

Dealing with Anxiety

Philippians 4:4-9

The future is uncertain, and life is full of challenges. How is a Christian to deal with them? Life challenges us with many worries and pressures – the Coronavirus for example. And many adults find it hard to get a good night's sleep, worried about all the stress of life. I know too many people who are worried about things they cannot change and who make their own life miserable with worry. Jesus lived in a world that was also filled with anxieties – He knew about poverty and disease and grief. In His day there were no hospitals, no social security, and no fire houses or ambulances. Life was never easy. In one of his most well-known sermons, Jesus devoted ten verses to the problem of worrying. In just a few verses he gave such a great comfort and reassurance to his followers that it is worth listening to what he had to say on this topic.

In **Mt. 6:25-34** Jesus said, ***“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. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! 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 will need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”***

In this version we read, ***“do not be worried about your life.”*** The KJV says, ***“take no thought for your life.”*** Jesus is not suggesting that we are to live without care or caution. Jesus was cautioning against the kind of anxiety that forgets God and sees no hope for tomorrow. *Faith sees the help of God in tough times; it trusts that God will take care of us.* Anxiety, on the other hand, is full of doubt and fear.

Anxiety is doubt at work; it is always uncertain. It fears the worst and ignores the watching care of a loving Father in heaven. *It forgets the promises of God.*

Verse 25 asks, “*is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?*” If God our Father has given us life, surely, we can trust him to provide the food and clothes we need to sustain life. Anyone who has given such an extravagant gift will not be stingy or careless with the smaller gifts. In **Romans 8:32**, Paul said, “*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?*”

In **verse 26** Jesus speaks about the birds, and how God feeds them. They don’t worry about piling up goods for an unforeseen future; and yet their lives continue, because God feeds them. Jesus asked in **verse 27**, “*And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?*” Other versions translate this, “*which can add a cubit to his stature?*” (That is 18 inches to his height). *Either way, worry is pointless.* It doesn’t help matters. Anxiety rather than helping you with your problem causes nervousness, sleeplessness, and irritability. An anxious persons often jumps the gun and does things hastily, which often cause more problems than it helps.

In **verses 28-30**, Jesus pointed to the flowers of the field. He said, “*And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!*” God takes care of His people. If he hasn’t forgotten the wildflower, He won’t forget you. You’re worth far more.

Jesus called the one who was anxious, a man of “*little faith.*” That is, *he puts little trust in God’s goodness and kindness.* The Lord compares the worrier to the Gentiles, who don’t know God. He said, “*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 these things; for your heavenly Father know that you need all these things.*” You can expect a pagan or an unbeliever not to know about God, but Jesus expects more of His followers. When one knows God, one should not have to live in worry and anxiety about the necessities of life.

Jesus' prescription for the Christian, was that the believer is to ***“seek first His kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Mt. 6:33-34).***

We must learn the art of living one day at a time. If we live each day as it comes, and do each task as it arises, then we will have the strength and the grace of God to help us through each step. Anxiety is more about what we don't know than the One we do know.

Anxiety can't change the past; however hard we try. Instead of rehearsing in our heart old failures, and old hurts, and old sins, we are better off to learn from our past. ***And worry about the future is useless.*** The biggest troubles are usually those that never happen – our imagination may dream up things that never happen. Anxiety is a waste of time and effort, since the future that really happens is hardly ever as bad as the future of our fears. Don't let an over-active imagination keep you from living life - a life of joy and peace, free from upset and worry. God's prophet said, ***“The steadfast of mind you will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in you” (Isa. 26:3).*** Peace is the opposite of fear and doubt. A person at peace is confident and unafraid.

Our reading this morning was ***Phil. 4:4-9***, it has the perfect prescription for anxiety. ***“Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 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. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything is worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”***

First, rejoice in the Lord always. Consider how God has blessed you. Count your blessings every single day. When your mind is on the Lord and His love for you, you won't get caught up in worrying over the future. You'll keep your trust and focus on the good God and what He has done for you!

Second, *cultivate a forbearing spirit* – one that doesn't react hastily and negatively to everything that happens. Develop a sweet spirit of reasonableness. Grow a heart of understanding that gives others the benefit of the doubt.

Third, *remember the Lord is near or "at hand."* He sees and knows everything that happens to you. He's not distant or unconcerned. God is your Father, and He'll be very near to you to help you when you need Him.

Fourth, *stop worrying about anything*. Get out of the habit of getting upset about every unhappy event and disappointment. Examine yourself. How do you react to problems? Do you get emotionally worked up over every little thing? You don't have to worry. You can do something.

Fifth, *in every circumstance pray*. Pray with an attitude of thanksgiving. Tell God what you need. Don't hold back. Let Him know everything! He is ready to listen and to help answer your request. When you ask, the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. God will place a guard all around you to keep you secure and so that you might be at peace. God's help means you can take control of your heart and mind. You don't have to be a slave to anxiety and doubt and fear. You can be at rest with God.

Sixth, *decide now where you want your thoughts to live*. We decide what we think about all day long. We make the choices that affect our happiness or our misery. Your emotional life will reflect what you choose to think about. Paul in **Phil. 4:8** said, "***Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.***" Some folk dwell on the ugly, the depressing, the sinful, the failures, and the critical. It is no wonder their attitudes in life is sour and pessimistic.

Seventh, *practice doing God's will*. Paul said in **verse 9**, "***The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.***" When people follow what they have learned and seen in the Word of God and in genuine Christianity, they'll find a peaceful relationship with God. The righteous man can go to bed at night with peace in his heart, but the wicked man continually worries his sins will be found out. He's

always scared and hiding something. The loving person finds peace with others, but the hateful person's life is filled with strife and tension.

Solomon said in **Prov. 3:1-8**, ***“My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So, you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.”*** The more we follow the will of God, the more we will find the peace and grace God gives.

When you are at peace with yourself, at peace with others, and at peace with God, you'll find little to worry about. The best way to peace is through listening to God and through following His Word. Perhaps one reason people are so uptight and anxious is they have never found the peace that God gives. In **Romans 5:1** Paul said, ***“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** It is through faith in Christ and obedience to His will that we enter the peace of God.

All the water in the world could not sink a ship no matter how hard it tried, unless it got inside the ship. All the hardships of this world could never hurt you, unless you let it inside of you.

This is why Peter in **1 Peter 4:7** said, ***“casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”*** Peter knew that if you let the worries of this world burden you, you'll be overloaded and stressed. But if you give them to the Lord, you can live free. Occasionally people cast their anxieties on the Lord and then quickly take them back. Brethren, once you put a matter in God's hands, trust Him to take care of it. Leave it in His hands.

All the worry in the world won't remove life's hardships – this virus will go away in the Lord's good time. When it serves its purpose, the Lord will remove it. Until that time – Trust in the Lord! He knows what you need, and he will supply.