

**True Joy - The Wisdom of Philippians**  
***Rejoice in the Lord - Freedom from Anxiety (Phil 4:4-7)***  
**7-11-10**  
**Scripture Reading - Phil 4:4-7**

Everyone struggles with anxiety to one degree or another, though some of us are more prone to it than others.

We're anxious about...

- Our kids
  - o Their health
  - o Their safety
    - Leah Kate is #1 on Jess' list
  - o Their friendships
  - o Their development
  - o Their choices
  - o Their spouse (future or current)
  - o Their salvation
    - Jay's announcement
    - His dad's tears
- Our relationships
  - o Are we good enough sons, daughters, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, and friends?
  - o Will we ever find that special someone that God wants us to marry? Will our marriage ever be what we'd hoped it be? Will our marriage even make it?
  - o Will we ever find that close friend that we've always longed to have?
  - o Will so and so ever forgive me for what I did to them? Will I ever be able forgive them for what they did to me?
- Our health
  - o We're get old
  - o We're tired
  - o We're out of shape
  - o We're over weight
  - o We're addicted
  - o We're depressed
  - o We have aches, pains, breaks, strains, surgeries
  - o Cancer, heart attacks, strokes, chronic diseases

- o And so do those we love
- Our jobs
  - o Will we ever find one we like?
  - o Will ever find one *at all*?
  - o Will we be able to keep the one we have?
  - o We don't like our boss, our coworkers, our hours, our work environment, our benefits package.
  - o How will we ever retire? When will we ever retire? What will we do then?
- Our schedules
  - o We know we're WAY too busy but nothing seems cuttable and we have no idea how to slow down.
- Our finances
  - o Will we ever get them under control?
  - o Will we ever get out of debt?
  - o Will we have enough to pay the rent, to buy groceries, to take a vacation, to retire on?
  - o Will the economy ever rebound?
- Our reputation
  - o Do people like us?
  - o Do people respect us?
  - o Do people value us?
  - o Do people want us around?
- Our stuff
  - o Our house, our car, our clothes, our yard, our toys
  - o Are they good enough?
  - o Will they last?
  - o What's wrong with them now?
  - o What about that one ☺?
- Our world
  - o Are we safe?
  - o Will our fossil fuels last?
  - o What about global warming?
  - o Will we ever get out of Iraq and Afghanistan?
  - o Will the oil spill ever be cleaned up?
- Our church
  - o *My biggest source of anxiety*
  - o Are we being faithful?
  - o Are we being obedient?

- o Are we reaching out?
- o Are people coming to Christ?
- o Are people growing in Christ?
- o Are people happy?
- o Are people connected?
- o Are we healthy?
- o Are we united?
- o Are we glorifying God?
- o Are we making a difference for Jesus in Duluth and beyond?
- o What can we do to make more of a difference, to be more effective?
- Our personal walk with God (the thing that should bring us the most peace)
  - o We know God should be first our lives but often times He's not.
  - o We know we should be reading our Bibles and praying more, but for some reason we don't.
  - o We know we should be witnessing to our neighbors, coworkers, and friends who don't know Jesus, but we're afraid.
  - o We know we should be leading our families in family devotions, but we never seem to get around to it.
  - o We know we've been struggling with the same sin for a long time, but we just can't seem to get over the hump.
  - o We know God what God is calling us to do, but we just can't seem to do it.
  - o And it causes us GREAT anxiety.
  - o We are an *anxiety ridden* people.

Most of us tend to deal with our anxiety in one of two unhealthy ways. *We either run from it, or we allow it to consume us.*

- o Runners try to get away from their anxieties by escaping into thing like: eating, sex, alcohol, and drugs, TV, movies, music, and media, garages, careers, projects, and past times, the telephone, e-mail, Facebook, and the Internet. Anything they can do to get their minds off of their problems.
- o Instead of escaping, consumers get so wrapped up in their anxieties that they can hardly function. It's

obvious that their problems are always on their minds and hearts because you will rarely hear them talk about anything else. They are constantly worried about everything and are paralyzed as a result.

- o God doesn't want us to handle our anxieties in either of these two ways. He doesn't want us to run from them, nor to be consumed by them. Through Christ there is a better way. Jesus wants to shoulder our burdens for us.
  - **Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)**  
<sup>28</sup>Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
  - **1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)**  
<sup>7</sup>Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Believe it or not, though in this lifetime the *temptation* to be anxious will always be there because we are sinful people living in a sinful, fallen, world, *in Christ we have both the tools and the power to be set free from anxiety.*

Paul reminds the Philippians of these tools and this power in today's passage.

- Paul knew that the Philippians had much to be anxious about.
  - o In addition to the normal anxiety provokers of kids, health, finances, etc., the Philippians were dealing with persecution and false teaching from outside the church and disagreement and disunity from within.
- Because the Philippians were so focused on Christ and advancing His Gospel, Paul knew that these spiritual troubles would be especially anxiety provoking for them.
- Therefore, in his closing remarks, he seeks to help the Philippians to deal with these anxieties.

#### **Philippians 4:4-7 (ESV)**

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness (or gentleness, or forbearance) be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious (or worried, or fretful) about anything, 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 understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The first tool for dealing with anxiety that Paul reminds the Philippians of in this passage, is that *it is sinful to be anxious.*

- **Philippians 4:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about *anything*,...

Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 6, which I'm sure

- **Matthew 6:25-34 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>28</sup> And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup> "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

- Now some of you might be thinking, "Wait a minute! That's NOT the same thing. Jesus is telling them not to worry about frivolous things like what they should eat, drink, and wear. Of course you shouldn't worry about stuff like that." But in Jesus' day, those things were a BIG deal.

But why is anxiety sinful? Why is it a sin to worry about stuff?  
*Because all anxiety is rooted in lack of faith.*

Think about it...

- Why are anxious about our kids falling off the swing? Because we don't *trust* that they'll hang on tight.
- Why are we anxious about a something that was said about us? Because we don't *trust* that those who heard it will be discerning and gracious, and we don't *trust* that the person who shared it truly has our best interests in mind.
- Why are we anxious about our finances? Because we don't *trust* that we'll have enough money to get the things we want or to do the things we want to do.

But for the Christian, the distrust goes even deeper...

- Why are we anxious about our kids falling off the swing? Because we don't *trust* that God will either keep them from falling or work a fall for good in both their lives and ours.
- Why are we anxious about a something that was said about us? Because we don't *trust* God to protect our reputation, to clarify what was said, and to work in the lives and hearts of others.
- Why are we anxious about our finances? Because we don't *trust* that God will provide us with the things we need.

That's why Jesus says in Matthew 6:30...

- **Matthew 6:30 (ESV)**

<sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O *you of little faith?*

All anxiety is rooted in lack of faith, and for the Christian, all anxiety is rooted in lack of faith in a loving Heavenly Father who is in absolute sovereign control of all things, who knows what we need before we ask Him, who loves us absolutely and unconditionally, who always *knows* what is best for us and always *does* what is best for us, and who *loves* to give good gifts to His children who ask Him. That's what makes it sinful.

Therefore, the first step in winning the battle against anxiety is the first step in winning the battle against any sin in your life – *recognizing and repenting of it.*

The second tool for dealing with anxiety that Paul reminds the Philippians of, is that in Christ we have SO MUCH to be thankful for.

- **Philippians 4:4-6 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

How can we *possibly* rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS and give thanks in ALL circumstances? *Because if we have Christ, we have EVERYTHING!!!*

- **Philippians 1:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

- **Philippians 3:7-8 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

- **Matthew 13:44-46 (ESV)**

<sup>44</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. <sup>45</sup> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, <sup>46</sup> who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

If you know you have everything, then you know you have nothing to worry about.

- If you know your child is strapped in tight, surrounded by four watchful adults ready to catch them, and there is three foot

thick layer foam padding beneath the swing, you're not going to be anxious about them falling out.

- o Jesus is the strap, the watchful adults, the foam padding
- If you know that what is being said about you is going to be accurately reported, with the best of intentions, to people you know love, trust, and care about you, then you're not going to be anxious about what is being said.
  - o Jesus is the accurate report, the best of intentions, the Person you know loves, trusts, and cares about you
- If you know you just won the lottery, you're not going to be anxious about your finances.
  - o Jesus is the lottery, the jackpot, the ultimate prize

Here are just a few of the things we have in Christ that should free us from anxiety.

- **Romans 8:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>There is therefore now *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- **Romans 8:9-18 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, *if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.*

- **Romans 8:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup>For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but *if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

- **Romans 8:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God *are sons of God.*

- **Romans 8:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup>*and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

- **Romans 8:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with *the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

- **Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

<sup>28</sup> *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

- **Romans 8:31-32 (NIV)**

<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to this? *If God is for us, who can be against us?* <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

- **Romans 8:35-39 (NIV)**

<sup>35</sup> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because, if we are in Christ, we have EVERYTHING, there is NOTHING we need to worry about.

The third tool for dealing with anxiety that Paul reminds the Philippians of, is that *the Lord is at hand.*

Paul was confident that Jesus would come again soon, and if you look at life from an eternal perspective, he was right. Whether Jesus had returned in Paul's lifetime, in our life time, or 1000 years from now, when viewed through the lens of eternity, His second coming is at hand. Paul mentions this throughout his letter to the Philippians.

- **Philippians 4:4-5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. *The Lord is at hand;*

- **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at *the day of Jesus Christ*.

- **Philippians 1:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless *for the day of Christ*,

- **Philippians 3:20-21 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

The fact that Jesus is coming again and could come at any time should help us not only to be reasonable, gentle, and forbearing, with everyone, as we're commanded in 4:5 but it should help us not to be anxious about anything as we're commanded in 4:6. Here's what a mean...

- A person can patiently endure A LOT when they know a break is just around the corner.
  - o A soldier can patiently endure A LOT if he knows he's about to come home.
  - o A college student can patiently endure A LOT if she knows it is her last class before she graduates.
  - o An employee can patiently endure A LOT on their last day of work if they know they are about to go on vacation.
  - o As Christians, we can patiently endure A LOT knowing that Jesus' second coming, our final redemption, and the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth is just around the corner.

So Paul gives us three tools, three truths to remember in this passage to help free us from the bondage of anxiety:

- 1) Anxiety is sin
- 2) We have much to be thankful for in Christ
- 3) The Lord is at hand.

But none of these tools will do us any good unless we plug them in to the power source of prayer.

The power for dealing with anxiety that Paul reminds the Philippians of is prayer.

- **Philippians 4:4-7 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, *but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> *pray without ceasing*, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

*The tools to fix our anxiety are the truths of God's Word, but the power to bring those truths to life in our lives is prayer.* If we want God to change our lives and to free us from anxiety, we need to ask Him to do so and to claim the promises that He has given us in His Word, *through prayer.*

Pray about my anxiety for the church.

- Confess and repent of anxiety.
- Thank God for all He's doing and has done for us.
- Thank God that He is at hand.

Finally, the end result of plugging the truths of God's Word into the power source of prayer is *a peace that surpasses all understanding in the midst of any and all circumstances.*

The result is peace.

**Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> *And*

*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Note that God does not promise to grant our requests or to change or deliver us our circumstances. He promises to give us amazing peace that will guard our hearts and minds in the midst of them. We need to trust our Heavenly Father, that that is enough.

I can remember a brother who testified to this peace time and again throughout a very difficult year in his life in which God's answer to many of his requests was no.