

Sermon 12-16-18 Philippians 4:4-7 Dealing with Christmas Anxiety

Dear Celebrants of Christmas:

Christmas is a wonderful time, right? But, I think we would also say Christmas time may also be a worrisome time, right?

- Will I buy the right gift for so and so?
- Will the family gatherings go smoothly without any issues surfacing?
- Will our altered routines from school or work cause any problems?
- Will I have anything to be “anxious” this Christmas season?

The Apostle Paul says to us right now: “Don’t worry about anything.”

Did Paul have any reasons to worry about anything? Well, consider the following issues Paul was facing when he wrote these words in Philippians:

- His friends in Philippi were disagreeing with each other
- His friends in Rome were causing strife in the church there
- He was in prison facing possible execution for the defense of the faith
- Yet, with all this on his mind and heart, Paul simply says: “Don’t worry...”

What is worry?

Be pulled into different directions

- in verse 6 the word “anxious” means to “be pulled into different directions.”
- our hopes pull us in one direction and our fears pull us in the opposite direction
- worry pulls us apart in different directions
- “worry” in the English language comes from the word meaning “to strangle”

Worry strangles us...it may strangle us with: headaches+++neck and back pains+++ulcers

Worry may affect our...thinking+++digestion+++coordination

From a spiritual point of view “worry” is wrong +++ a sin +++ because when I worry I am doubting God’s care and concern for me. Worry is “wrong thinking and wrong feeling” about...

- circumstances
- people
- things

Worry is the greatest thief of joy.

- Christmas is a time of joy
- We all want to have a joyous season
- But, the worries may crowd out our joy

How may I stop worrying?

- We need the Lord to secure our heart and mind
- We need the Lord’s peace which in verse 7 says “guards” our hearts and minds like a soldier would stand guard at a door to prevent anyone from entering that door

How may I get over my worries?

Remember the Lord is near

I. Remember the Lord is near vv4-5

A. Rejoice in Him (confidence)

Remember Paul was sitting in prison in Rome when he wrote these words. Yet, Paul is able to rejoice even though...

- His friends were arguing with each other
- He was facing possible death
- He most likely was deprived of basic physical needs
- Yet, Paul in the midst of all of this has an attitude of rejoicing (confidence) in the Lord

How could Paul rejoice in the midst of his miserable circumstances? How hard we find it to rejoice when things are going our way? What was Paul's secret?

HE KEPT HIS FOCUS ON GOD RATHER THAN HIS PROBLEMS

Be gentle

B. Be gentle - What does Paul mean by this?

- Be satisfied with less than one's due - Be content with one's life and circumstances

- A willingness to forgo retaliation when threatened or provoked

A gentle person will...

- Look at things from the other's person's view point
- Remember his own duties rather than what the other person does or does not do
- Will yield in matters of personal feelings and interests

What gives us reason to hope? What would make us gentle? It is KNOWING that the Lord is NEAR

God will work out all things for us

- God knows our needs
- God promises to provide for us
- God will give us what is best
- Romans 8:28 "God will work out all things for us"
- God will provide us with strength to live through our trials I Corinthians 10:13
- No matter where we are God is as close as a prayer
- No matter what we may go through God is with us and will be returning one day
- Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God."

God is saying: “In the midst of a trying circumstance or something that would cause us to worry...Wait for Me and Be Still.

How may I overcome anxious thoughts?

Remember to pray

II. Remember to pray vv6-7

A. Get alone with the Lord

I Peter 4:7 “Be clear minded so you can pray...”

When we are pulled in different directions - Go to the Lord v6...

- In worship
- With our needs
- With thanksgiving

v6 “Present your requests to God.” This carries the idea that we come before the Lord with our concerns in a spirit of...

- Adoration
- Devotion
- Worship - You are my Lord and Your ways are not always my ways...for You know best.

When we are tempted to worry may we...

When we are tempted to “worry” may we come before the Lord and...

- See the greatness and majesty of our God
- Practice the presence of God through communication with Him in prayer
- Know that the Lord is bigger than our problems and concerns
- Approach God in adoration – worship Him
- Approach God with our needs and pain

God wants to hear us with what is on our mind and hearts....

- Matthew 7:1ff Ask --- Seek --- Knock
- Hebrews 5:7 Jesus offered up prayers through cries and tears to His Father in heaven
- Romans 15:30 Paul wrote: Join with me in my struggle by praying
- Colossians 4:12 Paul speaks of fellow believer Epaphras who was always wrestling in prayer for others
- Approach God with thanks...

Ephesians 5:20 “Always giving thanks in the Name of Jesus...”

Colossians 3:15ff “Let the peace of God rule in your heart...Be thankful...”

God loves to hear us say THANK YOU - remember the story of the 10 Lepers?

Matthew 6:25-34 Do not worry about our basic needs being met...they will be met...period!

Rather than doubt God’s care and control in our lives...we are to...

Pray – Praise + Petition + Give thanks

- pray +++ praise +++ petition +++ give thanks
- Lay out before the Lord ALL that is on your mind!
- Be confident that God will hear and respond to your prayers!

B. Receive the Lord’s peace I Peter 5:7 “Cast all your anxiety on God...”

Paul is saying in verse 7 “Don’t worry about anything but pray about everything...”
How often we are prone to pray about the Big Things in life and forget to pray about the so-called “little-things”. God wants us to come to Him with everything...no matter how “little.”

Having peace is the result of going to the Lord...having a peace which guards our heart and mind.

- Paul most likely was changed to a Roman guard day and night

- Paul says the Peace of God will guard us - like a soldier standing guard over our hearts and minds

What is God's peace?

- A quiet confidence within regardless of what is going on around us on the outside
- Not a simple absence of trials but an aggressive presence of the Lord's strength
- Knowing our sins cannot condemn us

We have peace through prayer: Daniel 6:1-11; Philippians 1:2

- Offer the things that are on your mind and heart to the Lord...now
- Thank Him that He has...is...will meet all of your needs
- "You (Lord) will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast."
- "This peace of God towers far above the reach of our understanding."
- We don't need to walk around in gloom, sorrow and despair.
- This peace of God gives us that "inner contentment"

"While tears may yet be streaming down our cheeks we can smile with the inner assurance that all things must work together for our good. This peace keeps our heart steadfast so that it clings to Christ and resigns itself to whatever God ordains." H. Spafford (He lost 4 children at sea in the 1870's)