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Be Anxious for Nothing Philippians 4:6-7 Part 2

Everyone has suffered from anxiety to some degree or another. And sometimes it can be quite troublesome. When it becomes troublesome many people will seek out help. Sometimes this help is found in drugs which I alluded to last week. At other times this help is found in various therapies offered by most mental health professionals such as “cognitive restructuring”, “relaxation training” or “distraction.”

Cognitive restructuring is used to help a person who is suffering from anxiety to decrease the perception of danger by attempting to reshape the way the person is thinking about that danger.

Relaxation therapy is used to help a person who is very anxious to relax mentally and physically. Techniques that are used to accomplish this include controlled breathing, imagery and progressive muscle relaxation. The theory behind this approach is simple. It is very difficult for the body and the mind to be relaxed and anxious at the same time.

Distraction therapy is used to focus your attention away from the thoughts or physical sensations that contribute to the anxiety to something else.

Can these approaches actually help someone? And the answer would have to be, Yes! They can actually help. Those in the world who are suffering from anxiety can actually go to a mental health professional take some drugs or perhaps engage in some of these therapies and most likely find some degree of relief.

If what I just shared with you is true should we as the disciples of Christ start lining up at the doors of these well meaning counselors and pay the \$75 to \$100 per hour for their help in overcoming anxiety? And I believe that the answer to this question is, NO! And why is this? We will find the answer to this question as we continue our study of **Philippians 4:4-9**.

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.”**

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 .

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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.”**

Biblical joy is a deep down confidence that all is well with our soul no matter what the circumstances might be.” When we talk about biblical joy we are talking about something that is not related to circumstances 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 was the second exhortation that we considered? Let us read **Philippians 4:5 “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.

What was the third exhortation that we find in **Philippians 4:4-9**? The third exhortation is **“Be anxious for nothing”**. Let me read for you **Philippians 4:6-7 “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.”** From these two verses we can learn a great deal about anxiety. What do we learn about anxiety from Philippians 4:6-7?

It just so happens that the third exhortation that we find in **Philippians 4:4-9** is the first thing that we learn about anxiety in **Philippians 4:6-7**.

We learn that we are to be anxious for nothing. Because God has commanded us to be anxious for nothing we know that it is quite possible for us as the disciples of Christ to be anxiety free. Because God has commanded us to be anxious for nothing there should not be anything in our lives that should cause us to be fearful or apprehensive. Because God has commanded us to be anxious for nothing there should not be anything in our lives that would produce in us a sense of dread. Hopefully based on the clear teaching of God’s Word you believe this.

But how does God want us to accomplish this high standard that He has set? This leads us to the second thing that we learn about anxiety in **Philippians 4:6-7**. Let us read these two verses one more time **“Be anxious for nothing but give yourself up to medication and every possible psychological ploy known to man (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”** Is this what it says? And the answer would be, NO!

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What does it say? **“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 God’s solution to anxiety is prayer. Paul uses three different words for prayer in **Philippians 4:6** all of them synonyms. The accumulation of these three synonyms for prayer is to emphasize it’s importance.

We find the first reference to prayer in the phrase **“.... but in everything by prayer (PROSEUCHE).”**

We find the second reference to prayer in the next phrase **“But in everything by prayer and supplication (DEESIS).....”**

And immediately following this we find the third reference to prayer. What does it say? **“But in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God (AITEMA)”**

As we read **Philippians 4:6** and observe these three different synonyms no one should miss the point that God’s solution to anxiety is prayer. Now let me be very clear about something. There are millions of people around the world today who will be talking at God but not with God. Just because a person may think that His words are being positively received by God does not mean that they are.

In order to enjoy effectual prayer it requires a personal relationship with Christ (John 14:6). What does **John 14:6** say, **“Jesus said to Him (Thomas), ‘I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.’** If we truly want our words to be positively received by God it begins by establishing a personal relationship with Him through His Son. What else does God require from those people who are seeking a positive reception from Him in prayer?

In order to enjoy effectual prayer it also requires that there is no unconfessed sin in our lives (Psalms 66:18). Let me read for you **Psalms 66:18 “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”** If we truly want to be heard by God it does not only mean that we must come to Christ and embrace Him as our Lord and Savior but we must continue to give Him His rightful place in our lives. And of course this means that we will be seeking to live our lives for Him rather than for ourselves.

If these two conditions are met then we can boldly come before His throne of grace and know that we can find grace to help in the time of our need. Even the grace to be anxious for nothing? And the answer is yes!!

Now let me ask you a question, if this is true that a genuine believer who is sincerely seeking to live for the Lord can have an effectual prayer life and can in fact bring their cares and concerns to the Lord can they still struggle with being anxious?

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And the answer is, Yes! There are several reasons why believers who are in a position to pray effectively may still at times find themselves anxious.

Let us consider those reasons. The first reason is that we need to come into God's presence with those cares if we are going to be free of our anxiety (James 4:2). What does **James 4:2** tell us **“you do not have because you do not ask.”**

The question has often been raised, why is it necessary to pray if God knows our needs? The complete answer may not be given in the Word of God, but it is clear that God expects His children to pray and to present in detail the needs of their lives. It is also clear that the gracious provision of God is sometimes withheld because of a failure on the part of the believer to come to Him faithfully in prayer. Don't think simply because you are a Christian and you believe that you are seeking to live for the Lord that you will be free of anxious thoughts if you do not take every anxiety whether big or small to the Lord in prayer. What does the passage say, **“Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication.....”** You might say, “If I did this that would require me getting serious about prayer.” And that is exactly right.

How often do you pray? I would hope that your answer would be, “I pray a lot.” If there were no other motivating factor other than our desire to bring all of cares and concerns to the Lord so that we might be free of anxiety; that one motivating factor all by itself should draw us into God's presence continually.

If you are here this morning and you are a believer and you know that you are sincerely seeking to live your life fully and completely for the Lord but you are anxious about something ask yourself this question. “Have I taken this care or concern to the Lord in prayer?” If your answer is “no” then you should be aware that your suffering is totally unnecessary. The solution for your anxiety is simply a prayer away. This thought was captured very well in the words of a very old hymn **“Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain, we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.”**

If we fail to pray about our cares and concerns then of course we can be anxious even if we are a true Christian and truly desire to live for Him. But this is not the only reason why a true believer and a person who is seeking to live for the Lord might experience anxiety. What is another reason?

The second reason is that we must leave those cares with Him if we are going to be free from our anxiety (1 Peter 5:7). What does **1 Peter 5:7** say **“Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because he cares for you.”**

Some Christians go into God's presence with their particular concern and they verbalize a lot of wonderful things but unless they are able to trust him with their anxiety and demonstrate that trust by casting their cares upon Him there will be no relief from their anxiousness.

But if we are able by faith to cast our cares upon Him believing that in fact He does care for us and that He is perfectly able and willing to manage those cares on our behalf what would be the appropriate response on our part toward Him. Thanksgiving! And that is exactly what we see in this verse.

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Let us go back to the verse and read it one more time. What does it say? **“Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”** What is praying with thanksgiving dependent upon?

Being able to pray and cast our cares upon the Lord with thanksgiving is dependent upon us believing that He is both able and willing to bring about the perfect outcome.

Let me ask you a question. How can a true born again Christian who is seeking to live for the Lord continue to be anxious if they have truly turned all their anxiety over to the Lord and are trusting Him for the perfect outcome? The answer is it can't be done. What is God's solution to anxiety or even the threat of it? Prayer. Do not discount the power of prayer.

Several months ago I took a blood test that indicated a high PSA level which is a potential marker for prostate cancer. I have now repeated this test three times and my levels have continued to be high. I now have a biopsy scheduled for February 4th.

Am I concerned about this? Of course. Has this concern put some pressure on my life? Of course. If I did not feel the pressure of this I would not have had three blood tests, met with a urologist and scheduled a biopsy for February 4th.

Is it possible that I might become fearful or apprehensive about my present physical state and this upcoming biopsy? Of course. If the biopsy comes back negative for cancer there is no problem. But if it comes back positive for cancer then it will certainly have an impact on my life, the life of my family and this church depending upon the type and stage of the cancer.

Under these circumstances I believe that it would not be too unusual for people in the world to perhaps become apprehensive. But for the Christian this should not be an option. Why? What does God expect from us? What is the standard that he has given us in Philippians 4:6? “Be anxious for nothing.”

I don't want to be anxious. I don't want to be apprehensive. I don't want to be fearful. I don't want to have a sense of dread. I believe that it is sin. I believe that it would displease the Lord. So what is the solution to the problem of anxiety or even the threat of that problem? Those who are of the world or who have bought into the message of the world will give a totally different answer than the one I gave you this morning. But the answer that I have given you this morning should be the answer that every disciple of Christ should give. The solution to the problem of anxiety is prayer. And this is what I have chosen to do.

And what is my prayer? I am praying that my biopsy might be negative, that is my request. Will He grant me a positive answer to this request? I don't know. But I do know the Lord and I know that I can trust Him with my cares and concerns and therefore there is absolutely no reason for me to be fearful or anxious about whatever comes and I'm not anxious.

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CONCLUSION

As disciples of Christ we have a choice when it comes to dealing with our anxieties. We can turn to the world and their proposed solutions or we can turn to prayer.