



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Dealing with Worry & Anxiety in the Capitol

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

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There are certainly a lot of things that can cause worry, anxiety, and stress in the capitol. Campaigns, controversial issues, complicated problems, and strained relationships all can make life in the statehouse challenging. You then add all this to the normal difficulties of “regular life” everyone faces such as family, career, and daily circumstances. All these anxieties of life can easily distract us from the greatest anxiety of all – whether or not we are right with God and the question of our eternal destiny.

We come to a passage in our study of Philippians where Paul deals directly and powerfully with this issue of worry and anxiety. He encourages believers that instead of anxiety, we can experience the peace of God in our lives:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Here in chapter 4, Paul is giving a series of practical exhortations to the Philippian believers. He challenges them to “stand firm” (vs. 1). He urges those who are experiencing strife to “live in harmony” (vs. 3). He exhorts them to “rejoice in the Lord always” (vs. 4). He advises them to “let your gentle spirit be known to all men” (vs. 5). Here in our text he gives the challenging appeal to not worry and the amazing promise of God’s peace.

As is always his practice, Paul does not simply give a list of “things to do”, but he bases them on the truth of the gospel. We see this in the “therefore” in 4:1. The “therefore” refers back to the gospel truths Paul has laid out in chapter three. The truth that believers have a righteousness that comes from God through faith in Christ (3:9). The truth that those who have repented and put their faith in Christ are actually “citizens of heaven” (3:20). The truth that Christ is coming back one day and that His followers will be like Him (3:21).

Based on these truths Paul informs them how they should then act as citizens of heaven living in the Roman colony of Philippi.

We have taken as our theme for the study of Philippians the benefits and responsibilities of living as citizen of heaven. Here Paul shares one of the most amazing blessings of truly understanding what it means to be a citizen of God’s kingdom. When our values, loyalties, and hopes lie in heaven, we can have peace in our hearts and minds in our lives here on earth.

Let us follow a simple outline to help us understand and remember the message of this wonderful passage. Paul encourages us to be anxious for nothing, to be prayerful for everything, and to be thankful for anything. As a result, our worry, stress, and anxiety will be replaced by the peace of God.

BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING

This is an amazing and challenging statement. Do not be anxious about anything. It simply means what it says – we are not to worry or be troubled about any of the circumstances or situations we might face in our lives. This is possible because we can cast our cares upon the Lord and trust Him to take care of us as Peter writes, “...casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7).

What gives this statement real meaning is Paul’s own situation as he writes it. He is in prison. His life’s work and mission have been interrupted. He does not know if he will live or die. He is concerned about the struggles of the church at Philippi and the other churches he has established. Yet he writes, “Be anxious for nothing”. We remember the circumstances at the beginning of the church at Philippi recorded in Acts 16. Arrested, beaten, and thrown in prison – and what do Paul and Silas do? At midnight they were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. (Acts 16:25). Because of their faith in God’s care for them they could face difficult circumstances without anxiety and worry.

BE PRAYERFUL FOR EVERYTHING

Instead of worrying, Paul says we are to pray for everything. Every

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL INTERIM BIBLE STUDY TUESDAY, AUGUST 2

8:00 A.M. – HOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM (M 252 NEAR MINORITY OFFICES)
12:00 NOON – TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54 IN BASEMENT OF EAST WING)

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circumstance and situation, large or small, can be taken to God in prayer. The writer of Hebrews says that we can “**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). As we pray, we grow in our dependence upon God and in our trust in Him to care for us. The challenging circumstances we pray over become bearable even if they are not changed or removed, because we know God is with us and has a purpose and plan, even for the difficulties.

We see in our text three different words for prayer: prayer, supplication, and requests. These all refer to the specific, direct petitions we make to God regarding the circumstances and situations we are facing. Instead of rebelling against and worrying about our circumstances, we take our needs to God and trust Him to care for us. And, as we pray, Paul urges us to do so *with thanksgiving*.

BE THANKFUL FOR ANYTHING

One of the greatest remedies for worry and anxiety is an attitude of thankfulness. We can remember and be thankful for how God has blessed us even in the midst of challenging trials and circumstances. In the midst of any trial we can be thankful that God demonstrated His love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; and that we can be justified by His blood, and saved from the wrath of God through Him (Romans 5:8-9). We can be thankful that our citizenship is in heaven and that we can look forward to His coming.

Amazingly, all this allows us to be thankful for anything, even the trials themselves. We can do so because we can know God is using them to make us more like Christ and to further advance the gospel (see Phil. 1:12).

THE AMAZING PROMISE

When we cast our care and anxiety upon the Lord and go to Him thankfully in prayer, we have an amazing promise:

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (vs. 7)

This peace is an inward quietness of heart that is granted to us by God. It is a confident trust in God’s wisdom and power that can provide calm amid the worst storms of life. Paul writes that this peace will “guard our hearts and minds”. “Guard” is a military term used of soldiers on guard duty. All of us are familiar with the

upsetting feelings of heart and the racing thoughts in our minds associated with worry and anxiety. It is such a problem that we need our hearts and minds to be protected by the truth of the gospel and God’s love and care for us and the resulting peace.

Notice Paul writes that this peace comes about “in Christ Jesus”. Before we can ever have the **peace of God** in our hearts and minds, we must first have **peace with God**. This is the relationship Paul writes about in Romans 5:1, “**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...**” Because of our sin, we are enemies of God and under His wrath. We have the nagging sense of guilt that will keep us from ever experiencing real peace. Christ, through His sinless life and His death on the cross provided the means for our sins to be forgiven so that we are right – we are at peace with God.

Perhaps the best commentary is Jesus’ own words of comfort and encouragement in John chapters 14-16 and His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:25-34).

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. John 14:27

“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

25“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on... 31“Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’... 33“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (See Matt. 6:25-34)

CONCLUSION

I must say this is a difficult study for me to lead because I tend to struggle a great deal with worry and anxiety. I would definitely join Paul in this area by saying I have not obtained it, become perfect, or laid hold of this truth (see 2:12-13). But, like Paul, it is a goal towards which I want to press on. Will you join me in seeking a greater understanding of the truth of the gospel and God’s love and care which will give us the wonderful peace of God, even in the midst of trials and difficulties?