

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Be Anxious for Nothing Philippians 4:6-7 Part 1

According to Newsweek magazine 23 million Americans or in other words 12.6% of our population will suffer an attack of acute anxiety this year. You might ask, “What is acute anxiety?” Acute anxiety is often referred to as a “panic attack.” Those suffering from a panic attack will take a rather benign and harmless incident and turn it into a three-alarm fire. They might experience a simple cough and then over a period of several minutes or even several hours begin to imagine that they are dying even though there is absolutely no factual basis for that fear. Then after this terror has run its course it vanishes and the anxiety subsides.

In addition to the great number of people suffering from acute anxiety or panic attacks you can add all those suffering from chronic anxiety. Chronic anxiety is characterized by less intense reactions but of much longer duration. Those with chronic anxiety are trapped, in a sense, on Ol’ MacDonald’s farm. Rather than “here a pig, there a pig, everywhere a pig, pig” for them it is “here a fear, there a fear, everywhere a fear, fear.” Those suffering from chronic anxiety can suffer it indefinitely.

When you add all those suffering chronic anxiety together with those suffering acute anxiety you have what psychologists call the number one mental health disorder in America. In fact debilitating anxiety whether it is acute or chronic is so prevalent I would suspect that there are people attending our services this weekend who have experienced in the past or who, even now, may be experiencing in the present a disabling form of anxiety.

Hopefully the vast majority of those attending our services this weekend are not in any way disabled or have ever been disabled by anxiety. But even if this is true I know that there is not a single person here this weekend who has not at some point in time suffered from anxiety on at least a moderate level. But even a moderate level of anxiety is a terrible thing. In fact of all the joy stealers that can plague our lives, none is more nagging, more agitating, or more prevalent than this one.

This weekend we will find some help for this problem in **Philippians 4:4-9** a passage of scripture that we have been studying over these past several weeks. Let me read this passage for you. **“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! (5) Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. (6) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (8) 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, let your mind dwell on these things. (9) The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.”**

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Paul has transitioned from his efforts to gain some help for Euodia and Synteche in resolving their conflict in **Philippians 4:2-3** to a series of final exhortations in **Philippians 4:4-9** which set the stage for Paul concluding His letter to the Philippian church . The first exhortation that we have already examined was given to us by Paul in **Philippians 4:4**. What did Paul exhort the Philippian church to do? He exhorted them to **“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say rejoice.”**

He is not in this command calling us to be happy. Happiness is an attitude of satisfaction or delight based on some present circumstance. Happiness is related to happenings. Happiness is related to “happstance.” Happiness is related to “hap” which is a word that basically communicates chance. Happiness is that which you really can’t plan or program. Happiness may or may not happen. This is very different from biblical joy.

Biblical joy is a deep down confidence that all is well with our soul no matter what the circumstances might be.” When we are talking about biblical joy we are talking about something that is not related to circumstances or chance at all and that is why Paul can command us to rejoice **“always.”**

Today you might not feel particularly happy because of your present circumstances but you should, at this very moment in time, be experiencing biblical joy if you have in fact made a profession of faith in Christ.

What is the second exhortation that we considered? Let us read **Philippians 4:6 “Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men, the Lord is near.”** The word translated “forbearing spirit” (EPIEKES) in Philippians 4:5 denotes the patient bearing of abuse at the hands of others.

The philippians were suffering at the hands of people opposed to the gospel of Christ. And in light of this suffering the Philippians had several options available to them. They could either be filled with ill will toward these individuals or they could patiently bear their abuse. And if they chose to patiently bear their abuse their forbearing spirit would manifest itself in a purposed determination to treat their abusers well rather than treating their abusers badly.

We will now go on in the passage that we have been examining and consider the third exhortation in **Philippians 4:6-7**. Let me read these two verses again for you, **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** What do we learn about anxiety from Philippians 4:6-7?

We learn that we are not to be anxious about anything. Let us again read **Philippians 4:6**. How does the verse begin? **“Be anxious for nothing...”** What does Paul mean by this command? Let us begin by considering what this command does not mean. Being anxious for nothing does not mean that we will be free of all care or concern (Philippians 2:19-20).

Listen to the words of Paul in **Philippians 2:19-20 “But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.**

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(20) For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.” The word translated “concerned” in **Philippians 2:20** is the same word translated “anxious” is **Philippians 4:6**.

I am sure that there is not a single person here this weekend who does not have certain cares and concerns. Hopefully you are concerned about your appearance, your grades, your employment, your children, your health, etc. Having cares and concerns is not wrong in and of itself. Having cares and concerns is absolutely necessary to live productive and fruitful lives. Having cares and concerns will cause us to get up in the morning and will cause us to go to work and hopefully to work hard each and every day.

Unless we are extremely depressed I am quite confident that all of us in fact are full of various cares and concerns and hopefully those cares and concerns, like the cares and concerns of Paul and Timothy, are more about others rather than ourselves. But whether the concerns and the cares that make up our lives are more about us or more about others those cares and concerns will at times press down very hard upon us. This leads us to another thought about what being anxious for nothing does not mean.

Being anxious for nothing does not mean that we will not feel pressure from our cares and concerns (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Let me read for you **2 Corinthians 11:23-28**.

In **2 Corinthians 11:23-27** Paul detailed for the Corinthians many of the things that he had suffered as an apostle of Christ. Let me read this list for you, **“Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. (24) Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. (26) I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; (27) I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure** this is an incredible list of sufferings but he is not done.

After having said all of this he then goes on to say, **“Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.”** Paul’s care and concern for the churches were described as what? **A daily pressure.** He was continually thinking about what he should or should not do and so much so that he experienced many sleepless nights. In fact the pressure that he was feeling from those cares and concerns could be described as a form of suffering. How do we know this?

The daily pressure that Paul felt was not only listed among his sufferings but he lists it as the capstone of his sufferings. When Paul got a report of an ongoing problem in one of those churches that he deeply cared about it would certainly stir him up and it certainly would not make him feel good. It would not be as if he would simply say to himself, “Oh another problem at Philippi and nonchalantly proceed with his life as if nothing had happened.

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The cares and concerns that fill our lives will at times press down upon us. And when those cares and concerns begin to press down upon us we will become uncomfortable even to the point where we might begin to lose some sleep. But hopefully this feeling of discomfort even our momentary preoccupation with some specific care or concern will serve to move us in a good and positive direction. Unfortunately this is where many people get into trouble and they find themselves becoming anxious.

We now come back to the original question. What does Paul mean by the exhortation “**Be anxious for nothing?**” We know that it does not mean that we are free of cares and concerns. We know that it does not mean that we are free from any discomfort generated by those cares and concerns. But rather being anxious for nothing means though we might be concerned we are not apprehensive or fearful about the matter for which we are concerned. Working hard to address a care or concern and trying to alleviate the discomfort that we might be feeling as a result of that concern is totally different from having our stomach tied up in knots, our adrenaline levels sky high as if we are under attack from a wild animal or feeling the sense of panic about a possible bad outcome that might or might not take place.

Just recently I was feeling some pressure. My son Nathan just got engaged to Sonia Martinez. Lynn and I are very excited about their upcoming wedding which will take place at the end of the summer. The only problem was that there was not enough time to finalize any plans for where the wedding ceremony or reception would take place before they went back to college.

In order to help them out I volunteered to find a place for the wedding and the reception that would meet all the parameters that they had outlined. I did this willingly but after they drove off in their car to go back to the University of Santa Barbara I suddenly began to realize that given the parameters that they set I might have gotten myself over in my head. When I was faced with the prospect of failure in regard to something that I had committed myself too which was so very important to my son and future daughter-in-law; combined with other issues that I am presently dealing with I suddenly found myself apprehensive and fearful about the possible outcome. It was not a good feeling. I wish I could say otherwise but this would not be the truth. And as soon as I let the pressure I was feeling for making these arrangements distress me I had sinned. What does the verse say? “**Be anxious for nothing.**” At that moment in time I needed to be more like a sparrow. What do I mean by this?

Let me ask you a question. “Do sparrows worry?” “Do they worry as they as they go from fruit tree to fruit tree or from trash can to trash can?” Are sparrows so concerned about getting enough to eat that they suffer from mental and emotional distress? I believe that our conclusion would have to be what, NO!

Certainly they are instinctively being driven or pressured to find food otherwise they would not be spending so much time doing it but there is absolutely no way that those sparrows will ever need relaxation lessons even if there may be times of significant food shortages.

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Though I do not know this for a fact this does seem to be the inference from Christ's instruction to His disciples in **Matthew 6:25-26** **“For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing; (26) Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father, feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they.”**

Jesus is contrasting the anxiety filled life of mankind in general to the anxiety free life of sparrows in these two verses. If the birds, who cannot in any real sense plan ahead, have no reason to worry as they instinctively go about their many labors then we who have some basic intelligence and have chosen to follow Christ have no reason to worry in spite of any concern that we might have no matter how monumental that concern might be. This is God's standard for our lives. This is the command that we find in **Philippians 4:6**. What does it say, **“Be anxious for nothing.....”**

We need to take this command seriously. If you find yourself struggling with anxiety while preparing for an algebra test you need to confess your sin. If you find yourself struggling with anxiety about being single you need to confess your sin. If you find yourself struggling about being married you need to confess your sin. If you find yourself struggling with no having children you need to confess your sin. If you find yourself struggling with having children you need to confess your sin. If you are anxious about the possibility of losing your job you need to confess your sin. If you find yourself struggling about having the right job you need to confess your sin. If you are anxious about the possibility that your spouse is going to leave you then you need to confess your sin.

Please don't fall into the snare of Satan and lower the standard that God has set in his word. Those anxieties that you might consider no big deal today, only small potatoes, could one day turn into what psychologists might call a full blown anxiety disorder tomorrow but worse than that it could rob you of your joy and ultimately your ability to fruitfully serve the Lord. Satan would have you have us dismiss our periodic anxieties as no big deal but it is a big deal.

Anytime that we find ourselves becoming worried, apprehensive or feeling a sense of dread about any matter of this life we have fallen into the sin of worry. Worry is as much a sin as adultery, or murder, or theft. Yet believers often treat it lightly because they feel that there is nothing that they can do about it anyway. But there is something that they can do about it. This brings us to the second thing that we learn:

We learn the solution to anxiety. For many people in the medical world the solution that they offer to the problem of anxiety is medicinal. Usually various benzodiazepins such as Valium, Xanax, Activan or Klonopin are prescribed as the first level of treatment.

And many professing Christians very quickly and naively adopt this form of treatment not fully understanding or appreciating that these medications are habit forming and can impair memory and motor coordination. Rather than freeing them they can over time become more dependent upon these medications. These medications become necessary for them to face such simple everyday situations as a simple social gathering or even going to the store.

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For the people in the world this might be the best alternative available to them but for the Christian it is not.

What is the solution for the problem of anxiety? We will learn that solution next week as we continue on in our study of **Philippians 4:6**.

CONCLUSION

But whatever solution we find next week to the problem of anxiety in Philippians 4:6 that solution is rooted in the cross.