

Monday, March 30, 2020

Turn off the outside “noise” for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God’s Word.  
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9 (TNIV)

<sup>6</sup> Do not be **anxious** about *anything*,  
but in **every** situation,  
by **prayer** and **petition**,  
with **thanksgiving**,  
present your requests to God.

<sup>7</sup> And **the peace of God**,  
which transcends all understanding,  
**will guard your hearts and your minds**  
in Christ Jesus.

— PART 3 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

*“Do not be **anxious**...” — For me, Paul’s advice here is easier said than done. But “**assurance that ‘the Lord is near’** [v. 5b] **also encourages Christians to stop being anxious.** The present tense prohibition, ‘Do not be anxious,’ indicates that **the readers must stop what they are habitually doing.** . . . Paul understands that **anxious thoughts naturally multiply in times of trouble.** But he calls for his friends to **make a concerted effort to stop their obsession with worrying.**”*

G. WALTER HANSEN, *The Letter to the Philippians* (Pillar NTC)

*“Do not be **anxious about anything**” — We might be tempted to think that Paul sounds a little extreme here when he adds “**about anything**”! But we have to remember that “Paul’s whole existence was on the bubble; danger was everywhere. Few things were going right for him, humanly speaking. So understand that the apostle’s command came with feeling. In fact, he literally declared, ‘stop worrying about anything!’ — which assumes that the Philippians were anxiously wringing their hands. Indeed, as residents of Philippi they had more things to worry about than we do — poverty, hunger, ostracism, interlopers, agents provocateurs, heretics, and...very Roman [authorities].”*

R. KENT HUGHES, *Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon: The Fellowship of the Gospel & the Supremacy of Christ*

*“but in **every situation**” — this suggests that “**in all the details and circumstances of life**” (G. Fee) — **including the difficult ones we are going through right now** — any of us who have a deep confidence in God’s love, presence and power will naturally share their challenging circumstances and concerns with God in prayer.*

“by **prayer** and **petition**, with **thanksgiving**, present your requests to God” — when my prayers begin to focus on **petitions**, it’s a barometer that I’ve begun treating God as a magic genie, or as Santa Claus. The antidote for my narcissism and self-centeredness is to remember to include **thanksgiving** as part of my prayers! Gordon Fee notes that “**the heart of these exhortations reflects the threefold expression of Jewish piety — rejoicing in the Lord, prayer, and thanksgiving — which are basic to the Psalter: “the righteous rejoice in the Lord” (Ps 64:10; 97:12) as they “come before him with thanksgiving” (Ps 95:2; 100:4) to “pray” in his “sanctuary” (Ps 61:1-4; 84:1-8). Paul already expressed them in this way, and in this order, in his earliest extant letter as God’s will for his people in Christ Jesus [1 Thess. 5:16-18]...**”  
GORDON D. FEE, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT)

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So Father, we confess that we are often anxious about almost **everything**,  
and often forget to pray about **anything**.

Instead, we follow the motto, “**Why Pray When You Can Worry?**”

We also confess that sometimes our “prayers” are limited to long lists of **petitions**, requests, suggestions, “wish lists,” and demands...

and further confess that we rarely offer **any**  
**thanksgiving** or **gratitude** or **praise**  
to our good and generous God **at all!**

So we cry out, in alignment with Paul the Prisoner,

“**Please help us to stop being so anxious** about **everything**,  
but instead to present our requests to God in **every** situation,  
by **prayer** and **petition** —  
and with a healthy dose of **gratitude** and **praise** and **thanksgiving!** —

*to “shape our worries into prayers,  
and let God know our concerns.”*  
**And we ask that we would learn to**  
*“let Christ displace worry at the center of our lives”!*

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May God’s serenity and peace be poured out on you today,

Pastor Doug

P.S. We would love to hear from you! How are you doing right now? And we would love to pray for you! Email us at [info@bethanyonline.net](mailto:info@bethanyonline.net)

P.P.S. Keep checking this page — we will try to post fresh encouragement **every day** during this crisis!

P.P.P.S. And watch our **LIVE-STREAM Worship Service** this coming Sunday at 10:30 a.m. for more encouragement.