worrying About Anything, You Should Bring All Your Requests Before God. "BUT IN EVERYTHING . . . LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD."
 1. Notice, you are to be anxious for nothing, but you are to pray in everything.
 - a. Paul, echoing Christ, says that you should never

- let these situations worry you.
- b. Rather, you are to do what your Lord tells you, and "SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU" (Matt. 6:33).
2. You are to pray because worry in itself cannot change anything, but prayer can change everything.
 - a. Prayer is bringing our concerns to the One who can make a difference.
 - (i) Prayer is not giving new information to God for He knows all things.
 - (ii) But prayer is throwing ourselves on the tender mercies of our Lord, trusting that He will work everything out for His glory and praise.
 - b. But prayer is also showing our submission to the will of God, for He is the One who commands us to pray in all things.
 - (i) Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "REJOICE ALWAYS, PRAY WITHOUT CEASING; IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS; FOR THIS IS GOD'S WILL FOR YOU IN CHRIST JESUS" (1 Thes. 5:16-18).
 - (ii) And Peter wrote, "HUMBLE YOURSELVES, THEREFORE, UNDER THE MIGHTY HAND OF GOD, THAT HE MAY EXALT YOU AT THE PROPER TIME, CASTING ALL YOUR ANXIETY UPON HIM, BECAUSE HE CARES FOR YOU" (1 Peter 5:6-7).
 - (iii) Luther humbled himself before God. It is very likely that he did not touch even a morsel of food as he fasted and wrestled the whole night in prayer to God, seeking to understand why the most learned men of the church would not listen to him and could not see this truth as he himself clearly saw it in the Bible.
- B. But There Is Also a Specific Way Which the Scripture Tells Us that We Are to Pray. "BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD."
1. First of all there is the frame of mind which is expressed in the word "prayer." Prayer is an act of true reverence and devotion to God. It is the spirit in which we approach Him (Hendriksen 195).
 2. Secondly, there is the "entreaty" which is a specific request before the throne of God. This is the bringing before God our cry from a humble heart for the needs that are most keenly felt by us (195).
 3. Thirdly, these requests are to be accompanied by thanksgiving, for what He has done in the past, for what He has blessed us with in the present, and for what we are assured through His promises that He will do in the future.
 - a. When we give thanks, we recognize that we don't deserve any good thing from the hand of the Lord, and so whatever good He brings is appreciated and received in humility and entire submission to His will.
 - b. William Hendriksen has written, "Prayer without

thanksgiving is like a bird without wings: such a prayer cannot rise to heaven, can find no acceptance with God" (196).

4. And we can know that when we approach the throne of grace in this manner, that He will hear and answer us according to His will. "AND THIS IS THE CONFIDENCE WHICH WE HAVE BEFORE HIM," John writes, "THAT, IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE HEARS US. AND IF WE KNOW THAT HE HEARS US IN WHATEVER WE ASK, WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE REQUESTS WHICH WE HAVE ASKED FROM HIM" (1 John 5:15).
5. So we have seen that it is sinful to worry, and that rather than worry, we should bring all our requests to God.

III. The Result Will Be that the Peace of God Shall Watch Over Your Heart.

- A. God's Peace Is a Peace that Is Beyond Our Understanding.
 1. Anxiety throws the life upside down, it is unnerving.
 - a. It is that feeling of unrest inside.
 - b. It continually beats you like a relentless whip, making you consider the worst consequences possible for your situations.
 2. Peace, on the other hand, is its blessed opposite.
 - a. Peace is something which the Lord wants His people to experience.
 - (i) Jesus said, "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).
 - (ii) "THESE THINGS I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU, THAT IN ME YOU MAY HAVE PEACE. IN THE WORLD YOU HAVE TRIBULATION, BUT TAKE COURAGE; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD" (John 16:33).
 - b. And God's peace is beyond our comprehension because it is able to still even the most restless of hearts in the worst of situations.
- B. And When You Are in Christ Jesus, that Peace Shall Guard Your Heart and Your Mind.
 1. Whereas anxiety causes turmoil in the heart and mind, peace will guard it.
 - a. It will keep the heart from being torn inside out by all of the worries of life.
 - b. It will quench the flood of fearful imaginations that inundate the mind with fuel for the anxious fire.
 2. But this peace is only found in Christ; it is the gift of God.
 - a. Luther was enabled to stand by the grace of God before the doctors of the church and the princes of the province and state his memorable words, "Unless I am convinced by Holy Scripture or by sound

- reason, I cannot recant. My conscience is bound by the Word of God and to go against Scripture or conscience is neither right nor safe! Here I stand! I can do no other! God help me. Amen."
- b. The devil surely tried to fasten his fiery arrows into Luther's heart and mind more than once in his life as he tirelessly wrote and preached against his lies and sought to bring the truth of God to light.
 - (i) Surely Satan continued to try and convince Luther that he was wrong and the established church was right.
 - (ii) Surely he suggested to Luther that his life would not be worth a nickel and that he would most certainly end his days as a fugitive and then be cast into the fiery furnace for his heresies.
 - c. But it was the gracious peace of God in his heart, that which passes all understanding, that was able to keep him from sinking into despair when he considered what overwhelming odds he faced.
 - (i) Luther was able to face each day knowing that his Lord would only bring the things that he was able to endure.
 - (ii) Luther had founded his conviction on the Word of God, and having such a firm foundation, he was not willing that anything should move him.
 - (iii) Having committed himself to his Lord in prayer, he experienced the peace that enabled him to continue to serve the Lord's cause.
 - d. And when you are in Christ through daily trusting in Him and turning from your sins, and keeping His commandments with all of your heart and might, then you need not fear nor be anxious for anything, for you are in God's hands.

IV. Uses.

- A. And So What Are You Worried About This Morning?
 1. Are there loved ones whom you worry about because they have gone astray from Christ or are in situations that you know are dangerous and could end up in serious harm?
 2. Are you anxious about your health, that you could possibly contract a fatal disease, or do you have one now which is threatening your life or the life of one of your loved ones?
 3. Are you worried about money problems, perhaps not having enough to live on now and wondering how you are going to provide for your family, or for your wife and yourself when you reach retirement?
 4. Are you worried about situations and conflicts that might arise in your life, or already have, which might rob you of precious peace?
- B. Have You Laid These Things Before the Lord in Prayer?
 1. Knowing that the Lord is the only One who can change any of these things, are you taking your worries to the Lord?
 2. Are you casting all of your cares on Him knowing that

He cares for you?

- a. Not seeking God for His mercies when He has bidden you to come is like not reaching out for the life-saver which He has thrown out to rescue you.
- b. The Lord gives you clear direction on what you must do and how you must do it. He even gives you the command to do what He knows is for your good. Will you do it?

3. And are you willing to spend the time it takes to engage in real prayer before God? It has been said of Luther that he spent two hours in prayer every morning of his life, unless he had a lot of things to do that day, then he spent three hours in prayer.
 - a. Are you one of those who spend ten minutes in prayer every day unless you have a lot to do, in which case you neglect it all together? Or are you continually before God's throne beseeching Him for grace and mercy?
 - b. Prayer is the spiritual breath of the spiritual man. If a man does not breathe, then he is not alive, and if you do not take spiritual breaths, then you are not spiritually alive.
 - c. Can you tell by your spiritual respiration rate that you are alive and healthy with regard to your spiritual life?

C. If You Come Before the Lord in Prayer with Your Worries, He Will Take Them Away and Give to You the Peace Which Passes Understanding. Isn't That Worth **Any** Price that Is Required?

1. Casting our care upon God doesn't necessarily mean that we are going to have everything our own way. That is not where the peace comes from.
2. But the peace comes from the gracious work of God in your heart giving you contentment with His will no matter what the outcome, knowing that in the long run, whatever the Lord ordains is best for you.
3. Luther was content to die for the Gospel if that was the will of God. His peace came from knowing that he was Christ's and that Christ was pleased to use such a poor worm as he. Are you willing to be content with what the Lord has ordained for your life?
4. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "THE STEADFAST OF MIND THOU WILT KEEP IN PERFECT PEACE, BECAUSE HE TRUSTS IN THEE" (Isa. 26:3). Are you trusting in Christ this morning? Have you taken Him for your Savior and Lord, and are you content with His will for your life? Then may God grant you the grace to cast all of your cares upon Him and receive His perfect peace. Amen.