

Do Not Be Anxious

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Preacher: Rev. John Davidson

[0 : 0 0] If you would turn back with me please to that portion of scripture that we read in Philippians chapter 4. Philippians chapter 4 and we'll read verse 4 onwards again.

Philippians 4 and at verse 4. Paul is commanding them to rejoice. It's the great theme of the book of Philippians. He's telling them to 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.

The bottom line here is that the Lord does not want his people to be an anxious people. The Lord does not want his people to be people who are forever worrying over things that are going on in their lives.

[1 : 1 3] It's easy to say I suppose. It's not so easy to practice especially in this 21st generation when there's so much going on for us as individuals and families and churches and communities.

The pace of life is just so quick and our lives are like a vapor and time is passing so quickly. We're nearly at the end of January already. But the Lord does not want us to be anxious and He reveals to us Paul here the secret of taking anxiety out of our lives and that is prayer.

Prayer brings peace into our lives and into our experience. Who are warriors in here? Who are natural warriors? So am I. Yeah? Natural warriors. To be human is to worry. To be human is to be anxious.

But the Lord would have it that we would not be that way. Somebody once said why worry when you can trust? It's like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere. So true. Somebody else said worry is wasting today's time to clutter up tomorrow's opportunities with yesterday's troubles.

The Lord does not want you to be anxious. Verse 6. Do not be anxious. So what is anxiety? Well, the biblical perspective of anxiety. Anxiety and worry came into the world when Adam and Eve fell in the garden.

[2 : 5 7] They would have experienced anxiety when they hid themselves from God after they had committed that first sin. They knew there was a change of circumstances in the garden and this change of circumstances was not pleasing to God.

And one can picture them in our minds eye as they're naked and as they saw fig leaves together and they tried to hide from God. This is the first time in human experience and in human history at the fall where there's this sense of vulnerability.

Anxiety brings vulnerability and that apprehension was felt by humanity for the first time. We must also remember that this state of emotional experience that is it's not the way the Lord intended for us to be.

He says through Isaiah in chapter 48 and at verse 18, oh that you have paid attention to my commands, the Lord says. Then your peace would have been like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

But lo and behold we are fallen. The whole of humanity fell with Adam and Eve. They were our representatives and we're all guilty.

[4 : 14] So that is why anxiety came into the world and when you read the scriptures you will see that we're in good company as warriors and those who may very well be anxious because most of the Lord's people were warriors and anxious at some time and read the Old Testament.

And you'll see you remember Hannah, she expressed her anxiety in such a way that Eli the priest thought she was drunk with her dispute with Penina.

The Bible is full of stories of God's people being anxious. Moses is another prime example.

What about the Garden of Gethsemane? The Lord Jesus was fully human, perfectly holy and without sin.

But he was in a sinful world. He came into a sinful and a dark world. Maybe we'll do Gethsemane another day.

[5 : 19] So the scientific perspective of anxiety, the scientist tells us that anxiety is this sense of fear and apprehension that puts you on high alert. Because see every time I go into a poop it's I'm on high alert.

That's why I pace back and forth. So it is meant to put us into that heightened sense of awareness. You know where we're prepared for potential threats.

There's nothing really wrong with that. You could think of a soldier in war. It's perfectly reasonable for him to be anxious or her to be anxious and on high alert. And that's good. That might save his or her life.

But over excessive anxiety troubles us. Over excessive anxiety is not good for our mental health. It's not good for our spiritual lives. It's not good for us emotionally, psychologically and everywhere.

This fight or flight, that tense sensation in your stomach, that heightened sense of awareness, that slight fear of dread.

[6 : 22] It's not good for us and the Lord does not want us to be that way. And Paul did not want the Philippians to be anxious in any way. The apostle, he's already touched on issues that this little Philippian church very well may have been anxious about.

Many of them were anxious about their assurance of salvation. They wondered, and they wondered, am I really a Christian? Does the Lord really love me?

Do you ever ask these questions? Well, some in the Philippian church did. The devil was getting a foothold and their assurance was being shaken.

And of course, Paul, what does he say in that great version, chapter 1 and verse 6? He says, listen, little Philippian church, he says, I am sure of this, he says. I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Go back to chapter 1 verse 6. I have been with you, I have worshipped with you, I have seen your good works. I know you are the real deal. Do not worry about it.

[7 : 34] The Lord loves you, the Lord has changed you, the Lord is molding you and the Lord is transforming you. Do not be anxious about it. Be assured of your salvation in Christ.

What else were they anxious about? Well, they could have been anxious about the two ladies, Sinti, Hia and Judea falling out in chapter 4 verse 2. And two wonderful ladies, apparently, are doing so much work for the gospel and they fell out.

And lo and behold, Christians fall out. We know that well, don't we? Of course they do. Even Paul fell out with Matt at one point. But I bet they still prayed for each other.

I bet they still loved each other. Barnabas and Paul and Matt fell out. These things happen. But he is saying to them, do not be anxious about this.

And he commends the two women to make it up and to get on. And hopefully that is what happened. What else could they be anxious about? There was a church coming into the church preaching as well.

[8 : 38] And some of them were anxious about that they were not living lives worthy of the gospel. Chapter 1 verse 20, 27, it's a theme of them of themopholybians to live lives that are worthy of the gospel.

They might have been anxious about that. They might have been anxious about Paul in prison. They were anxious about Epaphroditus. They might have been anxious about many different things that Paul has touched on in the later.

So he's coming up to the close of the later and he's saying, listen. Listen guys, let's look at the bigger picture here. Look at the bigger picture here. You belong to Jesus. You are a Christian.

And the Lord loves you. The Lord has given you his very best in Jesus. So why are you anxious? Do not be anxious about anything.

Of course Jesus taught his disciples when he was with us in the Sermon of the Mount. He says, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink, what you will wear, what you will, what clothing you will wear.

[9 : 39] He says, look at the birds. They're not anxious. But your father in heaven feeds them. He looks after them. How much more worth are you than the birds that fly over your head?

So the Lord Jesus taught this as well to his people. Do not be anxious. What else does he say in the Sermon? He says, you seek first the kingdom of God. Seek first the kingdom of God, Jesus says, and his righteousness, and all these other things that you're anxious about will be added unto you.

He's not going to spoil you, but he's going to look after you. Seek first the kingdom of God. Somebody else once said that worry pulls tomorrow's clouds over today's sunshine.

And that is what we have this evening and maybe dark outside, but we have the sunshine of God's word and God's spirit and unison with that word, commanding us and exhorting us not to be anxious.

You see, an anxious mind will tell us many things that are not true. An anxious mind will make little molehills into mountains in our mind, isn't that?

[10 : 48] What happens? So what happens to an anxious mind? And that will paralyze us, and the Lord does not want us to be paralysed with anxiety. We're to be productive Christians, and when we're overly anxious, we're not as productive as we ought to be.

The Lord does not want you to be anxious, and he does not want me to be anxious. You see, the context here is he's telling them to rejoice, and he is teaching them and he's instructing them to be gentle.

Rejoicing and joy are one of the main themes of this little Philippian later. We're to be people filled with joy.

We are to be people who are full of rejoicing within our hearts for all that God has done for us. He commands them to rejoice in any circumstance, and he says it twice to get his point across.

After all, himself and Silas earlier, or a number of years earlier, had been stuck in a Philippian jail, and they very well may have been anxious, but what did they do? They started singing Psalms, full of joy and rejoicing, and all the other prisoners joined in with them, in a dungeon.

[12 : 08] And then he continues, what does he say? He says, let your reasonableness be known to everyone. Verse 5, let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

They are children of God, they are citizens of heaven, and they are to have that quiet, gentle, discussion.

Be reasonable, be fair-minded, have a balanced, intelligent, decent outlook on life.

Be reasonable in all of your dealings within the church and out with the church. You're living in a hostile world.

Paul also says to the current things, he says, I, Paul, myself entreat you by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. He says that in 2 Corinthians 10. I entreat you by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ.

[13 : 15] Jesus himself says, I am gentle and lowly in heart, but yet tough as nails at the same time. I am gentle and lowly in heart.

Yet both are Lord Jesus and even Paul the Apostle. They were gentle, lowly in spirit, but yet they were tough. They were tough.

On the inside they were tough. They had a resilience. They had that single-mindedness for the glory of God. It's all that matter to them.

They were so gentle, so reasonable, so fair, but yet within their hearts there was this zeal for God's people, this zeal for God's house, and this zeal for the glory of God.

There's no contradiction there to be gentle and reasonable and to have a zeal within our hearts for the glory of the Lord who has saved us.

[14 : 19] That is what he is commanding. We're not to be aggressive. We're not to be unfair in our dealings. We're to be truthful in all things.

He says earlier in Philippians 2, he says, Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God, a thing to be grasped.

He said, look at Jesus. He was God's son, but yet, but yet, he was a lowly, and he did not grasp that power.

You'll remember when the devil took him out into the wilderness, that's exactly what the devil wanted him to do. But no, Paul is increasing him to show the fruit of the spirit in their lives.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. You'll see that in Galatians 5. You know, this gentleness and this reasonableness, it goes against the grain of our modern culture.

[15 : 39] We live in a macho world where everyone is out for themselves, and everyone is dog-eat-dog, and it's because of evolution, the scientist says, and we're up against everyone else.

And no, we're not to be like that, we're to be gentle, we're to be reasonable, we're to be fair, and we're to live lives that are worthy of the gospel. That great theme that runs through this book as well.

Thirdly, he says, remember, be encouraged because the Lord is near at hand. Verse 5, the second part of it.

What does he say? Like, the reasonableness being owned to everyone, because why the Lord is at hand? There are two explanations of what Paul means here. What does he mean when the Lord is at hand?

The first explanation I have is that the Lord is imminently going to return. Nobody knows when the Lord is going to return. These Philippians and Paul didn't know when the Lord Jesus was going to return.

[16 : 45] But he's saying he will return. He will return, and he will complete your salvation at the day of Christ. Chapter 1 verse 6, and on that day he says, Every knee shall bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

On that day the Lord is near at hand. Take heart, take heart. Paul also said that when Christ returns, he will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.

You'll see it in chapter 3 and verse 21 of this wonderful letter. Your lowly body with all its aches and pains will become a glorious body.

It'll become like Jesus' resurrected body. The Lord is near at hand. Your life will be short. Make the most of it. Do not be anxious.

Be reasonable. Be fair-minded. Show the world you belong to Jesus. Do not be anxious about anything. The Lord is going to return.

[17 : 53] The second interpretation we have is that the Lord is present with his people. That the Lord is present with this little Philippian church. The Lord is present with this little Carlyway church.

The Lord is present with his people whenever they gather together, always and forever. I will never leave you nor forsake you. That is a promise we'll hold off. The Lord is present with his people in a very real and special way, especially corporately when we come together as a church.

Especially when we come together as a church. The Psalmist says the Lord is near to all who call on him and to all who call on him in truth.

Psalm 34:18, the Lord is near to the broken hearted. We live in a world full of the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

James tells us to draw near to God and the Lord God will draw near to you. The Lord is with this little Philippian church and the Lord is with us here just now.

[18 : 58] Do not be anxious. The Lord, yes, is going to return and make all things well, but he is also with us here and now. Here and now.

So what does Paul mean? Well, I think it's a double meaning. He's teaching both things simultaneously to encourage them. The Lord is near.

If somebody was to ask you what's the big idea of the Christian life, listen to the way R.C. Sproul answers that question. What is the big idea of the Christian life?

The big idea of the Christian life, he says, is *Corm Deo*. *Corm Deo* captures the essence of the Christian life, he says. This Latin phrase literally refers to something that takes place in the presence of or before the face of God.

To live *Corm Deo* is to live one's entire life in the presence of God under the authority of God to the glory of God.

[20 : 06] That is what *Corm Deo* means. To live one's entire life in the presence of God, knowing that he is with his people always under the authority of God is ultimately to the glory of God. Isn't that beautiful?

You see, the Lord wants you to experience this piece, verse 7. On the piece of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

He is saying the secret to all of this and the way to acquire this piece which surpasses all understanding is nothing radical, it is nothing complicated, it is simply prayer.

It is simply prayer.

What does he say about this piece? Well, he tells us it surpasses all understanding. It is beyond all human comprehension. If we were to take a bit of this piece that we have and enjoy with God through the purchased, what Christ has done on Calvary, he's purchased this piece that we enjoy and that we can have.

[21 : 37] If you were to take this piece and if you were to give it a scientist and if he was to stick it under a microscope, he couldn't make headnotte a limit. Because since in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom or human understanding.

But it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those that believe. It's all about faith.

What else does Paul tell us about this piece? Well, he tells us to guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus, verse 7.

You know, we may enjoy this peace in our lives, in our spiritual lives, in our emotional lives, in our psychological lives and we can still be anxious about many things.

But the world can never understand what you and I enjoy until you experience it. It has to be experienced and we experience it by the grace of God and by grace only.

[22 : 46] We cannot purchase it, we cannot buy it, but we can pray for it and we can ask the Lord for it. Lord grant to me that peace that surpasses all understanding in our prayer life.

And yet we may have this peace that surpasses all understanding and yet our lives very well may be in turmoil. The children are up at three o'clock in the morning unwell screaming.

We're going to work in the morning shattered. Things that work very well may not be good. All of these things in our lives, maybe we have children that have got a stray a little bit and are getting into trouble.

We have all of these anxieties and all of these things pressing upon us. We have ill health, we have aches, we have pains. We have all of these things, but yet we can enjoy that inner peace which surpasses all understanding.

You know, sometimes the Lord does calm the storm, but you know sometimes he will let that storm rage, but he will calm his child.

[23 : 58] Sometimes he may let that storm rage, but calm his child. God's avenue for you to experience this peace as I've said before is prayer with thanksgiving.

John Bunyan says, pray often for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God and a scourge for Satan. John Bunyan also said, prayer will make a man or a woman cease from sin, or sin will entice a man or a woman from prayer.

How true? Bunyan knew it. Prayer, time exposure with God, time with the Lord is the avenue to enjoy this peace.

The story is told of a man who didn't like flying. Does anyone know like flying? We're all good pilots, maybe go ahead, everyone likes flying. There was a man who did not like flying and he was flying from one city in America to another city in America.

And up they went and it was one of the worst journeys he ever had. There was turbulence and the plane was moving. The lockers were opening, stuff was flying out of the lockers. It was an awful journey and he was sweating and he was just in a mess.

[25 : 24] And he looked over to the other aisle and he seen this little girl reading a book. And the wee girl was a perfect piece with her book. And he marveled at the little girl. How can she be at so much peace as this plane is rocking about?

And they came in for a terrible landing and the plane bounced all over the runway and it finally came to a stop. The weather was terrible. And when they unbuckled the seat belts he just had to ask the little girl.

And he went up and he says, little girl, weren't you afraid when we were way up in the sky? When we were banging and shuddering and weren't you afraid? Weren't you anxious?

And she looked at him and then she looked at the cockpit which was open and she pointed to the pilot and she says, that's my daddy. And he's taking me home.

Trust, beef, do not be anxious. Let us pray. Gracious Lord, we thank you and we bless you for your work which encourages us.

[26 : 32] And Lord, we pray that your spirit is at work with it. Lord, many of us are natural warriors and anxiety is a daily thing for us. But Lord, we pray that you would grant to each and every one of us here this evening that that that peace which surpasses all understanding that you would calm our minds, our hearts.

And Lord, that you would change us and make us into the image of Jesus. Lord, would you sanctify us? Lord, we thank you that you are indeed with us every day and may we too live lives before the face of God and the presence of God under the authority of God and to the glory of God in our own lives.

And may Jesus be magnified and glorified in all that we do for we ask it always and forever in His name. And then, sorry for cutting it short, so we're going to close by singing Psalm 23.

Psalm 23, the Lord's my shepherd I'll not want. He makes me down to lie and pastures greenly leadeth me, the quiet waters by. Psalm 23 to God's grace.

That Lord my shepherd I'll not want. He makes me down to lie and pastures greenly leadeth me, the quiet waters by.

[28 : 13] Psalm 23 to God's grace. My soul he doth restore again, and be into mocked again, when in the house of righteousness, he mocked his own insane.

Though I walk in death's dark way, yet will I fear the hell? For the Lord lift me up by your arm.

Come comfort him, my table of desolation, in presence of my old, my head the dust with oil adorned, and my tabernacle.

Goodness and mercy all my life shall journey follow me, and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.

Now you may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.