

KEEP IT TOGETHER WHEN IT IS FALLING APART

Philippians 4

For several years a woman had been having trouble getting to sleep at night because she feared burglars. One night her husband heard a noise in the house, so he went downstairs to investigate. When he got there, he did find a burglar. "Good evening," said the man of the house. "I am pleased to see you. Come upstairs and meet my wife. She has been waiting 10 years to meet you."

... William Marshall, *Eternity Shut in a Span*.

Did you know that the average person's anxiety is focused on:

- 40% -- things that will never happen
- 30% -- things about the past that can't be changed
- 12% -- things about criticism by others, mostly untrue
- 10% -- about health, which gets worse with stress
- 8% -- about real problems that will be faced

Anyone ever blame you for being a 'worry-wart'? And if they ... did they have a legitimate reason to do so? Are you one of those who worries about every thing. You worry if there is not something to worry about?

The Greek word for 'worry' means "to be pulled apart in different directions." The Old English root from which the word "**worry**" comes from means "**to strangle**". And all of us have felt that feeling ... right?

From the spiritual point of view ... Worry is simply *wrong thinking* when it comes to the mind and it is *wrong feeling* when it comes to the heart. And that can involve circumstances, or people, or things. If there was ever the captain of thieves when it comes to robbing people of joy ... it would have to be worry.

We are finishing our **PHILIPPIAN** series this morning by turning to **CHAPTER FOUR** and seeing how to hold it together when everything around seems to be falling apart.

If anybody had the excuse or a reason to worry it had to be the Apostle Paul when he was writing this letter to the Philippians . A couple of his dear friends in the Philippian Church were arguing and fighting with each other. In fact ... the problem was great enough that it was beginning to cause a split in the church. Paul was stuck in Rome ... chained to the palace guards and obviously could not leave and go to Philippi and settle the argument. We have no idea what Euodia and Syntyche were arguing about ... but whatever it was ... it was bad enough that it was causing problems. Look at **VERSES 1-2** with me ... **Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! ² I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.**

I am sure that you have heard of churches that have literally split over something that is really not very important at all. A couple of people begin to argue and before you know it ... the whole church starts taking sides and the next thing you know ... there are two churches instead of one. Now ... I want you to understand something ... God wants us to multiply His churches ... but He certainly does not want us to do so by dividing them! And my guess is that that very thing may have gone through Paul's mind ... "Will this argument get bad enough that the very church that I love so much is going to end up splitting in two? ... And even if it does not split ... will it be bad enough that those who are not Christians that are looking on ... will they be convinced that they do not want anything to do with the church?" Believe me ... that is enough to cause a preacher to worry!

But that is not the only problem facing Paul! Remember... Paul was setting in prison when he wrote this letter! He was chained to palace guards. And he was waiting for his sentencing ... which could very easily be the death penalty.

Paul had a reason to worry if anyone has one ... but he didn't. If that were you or me ... I wonder if we would be downing *Roloids* like they were candy.

BUT ... How did Paul react to this? Not like most people react. Let's look at **CHAPTER FOUR** and find out. In this Chapter he gives us the secret of victory over worry.

Paul tells us in this chapter that the antidote ... the medicine ... for worry is not *Roloids* ... it is a secure mind. Paul puts it this way in **VERSE 7 ...**
⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When we have a secure mind, the **peace of God guards us (VERSE 7)** and the **God of peace guides us (VERSE 9)** ... with that combination why would we ever have to worry?

If we are ever going to conquer worry and experience a secure mind ... we need to implement into our lives three things that Paul shares with us in **PHILIPPIANS 4 ...**

The first one is ...

1 ... PRAY RIGHT (4:6-7)

VERSES 6-7 ... **⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Have you ever gone to a Christian friend about a problem and dumped this enormous load on them and their answer to you was "Well, you need to pray about it"? You walk away feeling really empty. You felt almost like they were using those words as a way to brush you off and get you out of their hair.

The interesting thing that Paul does here in **VERSES 6 AND 7** is that he tells us "if you are worried about something ... if you are anxious about something ... then pray about it." **But he uses three different words ... or phrases ... here that are all involved in that prayer time.** When all three of those are used, it makes a difference in the outcome. He was not brushing off people who were worried about a problem. What he was doing was giving us a real secret to eliminating worry in our lives.

1. PRAYER

The first word that he uses is the word “**PRAYER.**” He says in **VERSE 6 ... but in every situation, by prayer.** The Greek word for “prayer” here is a general word used to make our needs known to God. It carries with it the idea of adoration, devotion, and worship. Paul’s point here is that when we see or feel the sin of worry creeping up on us ... we need to get alone with God and worship Him. **When we adore God in prayer ... we recognize His greatness ... His awesomeness ... His ability to do all things. We realize that there is no problem too big for God.**

Too often our prayers are like going through a drive-up window. We pull up, give our order, get what we want and we are gone. Paul says one of the conditions of having victory over worry ... is right praying. That means spending some time adoring God ... recognizing God for Who He is. And when we do that ... we recognize that this is a God that can do anything ... even take care of our problems. This part of prayer happens and is enhanced when we have a single mind ... wanting everything to glorify God. But when we have ulterior motives ... then that peace that God gives is not going to be ours!

2. SUPPLICATION

The second word that Paul uses is “**SUPPLICATION**” or “**PETITION**”. **VERSE 6 ... present your requests to God.** This is sincerely sharing with and asking of God. This part of prayer is not the needless repetition of things. This is the real open heart discussion about what is taking place in our life and asking God’s help. This part of prayer can only happen when we have a submissive mind.

3. THANKSGIVING

The third word that Paul uses for prayer here is “**THANKGIVING**” or “**APPRECIATION**”. He puts it this way in **VERSE 6 ... with thanksgiving.** God likes to here His children say “Thank You”.

When Jesus healed the **10 lepers**, and only one came back and thanked Him ... He appreciated the fact that the one came back ... but He asked where the other 9 were. I am afraid that the percentages are not any better today than they were then. Too often, God does some amazing things for us and we forget to thank Him. When we take time to recognize the things that God is doing in our lives and thank Him for those ... **we become**

increasingly aware that God is active in our lives ... that God does care about us ... and that in itself can help us have victory over worry.

There is **another secret** to worry-free living in relationship to prayer that Paul gives us. That is that **we should take all things to God in prayer** ... not just the big things but even the little things. Take the little things to God before they become the big things! Maybe it will save you a lot of problems down the line. Paul's secret here ... take the things to God before they become a big deal ... and you can prevent much worry.

Notice what Paul says is the result of right praying in **VERSE 7 ... ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Right prayer brings the peace of God that guards your hearts and your minds Those are the two places that worry attacks us ... right? And with right praying ... they are guarded!

It does not mean that you will not ever have any trials again ... it means you will recognize that you are walking through them in the big protective shadow of God. Daniel is a prime example of that. In **DANIEL 6:1-10** we find Daniel praying with prayer, supplication and thanksgiving. And it is for that very reason that Daniel gets thrown into a Lions Den! In **VERSE 11** of that same chapter we find him taking a nap ... in the Lions Den ... surrounded by lions. I don't believe he could have been sleeping if he did not have the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. And he got that peace by right praying!

2 ... THINK RIGHT (4:8)

VERSE 8 ... Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

You can receive a peaceful heart by praying right ... but there is more to complete peace than just the heart ... it also involves the mind. **ISAIAH 26:3** says **You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are**

steadfast, because they trust in you. Wrong thinking leads to wrong feeling ... and before you know it ... your mind and heart are pulling in different directions and you are smack-dab in the middle of worry. Thoughts are extremely powerful.

Sow a thought, reap an action,
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character
Sow a character, reap a destiny!

Paul gives us details of what we ought to be thinking about as Christians:

1. FOCUS ON WHAT IS TRUE ...

Walter Cavert reported in the survey that I mentioned a few moments ago ... only 8% of what people are concerned about is legitimate. The other 92% is something that is either imaginary, never happened, or could not be controlled anyway. Satan wants us to think on things that are not true ... things that are imaginary ... things that might happen. If he can get us to think on the things that are not true ... then we worry ... and when we worry ... we don't put our trust in God.

2. FOCUS ON WHAT IS HONEST AND JUST ...

This literally means “**worthy of respect and right**”. There are many things that are not respectable, and Christians should not be thinking about those things. That might mean some types of music ... some TV shows or movies ... or even some virtual games. We should avoid anything that fills our minds with evil stuff.

It does not mean that we remain ignorant of the world's garbage ... it simply means that we don't climb into the dumpster and play with it.

3. FOCUS ON WHAT IS PURE, LOVELY, AND OF GOOD

REPORT. ... “Pure” here refers to moral purity. “Lovely” is simply things that are beautiful and attractive. “Good report” means something worth talking about. Paul's point here is that our standards that we set for our thoughts is high and noble ... not base and corrupt.

4. FOCUS ON VIRTUE AND PRAISE.” ...

If it has virtue ... it will motivate us to do better. If it is worthy of praise ... it is worth commending to others.

Christians, we cannot waste our “mind power” on thoughts that uproot us and destroy our purity. When we fill our minds with the Word of God instead of the Trash of this world ... we build in a ‘radar system’ that when a wrong thought comes through our minds, the alarm goes off. Right thinking will bring us peace and eliminate an enormous amount of worry.

I think the best way that I have ever heard this put is ... **Let the mind of the Master be the master of your mind.**

3... LIVE RIGHT (4:9)

The third thing that Paul tells us to do to be able to live a worry-free life and have joy is to live right ... you need to pray right ... think right ... and live right!

You cannot separate outward action and inward attitude. If you are thinking wrong ... eventually you are going to act wrong. BUT ... the opposite is true as well! If you are thinking right ... you are going to act right. The fact is that for us to live a worry-free life ... we have to live a right life. **ISAIAH 32:17 (NLT) ... The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever.**

If we are living a life that is not right in the eyes of God ... it makes sense that we would worry! But when we are living our lives in a righteous way ... right living ... we do not have to worry.

Paul did not just talk about Christianity ... Paul lived Christianity. That is one of the reasons that Paul did not worry in the face of a trial that could take his life. Paul believed that he **did not have to worry about anyone that could only take his life ... just the one that could take his life and soul.** And when we live right, we do not have to worry. When we are walking with God ... we will have peace ... we will have a worry-free life.

CONCLUSION:

So ... let me ask you ... are you living a worry-free life? Or are you more like that lady that was constantly worrying about a burglar breaking into her house? Are you keeping it together even if everything around you is falling apart? If not ... take a chapter out of Paul's book to the Philippians ... Pray right ... Think right and live right.