

into submission to the Divine will” (Sermons Preached at Brighton, 649). We need to pray until our prayer makes us forget our own wish and merge it in God’s will.

4. One final way to defeat anxiety is Right Living.

In verse 9 Paul says, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” Many of us spend too much time stewing and not enough doing. Paul knew that one key to peace is to do, to put into practice the principles of God’s word.

A little girl’s brother built a trap to catch birds. She loved birds and was worried about what would happen to them. So she prayed that God would not let her brother catch any birds in his trap. Then she went out, kicked the trap, and broke it! The secret of dealing with worry is often doing something about it. If you worry about something, if you struggle with any anxiety, get involved in any volunteer works in the community or several ministries at church. Have a time for exercise or a hobby. Come to church regularly and listen to God’s words and pray. When we are walking with God, living and behaving in ways that please God, we experience the peace God promises. But when we are not walking with God, when our actions are sinful, we lose that peace.

This morning, Paul is saying some words for us who are struggling with worries. Agree with each other in the Lord. Think whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. And rejoice in the Lord. Present your requests to God. Put whatever you learned into practice. These are Paul’s words and principles for worriers. When we put these words into our practice, the God of peace will be with us now and always. Amen.

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Philippians (11): A Word for the Worrier

Philippians 4:1-9

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Today many people are enslaved by or addicted to a number of sinful behaviors such as drugs, alcohol, gambling or sexual addictions. Other people are also addicted to shopping, chocolate, internet (facebook, games, snap chat), and so on. But there is another addiction that all of us wrestle with each and every day. It is uncontrollable worry. All of us struggle with worry. We worry about our kids. We worry about our bills. We worry about our health. I worry about my sermons every week. All of us worry!

At first glance worry doesn’t seem all that harmful. But it has the power to suppress our joy and increase our stress. It is the most efficient thief of joy and freedom. The word ‘worry’ comes from the German word ‘*wordwürgen*’ which means to strangle or to choke. Our worries choke the life out of us. In today’s text Paul cites four principles that will help us to defeat the worry habit.

1. First, we must have Right Relationships.

One of our biggest sources of anxiety is rocky relationships with others. In the church in Philippi, there were apparently two women who were not in right relationship with one another. And their quarrel was destroying the peace of the entire church. Paul urges these women to put aside their partisan quarrel and cultivate a spirit of gentleness and kindness toward each other. Their names were Euodia and Syntyche. Verse 2 is the only time they are mentioned in all of Scripture. Paul says, “*I plead with Euodia and Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord...I beg them to get along!*” Think about it. Euodia and Syntyche’s entire lives have been summed up by this one verse, which is pretty tragic. I would be very embarrassed if I were in their shoes. It makes us think, if our lives were to be summed up in one sentence, what would it be?

I don't know what Euodia and Syntyche quarreled about. But many Christians tend to be like these two women. We fight and argue over lots of things. And sadly enough the things we quarrel about are often things that are not important. Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to be of one mind, to agree with each other in the Lord. It is often very tough to get along. Many times agreeing with one another is so difficult that it requires supernatural strength. And so Paul urges these two ladies to tap into that power source and agree in the Lord. Paul is saying that if we want to experience peace, we need to remember that Jesus is the power source behind our ability to be in right relationships with one another.

2. The second principle is Right Thinking.

An old poem says: *Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.* Proverbs 4:23 says, *"We must be careful what we think, because our thoughts run our life."*

In verse 8 Paul says we should think about things that are true. In 2006 Dr. Walter Cavert did a study of the things we worry about. He discovered that: 40% -- things that will never happen; 30% -- things about the past that can't be changed; 12% -- things about criticism by others, mostly untrue; 10% -- about health, which gets worse with stress; 8% -- about real problems that will be faced. In other words, 92% of our worry is over things that won't happen or things we can't change. Take a look at the above list. So if you're going to worry about something, make sure it is true.

In verse 4, Paul infers that we should fill our minds with optimistic thoughts, things that bring us joy. Paul says, *"Rejoice! And again I say rejoice!"* In this verse the word 'rejoice' is in the imperative form. It is a command. So, to ignore this directive is disobedience. Attitude is a choice. An optimistic spirit can be and should be cultivated. So, right thinking involves choosing the right attitude. In this text we are commanded to replace worry with joy and to choose to look at the bright side, the sunny side of life.

How can we have joy? How can we practice for joy? Loosen up and find something to laugh about. Stop reading only the grim sections of the newspaper. Watch less television and start reading more books that bring a smile instead of a frown. Feed your mind more uplifting thought food. Surround yourself with optimistic people, Christian friends who look at life through Christ's eyes. Have fun and laugh together.

All this (optimistic thought and rejoicing) is not a naive behavior for the believer. It's not ignoring the bad in the world. It is simply remembering that God is in control. We can rest and laugh and be joyful with the knowledge, the faith that God is in control.

3. Third principle to defeat worry is Right Praying.

In verses 6-7 Paul says, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God...and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* In these verses Paul tells about the basic aspects of prayer: petition and thanksgiving. A petition is asking God to help with our needs or those of others. Our prayer requests are petitions. Thanksgiving involves praising God for God's aid. It is to find what we already have and to realize how we are blessed during praying. And right praying involves petition and thanksgiving. As Christians we must allow anxiety to become a cue for prayer. We must let our anxieties and worries become a cue for us to run into God's presence. Paul advises us to pray about everything, big and small. When we do all this, when we pray right, Paul says, *"the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds."* Therefore, prayer is power!

The main reason prayer helps is not that our requests are granted, but that by praying we spend time with God and in that relationship we are changed. When we pray, we cease being worriers and become trusters. Frederick W. Robertson, a 19th century preacher, writes, *"The object of prayer is not the success of its petition nor is its rejection a proof of failure. All prayer is to change the human will*