

“Do Not Be Afraid”
(Philippians 4:6-7)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

Paul gives us several things

To think about this morning

That will help us

With our Christian growth,

Our unity as believers,

And our peace of mind.

He first tells us to be steadfast/stable in Christ:

“Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long *to see*, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved” (v. 1).

We’re in the middle of a battle;

And as Dr. Ferguson reminded us on Wednesday evening:

“To be forewarned is to be forearmed.”

Our enemy has many things to use against us

To try and weaken us, to turn us away from Jesus –

From His truth,

From one another –

But we are to stand our ground.

One of his most effective strategies

Is to divide that he might conquer:

That's what he was doing in Philippi.

Two women were at odds,

And so Paul encouraged them to be reconciled

And urged the congregation to help them:

Division disrupts and weakens the church;

It gives the enemy a foothold

To break apart the whole fellowship.

Paul tells us

That instead of focusing on our differences

We should focus on the blessings we share in common.

He says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (v. 4).

We should also be gentle with each other,

Rather than pushing the issue;

Especially knowing our Lord is everywhere,

That He sees everything,

And that He desires peace:

He writes, "Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near" (v. 5).

As Solomon writes, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (15:1).

B. Preview.

But we should also be careful

That we don't let our anxieties

Destroy our peace and fuel our divisions –

Our fear that things

Aren't going to turn out well for us.

Worry not only affects us personally,

But everyone around us –

It makes us focus on ourselves –

On our needs,

On how others should be helping us –

Rather than focusing

On the needs of others.

Instead of letting fear control us,

We need to bring our concerns to the Lord in prayer –

We need to entrust them to Him –

If we do,

He will give us the peace we need

To be a source of peace to the fellowship.

This morning, let's focus

On how to overcome anxiety/worry.

II. Sermon.

A. First, what is Paul talking about

When he says, “Be anxious for nothing?”

The word he uses means,

“To have an anxious concern, based on apprehension about possible danger or misfortune – ‘to be worried about, to be anxious about’” (Louw-Nida).

It means, “To be uneasy, troubled, fearful.”

We all know what this means by experience.

The way he writes this

Indicates that this is something

They were already going through.

He’s not saying, “You should never allow yourself to start worrying;”

But, “You are worried, you need to stop.”

What were they worried about?

It could have been the Judaizers:

He warned them in 3:2, “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision.”

He did mean to include them,

But his statement is even broader:

He says, “Be anxious *for nothing*.”

Or to put it another way,

“Do not worry about anything.”

We’ve seen that anxiety/fear

Can destroy our peace;

It can destroy the peace of the church.

It can do many other harmful things:

The greatest of which, perhaps,
Is keeping us from doing
From what the Lord calls us to do –
As Dr. Ferguson reminded us this past Wednesday:
Intimidation/fear is our enemy's main weapon.

Fear is an enemy that we need to overcome –
One that we're actually commanded to overcome –
So that we can move forward.

B. What are some of the things we're anxious about?

We might have an easier time
Naming things that don't concern us.

We're anxious about our health –
Whether it will hold up;
Whether we'll have to endure
A long-term disability;
Whether we'll get a terminal disease –
Like cancer often turns out to be –
When we have symptoms we can't explain,
We tend to assume the worst,
Not the best.

The thought of death concerns us –

That one day we'll be laid in the ground –

At least our bodies –

We don't like to think about it,

But we know it's inevitable –

Unless the Lord returns before we die.

We're anxious about our relationships –

Whether our friendships will last,

Whether those that are broken will be restored;

If we're single, we're concerned about

Whether we'll ever meet that special one

We'll one day married;

If we're married, whether our marriage

Will last the rest of our lives;

If we have children,

Whether we'll be close to them

Or alienated from them.

If we're young,

We're also anxious about our future:

Whether we'll be able to afford college;

Whether we'll pass our classes;

Whether we'll graduate.

We worry about our finances:

Whether we'll get a good job;
If we have one,
Whether we'll be able to keep it;
Whether we'll advance;
Whether we'll have enough money to live on;
Whether we'll have enough to retire;
Whether our retirement funds will last
To the end of our lives.

We worry about spiritual issues:
Whether we really belong to Lord;
Whether we'll be able to overcome our sins;
Whether we'll make it to heaven;
Whether we'll be able to confess Jesus before the world,
As He calls us;
Whether we'll be able to do
What He made and called us to do;
Whether those we love and care about –
Our fathers and mothers,
Sisters and brothers,
Especially our children –
Will love Him, love His Word,
And walk with Him in His ways.

We're concerned about this world –
How bad it's getting;
How difficult it's becoming
To live as Jesus says we should live
Without alienating ourselves from everyone;
We're concerned about whether or not
We'll be able to pay the price we must
For living as lights in this world.

There are so many things
We can find to worry about.

Some of us have the added complication
Of being those who naturally tend to worry –
We're so used to being afraid
That we don't feel right
If we're not anxious about something –
Some of us don't have that particular complication –
But all of us struggle with fear.

C. So how can we overcome it?

It is possible you know –
If it's possible for the greater,
It certainly is for the lesser.

Peter and John weren't afraid
When they stood before the Sanhedrim
And told them they would continue
To preach and teach the Gospel (Acts 4).

Stephen wasn't afraid
When he preached the Gospel
Before the Jewish leaders,
And indicted them for killing their Messiah,
Knowing they would kill him (Acts 7).

Paul wasn't afraid
When he testified before kings;
When he faced persecution, prison and death,
For the sake of the Gospel.

How can we overcome our fear
And have their kind of courage?

First, we need to understand
Where our anxiety/fear actually comes from:
It's from a lack of faith –
It's from doubting the Lord.

How many times have you found yourself –

When faced with uncertain situations –

Thinking, talking and acting

As though God doesn't exist?

“What are we going to do?”

“How are we going to get through this?”

Sometimes we really do forget He exists –

That's one of our problems.

Sometimes we forget

That the God who does exist

Has made promises –

Promises He's guaranteed

Through the work of His Son;

As Paul writes, “For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us” (2 Cor. 1:20) –

That He's promised to provide all of our needs.

Maybe we remember His promises,

But don't believe

He's going to answer our prayers –

At least not for us:

We're not good enough;

We haven't measured up.

The real source of our fear

Is that we don't trust God.

If we're to overcome our fear,

We need to overcome our lack of faith.

How can we do that?

First, we need to remember

That God has given us His Spirit

Not only to give us faith,

But also to give us courage:

Paul writes to Timothy,

“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline”
(2 Tim. 1:7).

Secondly, through the working

Of His Spirit in our souls,

And by His Word richly living in us –

As we saw last Lord's Day, *it must be* –

We need to look to Him in faith

And ask Him for what He has promised.

Paul writes, “Be anxious for nothing, 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

We need to find the promise

That applies to our need;

Look to the Lord in prayer to fulfill that promise;

Thank Him that He heard us;

Trust that He will meet it;

And then *rest/find peace* in Him.

The Lord hasn't promised

That we would enjoy perfect health,

But He did promise to use what He allows

To make us more like Jesus –

That should bring us peace.

Paul had an affliction

That he asked the Lord three times to remove,

But the Lord answered, “‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ [And so Paul responded] Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

The Lord hasn't promised

That we wouldn't have to face death.

But He did promise to take us home when we die:

Paul writes, “For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1).

He hasn't promised

That all our relationships would last,

Or be mended if broken,

But He has promised

That He will never abandon us:

We will never be alone:

The author to the Hebrews writes, “*Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,’ so that we confidently say, ‘THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?’” (Heb. 13:5-6).

He has promised to meet all our material needs

If we will put Him first:

Jesus says to us, “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:31-33).

He will keep us safe in Jesus

And bring us safely to heaven

If we trust Him:

Jesus said to the Pharisees

Regarding those who believe in Him:

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27-28).

He may not save everyone we care about,

But He is good and will do what’s right.

And He will protect us

While we're in this world

From anything that can harm us:

Jesus says, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.
In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world"
(John 16:33).

He has promised to work everything in our lives

Together for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28).

God is real:

If you're a believer here this morning,

He has given you His Son.

Jesus has confirmed His promises;

He has given you His Spirit and faith to receive them.

You don't have to be afraid –

He will take care of you.

Paul writes, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all,
how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

Believe what He says.

Ask for what He promised.

And rest in the fact

That He will provide.

You don't have to be afraid. Amen.