

PAUL'S ADMONITION TO STEADFASTNESS

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

ADEOYE, EMMANUEL (EVANG.)

OUTLINE

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Paul addresses his Philippian brothers with a series of endearing terms, showing his deep affection for them.

"My dear fellow believers, you are very dear to me, and I miss you greatly. You make me so happy, and I am very proud of you. In view of all that I have said to you, this is how you should stand firm in your life in the Lord..."

How dear you are to me, an adjective in the Greek meaning "beloved," is one of Paul's favourite words used in reference to his friends.

How proud I am of you is literally "you are my crown." This is not the word generally used for the crown (diadem) worn by a king or queen.

It refers, rather, to the crown awarded to a victor in Greek athletic games or to the wreath placed on the head of a guest at a feast. It is a symbol of victory, pride, happiness, and honor.

These words recall Paul's tribute to the church at Thessalonica (**1 Thess 2:19-20**). you are like a crown for my head." In some instances how proud I am of you! may be rendered as "I am always glad to tell people about you," or "I am always boasting about you."

If anybody had an excuse for worrying, it was the Apostle Paul. His beloved Christian friends at Philippi were disagreeing with one another, and he was not there to help them. We have no idea what Euodia and Syntyche were disputing about, but whatever it was, it was bringing division into the church.

Along with the potential division at Philippi, Paul had to face division among the believers at Rome (**Phil 1:14-17**). Added to these burdens

was the possibility of his own death! Yes, Paul had a good excuse to worry - but he did not! Instead, he took time to explain to us the secret of victory over worry.

What is worry? The Greek word translated "Anxious" (careful) in **Phil 4:6** means "to be pulled in different directions." Our hopes pull us in one direction; our fears pull us the opposite direction; and we are pulled apart! The Old English root from which we get our word "worry" means "to strangle." If you have ever really worried, you know how it does strangle a person! In fact, worry has definite physical consequences: headaches, neck pains, ulcers, even back pains. Worry affects our thinking, our digestion, and even our coordination.

From the spiritual point of view, worry is wrong thinking (the mind) and wrong feeling (the heart) about circumstances, people, and things. Worry is the greatest thief of joy.

It is not enough for us, however, to tell ourselves to "quit worrying" because that will never capture the thief. Worry is an "inside job," and it takes more than good intentions to get the victory. The antidote to worry is the secure mind. - *"And the peace of God ... shall keep [garrison, guard Like a soldier] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:7).*

When you have the secure mind, the peace of God guards you (**Phil 4:7**) and the God of peace guides you (**Phil 4:9**). With that kind of protection - why worry?

If we are to conquer worry and experience the secure mind, we must meet the conditions that God has laid down. There are three: right praying (**Phil 4:6-7**), right thinking (**Phil 4:8**), and right living (**Phil 4:9**). Right Praying (**Phil. 4:6-7**)

Paul does not write, "Pray about it!" He is too wise to do that. He uses three different words to describe "right praying": prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving. Right praying" involves all three. The word prayer is the general word for making requests known to the Lord. It carries the idea of adoration, devotion, and worship. Whenever we find ourselves worrying, our first action ought to be to get alone with God and worship Him

"Adoration is what is needed. We must see the greatness and majesty of God! We must realize that He is big enough to solve our problems. Too often we rush into His presence and hastily tell Him our needs, when we ought to approach His throne calmly and in deepest reverence. The first step in "right praying" is adoration.

The second is supplication, an earnest sharing of our needs and problems. There is no place for half-hearted, insincere prayer! While we know we are not heard for our "much speaking" (**Matt 6:7-8**), still we realize that our Father wants us to be earnest in our asking (**Matt 7:1-11**). This is the way Jesus prayed in the Garden (**Heb 5:7**), and while His closest disciples were sleeping, Jesus was sweating great drops of blood! Supplication is not a matter of carnal energy but of spiritual intensity (**Rom 15:30; Col 4:12**).

After adoration and supplication comes appreciation, giving thanks to God (see **Eph 5:20; Col 3:15-17**). Certainly the Father enjoys hearing His children say, "Thank You!" When Jesus healed ten lepers, only one of the ten returned to give thanks (**Luke 17:11-19**), and we wonder if the percentage is any higher today. We are eager to ask but slow to appreciate.

You will note that "right praying" is not something every Christian can do immediately, because "right praying" depends on the right kind of mind. This is why Paul's formula for peace is found at the end of Philippians and not at the beginning.

If we have the single mind of Phil 1 then we can give adoration. (How can a double-minded person ever praise God?) If we have the

submissive mind of Phil 2, we can come with supplication. (Would a person with a proud mind ask God for something?) If we have the spiritual mind of Phil 3 we can show our appreciation. (A worldly minded person would not know that God had given him anything to appreciate!) In other words, we must practice **Phil 1; 2**, and 3 if we are going to experience the secure mind of **Phil 4**.

Paul counsels us to take "everything to God in prayer." "Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything!" is his admonition. We are prone to pray about the "big things" in life and forget to pray about the so-called "little things" - until they grow and become big things! Talking to God about everything that concerns us and Him is the first step toward victory over worry.

The result is that the "peace of God" guards the heart and the mind. You will remember that Paul was chained to a Roman soldier, guarded day and night. In like manner, "the peace of God" stands guard over the two areas that create worry - the heart (wrong feeling) and the mind (wrong thinking).

When we give our hearts to Christ in salvation, we experience "peace with God" (**Rom 5:1**); but the "peace of God" takes us a step farther into His blessings. This

does not mean the absence of trials on the outside, but it does mean a quiet confidence within, regardless of circumstances, people, or things. Daniel gives us a wonderful illustration of peace through prayer. When the king announced that none of his subjects was to pray to anyone except the king, Daniel went to his room, opened his windows, and prayed as before (**Dan 6:1-10**). Note how Daniel prayed.

He "*prayed, and gave thanks before his God*" (**Dan 6:10**) and he made supplication (**Dan 6:11**). Prayer - supplication - thanksgiving! And the result was perfect peace in the midst of difficulty! Daniel was able to spend the night with the lions in perfect peace, while the king in his palace could not sleep (**Dan 6:18**).

The first condition for the secure mind and victory over worry is right praying. Right Thinking (**Phil. 4:8**)

PAUL SPELLS OUT IN DETAILS THE THINGS WE OUGHT TO THINK ABOUT AS CHRISTIANS WHATEVER IS TRUE.

Dr. Walter Cavert reported a survey on worry that indicated that only 8 percent of the things people worried about were legitimate matters of concern! The other 92 percent were either imaginary, never happened, or involved matters over which the people had

no control anyway. Satan is the liar (**John 8:44**),

and he wants to corrupt our minds with his lies (**2 Cor 11:3**). "*Yea, hath God said?*" is the way he approaches us, just as he approached Eve (**Gen 3:1ff**). The Holy Spirit controls our minds through truth (**John 17:17; 1 John 5:6**), but the devil tries to control them through lies. Whenever we believe a lie, Satan takes over!

WHATEVER IS HONEST AND JUST

This means "worthy of respect and right." There are many things that are not respectable, and Christians should not think about these things. This does not mean we hide our heads in the sand and avoid what is unpleasant and displeasing, but it does mean we do not focus our attention on dishonorable things and permit them to control our thoughts.

WHATEVER IS PURE, LOVELY, AND OF GOOD REPORT

"Pure" probably refers to moral purity, since the people then, as now, were constantly attacked by temptations to sexual impurity (**Eph 4:17-24; 5:8-12**). "Lovely" means "beautiful, attractive." "Of good report" means "worth talking about, appealing." The believer must major on the high and noble thoughts, not the base thoughts of this corrupt world.

WHATEVER POSSESSES VIRTUE AND PRAISE

If it has virtue, it will motivate us to do better; and if it has praise, it is worth commending to others. No Christian can afford to waste "mind power" on thoughts that tear him down or that would tear others down if these thoughts were shared.

If you will compare this list to David's description of the Word of God in **Ps 19:7-9**, you will see a parallel.

The Christian who fills his heart and mind with God's Word will have a "built-in radar" for detecting wrong thoughts. "Great peace have they which love Thy Law" (**Ps 119:165**). Right thinking is the result of daily meditation on the Word of God.

RIGHT LIVING (**PHIL. 4:9**)

You cannot separate outward action and inward attitude. Sin always results in unrest (unless the conscience is seared), and purity ought to result in peace. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and peace" (**Isa 32:17**).

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable" (**James 3:17**). Right living is a necessary condition for experiencing the peace of God. Paul balances four activities: "learned

and received" and "heard and seen." It is one thing to learn a truth, but quite another to receive it inwardly and make it a part of our inner man (see **1 Thess 2:13**).

Facts in the head are not enough; we must also have truths in the heart. In Paul's ministry, he not only taught the Word but also lived it so that His listeners could see the truth in his life. Paul's experience ought to be our experience. We must learn the Word, receive it, hear it, and do it. "*But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only*" (**James 1:22**).

The peace of God" is one test of whether or not we are in the will of God. "*Let the peace that Christ can give keep on acting as umpire in your hearts*" (**Col 3:15**). If we are walking with the Lord, then the peace of God and the God of peace exercise their influence over our hearts. Whenever we disobey, we lose that peace and we know we have done something wrong. God's peace is the umpire" that calls us "out"!

Right praying, right thinking, and right living: these are the conditions for having the secure mind and victory over worry. As **Phil 4** is the "*peace chapter*" of the New Testament, James 4 is the "*war chapter*." It begins with a question: "*From whence come wars and fighting among you?*"

James explains the causes of war: wrong praying ("*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss,*" **James 4:3**), wrong thinking ("*purify your hearts, ye double-minded,*" **James 4:8**), and wrong living ("*know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?*" **James 4:4**).

There is no middle ground. Either we yield heart and mind to the Spirit of God and practice right praying, thinking, and living; or we yield to the flesh and find ourselves torn apart by worry.

There is no need to worry! And, worry is a sin! (Have you read **Matt 6:24-34** lately?) With the peace of

God to guard us and the God of peace to guide us - why worry?

Put into practice is often rendered simply as "do," The words from me are not in the Greek, but are understood from the phrase "in me"

Both from my words and from my actions is another way of saying "what you heard me say and what you saw me do." And the God who gives us peace will be with you

In the Bible the emphasis is not upon the qualities of God but upon his acts. In this case, God is the one who gives us peace **Rom 15:33; 16:20; 1 Thess 5:23.**

CONCLUSION

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