

Philippians 4:4-7

Introduction

A. We live in a “culture of anxiety”

We exist on a spectrum of non-anxiety, chronic anxiety, and acute anxiety

B. Two Images of a life

1. God’s peace will guard our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7)

a. God’s Shalom

= wholeness, flourishing existence, harmony, serenity

b. Will “Guard”

Military word used to describe a detachment of soldiers who stand guard over a city and protect it from attack.

God’s peace will “stand guard,” protecting you from attack

c. Your hearts and minds

= your whole inner life (thinking, feeling, willing)

2. The seed that is sown among thorns (Matthew 13:22)

The one who “receives the word but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke it out”

Oftentimes, we feel more like the seed being choked out and attacked by the thorns of anxiety and worry than we feel like a city being protected by God’s peace

The Passage

I. Outline of the passage

A. Three commands and one statement

1. Three commands

a. Rejoice

b. Let your gentleness be made known

c. Do not worry but pray

2. One command

a. The Lord is near

The Lord is near in time (his return could occur at any moment)

The Lord is near in relational proximity (“I am with you always”)

He is close to us, helping and guiding us

b. This reality forms the basis of each of the commands

Since this Lord is near, rejoice, be gentle, and don’t worry but pray

II. Rejoice in the Lord

A. “Always”: Rejoice all the time! In every circumstance

B. Paul’s example

Phil 1: he is in prison, waiting his trial, but still rejoicing

Acts 16:22-25: in prison with Silas in Philippi, singing hymns to God

Karl Barth: “joy a defiant ‘nevertheless’ to our circumstances”

III. Let your reasonableness be made known to all

- A. How we are to behave, come across to outsiders (especially non-Christians)
 - = A Christ-like gentleness towards people willing to bear abuse and mistreatment
- B. Jesus’ example
 - 1 Peter 2:23: When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

IV. Don’t worry about anything, pray about everything

- A. Don’t worry about anything
 - 1. Christ’s words in Matthew 6:25-34: 2 reasons not to worry
 - a. God is trustworthy so we don’t have to worry
 - Worry is connected with the fundamental sin of unbelief
 - Throughout Scripture God is saying “trust me”
 - Worry is a defiant “NO, I don’t trust you”
 - b. Worrying doesn’t help anyways
 - Irony: we think worry is going to somehow fix the problem
 - We turn it around in our minds, like a dog chewing a bone
 - But worry doesn’t help; in fact, it usually hurt
- B. Pray about everything
 - 1. The antidote to anxiety is NOT trying to make ourselves less anxious
 - The antidote is turning over these worries to God in prayer
 - 2. “prayer and supplication, requests”
 - Nothing particularly fancy or spiritual about these words
 - Language of request, asking, need
 - 3. “making known to God”
 - NOT as if God doesn’t already know these things
 - But what’s important is that we get out of the self-absorbed worry cycle and bring our concerns to the only one who can change the situation
 - 4. “In everything”
 - There is nothing too small to bring to God
 - Example: being worried about whether to go to this movie or that movie on a Friday night, or the color of the counter top

We’re embarrassed to bring small things to God, but we end up stressing over them

5. “with thanksgiving”

When you are grateful, it is difficult to be anxious

When you are anxious, it is difficult to be grateful

- a. Thanksgiving for what the Lord has done in the past (our salvation)
- b. Thanksgiving for what He’ll do in the future (eternal life)
- c. Thanksgiving for our current circumstances (they are producing character: Romans 5:3)

6. Example: Financial Difficulties

“God, I want to turn these thoughts over to you. Thank you that I have a roof over my head. Thank you that whatever happens financially, I am rich in you. Thank you that you’re using this to make me more dependent. Now, I pray for this deal to go through, and if it doesn’t, I pray you would provide means of financial resources for my family.”

C. The Promise: God’s Peace

1. Paul does NOT promise that God will change the circumstances that are causing anxiety
2. Paul does promise that God will do something in us (guard our hearts/minds)
3. “Peace which passes understanding”
 - a) It surpasses (is more effective than) our own attempts to work it out in our minds
 - b) It will guard us in a way we can’t explain by human logic

Conclusion

You may read these verses and say, “This doesn’t work. I’ve been a Christian for 30 years, and I’m still full of anxiety.”

But, have you ever really tried doing this completely?

Challenge: use anxiety as a trigger to pray. Every time you feel anxious, turn that anxiety into a prayer with thanksgiving.

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. What are your most common sources of anxiety? What one thing is giving you the most anxiety these days?
3. Discuss the following statement: "The entire Word of God is a constant exhortation to believers to stop worrying. It is everywhere forbidden to those who believe in Jesus Christ, and I think one of the most serious areas of unbelief is our failure as Christians to face the problem of worry as sin. Because that is what it is. Worry is not just something everyone does and therefore it must be all right. It is definitely labeled a sin in the scriptures, and the exhortation is everywhere: stop it! Have no anxiety about anything. I frequently have people come to me with this problem and they continually justify the sin of worry. "Look, you'll never get over this until you face it for what it is, a sin for a believer to worry. It is a sign of unbelief, and calling God a liar."
4. Have you ever tried to practically and concretely apply Philippians 4:6-7 to your life? What was your experience? What was the fruit?
5. What has been the most helpful idea or practice you have learned that has helped you with anxiety? What one piece of advice would you give a Christian who is acutely or chronically anxious?