

Worry is a Symptom

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

The beginning of the above verse can be said to say: “Do not be anxious about anything”, the phrase “careful for nothing” here means, “Worry about nothing”. It is the sense of something that bothers you that you cannot get out of your mind. This situation will dominate our thought process and causes us to worry.

“Nothing is a very interesting word. If you have something, it's not nothing—that is not correct grammar, but it is an accurate statement. Nothing is nothing, and you are to worry about nothing. Does this mean we are to look at life through rose-colored glasses, that we are not to face reality? Are we to believe that sin is not real, that sickness is not real, that problems are not real? Are we to ignore these things? No. Paul says that we are to worry about nothing because we are to pray about everything. Nothing is the most exclusive word in the English language. It leaves out everything. “Worry about nothing.” I confess that this is a commandment I sometimes break—I worry.” J Vernon McGee

A verse right before this says: **Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.** The point has been made here that we should rejoice always. How can we rejoice about everything? What about the things that seem to be out of control and not going the way we want? These things bother us and how can we not give much thought to them? The answer also is in verse six, it is because we realize that God is in control (we say it but do we really believe it) and we can pray our seemingly problems to Him. I say seemingly because God views our problems from a different perspective. Sometimes happenings that we think are big problems will turn out to really be blessings from God. Anytime we must exercise our faith it causes us to grow in our faith.

It is hard to exercise our body, the muscles hurt, it is hard to get enough air, the joints get sore, but the reward is a stronger body. Sometimes it is hard to exercise our faith, the emotions run wild, the thoughts may tend to worry, we might even feel bad physically, but the reward is stronger faith, better study of the promises of God and a more fruitful prayer life. If we will stay faithful and work through faith in God.

1. Worry is Just the Symptom

A. Seven reasons why worry stops us:

- It wastes time that could be spent on solutions
- It focuses on the problem, not the solution.
- It causes us to assume responsibility that belongs to God.
- It paralyzes us with fear and makes us ineffective.
- It removes our joy.
- It drains our energy.
- It keeps us sidetracked from God's will.

B. How we analyze things is based upon how we start our thinking. A good example is a belief in evolution. One who fully believes evolution begins with a belief that there is no God that can create the things we know and see. In other words, their solving the problem of explaining how things came to be by observation was biased from the beginning, because the person didn't believe there was a God in the first place. From that point their search was biased upon excluding anything that pointed to a creator's design.

C. The same thing is in play when we allow worry and negative thinking to consume our life. Is our search for help from God biased with unbelief that God could Help or is willing to help? How did we start out with our thinking? If we are honest with ourselves we most likely had problems with our faith in God's plan before any of these new things happened. Over time we just added to the list of things we were disappointed with. Nothing was resolved in our mind, and we quickly resurrected our past disappointments as each new

disappointment appeared. This then leads to worry and fear as our list of disappointments gets longer and we find new things to worry about. Just like the atheist who dismisses the fact of God, we dismiss getting help from God.

2. Prayer is the Solution

- A. God's solution is prayer. Instead of allowing worry to overwhelm us, He says pray for His help. God doesn't expect us to be completely sufficient in working through our problems. God has set up a need for trust and help from Him, for us to be able to get things done. The very act of prayer is demonstrating to God that you trust Him. You took the time to pray about the things that troubles you. That is saying to God: "God, you have the answer" which is faith demonstrated by our action of praying.
- B. Job had a series of things happen in secession that overwhelmed him. Job said: **Job 3:25 For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.** Job later after the testing was over still prayed to God. **Job 42:2-3 I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. 3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.** He tells God "thou canst do everything" and admits that he "understood not" the purpose for the things that came upon him. Through all the difficulties Job maintained his faith in God and never turned away from Him. Sure he went through distress at his loss and his lack of understanding of why these things happened. But he never lost his trust in God. We have not lost nearly as much as Job did, can we say that we still trust God?
- C. The Bible records God's people in victory, and also in times of despair. God never promised that life on this earth would be trouble free. In fact He mentions that there will be troubles. **Psa 88:3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.**

The apostle Paul had many troubles after he was saved. **2Cor 11:23-27 Are they ministers of Christ? ...I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.**

What most demonstrated his continued faith in God was the fact that after the beatings, after the shipwreck, after the weariness, he kept serving God. Freedom from pain is not the measure of God's love the true measure is the support God gives in spite of the pain.

The true measure of our trust in God is: Did we start to rebound after the initial shock or did we stay down and negative in our thinking? Everyone will have difficulties but how long does it take for us to turn to God? Do we pray immediately when difficulties come or do we stew a while and pray later. A return to a focus upon God's will shows that we truly put our faith in Him.

1Tim 4:10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

3. Trials Bring Us Closer to God (if we let it happen)

- A. *"In trial and weakness and trouble, He seeks to bring us low, until we learn that His grace is all, and to take pleasure in the very thing that brings us and keeps us low. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. His presence filling and satisfying our emptiness becomes the secret of humility that need never fail."*—Humility: The Beauty of Holiness," Andrew Murray
- B. "Vance Havner told a story about an elderly lady who was greatly disturbed by her many troubles—both real and imaginary. Finally, someone in her family tactfully told her, *"Grandma, we've done all we can for you.*

You'll just have to trust God for the rest." A look of absolute despair spread over her face as she replied, *"Oh dear, has it come to that?"* Havner commented, "It always comes to that, so we might as well begin with that!"

- C. Paul had the thorn in the flesh that made his life seem harder. He prayed three times for its removal but God answered: **2Cor 12:9 And he said unto me, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness". Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.** The word "Glory" here means boast or joy. Paul then took Joy in his infirmity because it allowed the power of God to be better demonstrated in him.
- D. Do we accept our infirmities that remain even though we pray for them to be removed? Do we like Paul accept the fact that God wants the best for us and He can make even a problem turn out to be a blessing? The most important thing to Paul was that he was getting closer to God with his problems. Not in spite of his problems but even through his problems. That makes a great difference and is the attitude God is looking for.
- E. *"I visited one who was ill in bed; and, after having buried seven of her family in six months, had just heard that the eighth, her beloved husband, was cast away at sea. I asked, "Do not you fret at any of those things?" She said, with a lovely smile upon her pale cheek, "O, no! How can I fret at anything which is the will of God? Let Him take all besides: He has given me Himself. I love, I praise Him every moment."*

Source: John Wesley's Journal, April 21, 1764

We must trust Christ today. Our worry cannot change facts nor will it offer solutions, it just leads to fear.