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**“Anxiety’s Antidote”**  
**Philippians 4:4-7**  
**Pastor Timothy Song**  
**November 8, 2020**

**(Philippians 4:4-7)**

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <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.

Core Idea: The nearness of God calls for rejoicing and “no anxiety”. But when we are anxious, the peace of God is promised when we go to Him in prayer.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Good afternoon, church. We are in a four-part sermon series on fear and worry. Two weeks ago, Pastor Peter preached on misplaced fears or fearing the wrong things. Last week, Pastor Woohyun preached on how worry takes over your mind, heart, and ambition. And the only way to combat worry is to meditate on the truth about God and receive His promises as true for us today. You can go back and listen to those sermons found on our website. Today, we’ll be looking at the antidote for anxiety. So, if you have your Bibles, please turn to Philippians 4:4-7. And let’s get right into it. Please follow along as I read:

**[Philippians 4:4-7]**

This is the word of God. This passage is the first set of Paul’s final exhortations to the church in Philippi. And in these four verses, we see commands that are given. One of them is: DO NOT BE ANXIOUS. Before trying to understand what it means NOT to be anxious, and before we can get to the antidote for anxiety, we need to define it first.

Now, there is a positive meaning of anxiety as well as a negative meaning. For example, Philippians 2:20-21 says, “I [Paul] have no one like him [Timothy], who will show genuine CONCERN [same Greek word as anxious] for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” Timothy is the model of being genuinely anxious, or concerned, for the welfare of others and the interests of Jesus Christ. And that’s a good thing!

When a member of our church is in need, we offer help. When we hear of someone who is ill or even a death, we rally together to show love and support. We are intercessors for our Missions partners. During this pandemic, there many ways to show your concern: cook a meal for someone, give generously to those who might need financial help, maybe get a gift card for a family to get some groceries, or even calling someone who may be feeling lonely. These are good and positive ways to show genuine concern for others. But that’s not the kind of “anxiety” Paul is talking about here. He says, DO NOT BE ANXIOUS.

The type of anxiety we're talking about here stems from a lack of faith in God due to fears that something harmful is going to happen. Negative anxiety means a lack of trust that God will pull through for you. Which then, becomes a sin issue. This anxiousness brings chaos and unrest, like raging storms flooding our hearts and minds. Now, I need to point out that not all anxiety is sinful. Especially in the times that we're in, mental health is a big issue. Anxiety can arise from things like loneliness, the fear and uncertainty of the future, depression, etc. The struggle is whether your faith remains unwavering in those situations.

We are all susceptible to this negative anxiety. So, brothers and sisters, where is this anxiety, or this lack of trusting in God, evident in your life?

- Is it a fear of death? Whether from COVID or other illnesses.
- Maybe parents are worried about the health of their children.
- Are there challenges and tensions in the home; between spouses, children?
- Are you anxious about job security and financial stability? There were people who lost their jobs due to this pandemic. All our plans and hopes have gone out the window which may cause us to be angry and doubt God's goodness.
- For students, school and future career is always a worry.
- Perhaps you are struggling with mental health or illness.
- Or, could it be that sin is causing anxiety because you're worried about getting expose or caught?

Whatever the circumstance or situation, we are constantly faced with the temptation of anxiety. But there is hope. Today's focus is on the antidote for anxiety. So, I want to address three main points in these 4 verses:

1. What anxiety does.
2. What is anxiety's antidote? And,
3. What happens when we apply the antidote?

So, let's begin with the first point. What does anxiety do?

### **POINT #1: ANXIETY PARALYZES US FROM KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDS.**

There are two imperatives, or commands, found in verses 4 and 5. Look at verse 4-5 with me: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near." The first command is to rejoice in the Lord always.

There is a sense of urgency as Paul repeats this command to the community of believers. The first time he says "rejoice", it is in the present, meaning to rejoice now! But when he says, "I WILL say it again: Rejoice!", there's a continuation of rejoicing; that we are to ALWAYS rejoice. And if Paul were to write another letter or was able to meet them face to face, the command will still be to rejoice! It's not an option we choose whenever we feel like it or only when things are going well. Even in our trials, hardships, and suffering, we are commanded to rejoice.

Joy is a distinctive mark of a Christian, but our joy is not based on circumstance; it is IN THE LORD. Why is this essential? Paul wrote this letter because there were concerns that the Christians were wavering in their joy because of persecution and suffering. Paul was in prison at the time and the church was worried about him (1:7-8, 12-14).

Epaphroditus, and others, became sick and they were anxious about their health (2:25-30). Also, there was disunity and conflict among believers, like Euodia and Syntyche (4:1-3).

However, amidst all of that, we rejoice in the Lord because God is at work in these difficult circumstances. Paul's imprisonment brought the advancement of the Gospel to the prison guards (1:12-20) which caused Paul to rejoice. By God's mercy, Epaphroditus recovered from his illness and was able to return to Philippi so that the community can rejoice and be less anxious (2:25-30). And even with the internal conflict between members of the church, this is what Paul says:

<sup>2</sup>I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, **whose names are in the book of life** (4:2-3).

Did you catch that? As believers, our names are in the book of life. This is the last thing Paul says right before he tells us to, "Rejoice in the Lord always" in verse 4. He is borrowing the words of Jesus. In Luke 10:18-20 Jesus said to the 72 He sent out not to rejoice in how demons submitted to them in Jesus' name but to "**rejoice that your names are written in heaven.**" Our rejoicing in the Lord is rooted in the faith that God has saved us, and we have the assurance of salvation. No matter what happens on this earth, no matter the pain or suffering we must endure, we can rejoice because our names are written in the book of life, but this is how anxiety paralyzes us from rejoicing. We forget about this. We forget who our joy is in. And the present suffering becomes overwhelming and anxiety creates chaos in our minds and hearts that clouds the things we know are certain. The flood of fears and worries drown out the wonderful truth that we are redeemed and restored in Christ.

I confess that my faith wavers. I'm not saying that I am not a Christian, but there are moments in my life where I feel bound by the worries of life more than set free from the promises of God. Aren't we all guilty of this? Can we resonate with Paul when he says, "But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering [which means to die] on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you." (2:17). We must not be paralyzed in rejoicing in the Lord even when we are anxious.

Ok, what about the second command? Look at verse 5: Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Here are a couple verses that use the word "gentleness":

- 1 Timothy 3:3 – "...not violent but GENTLE, not quarrelsome..."
- Titus 3:2 – "...to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be GENTLE towards everyone."

If we combine these verses, gentleness can be understood as not being violent or quarrelsome, and considerate. Gentleness promotes peace and calmness. The translation for this word also means "forbearance" therefore, to show patience and grace and who are we to show this gentleness to? Everyone. It is to be evident, in other translations, made known, to all people. We don't just show gentleness to the people of the church or only Christians. This gentleness is to be publicly made known to everyone. Your family, friends, co-workers, strangers you bump into on the street, even those who oppose you. Everyone. I think Philippians 2:14-15 teaches us what gentleness is as well:

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Do everything **without grumbling or arguing**, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will **shine among them like stars in the sky.**

God wants His children to shine in a warped and crooked generation. We are called to shine in this world with a gentleness that is kind, calm, without grumbling or arguing. In other words, God is commanding us to be witnesses. We are to think, speak and act with gentleness so that others may see Christ in us.

However, when we are dealing with anxiety and struggle to rejoice in the Lord, our gentleness becomes the opposite. We begin to grumble and argue. We are not calm or patient. It feels like at any moment, we will explode in tears or in anger. Thus, anxiety paralyzes us from obeying this command; to let our gentleness be made known to all. How does anxiety affect your witness to others?

Now, we have a small sentence at the end of verse 5. And I think this is the glue to keeping these two commands AND not being anxious: "The Lord is near." What does "The Lord is near" mean? It is talking about the second coming of the Lord. There are passages throughout the New Testament that talk about the nearness of the Lord:

- Matthew 24:36 – "But about that day or hour **no one knows**, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son [in His human nature], but only the Father." Not even the Son, in His human nature, knows the time of the second coming. So how could any of us?!
- 1 Peter 4:7 – "The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray." Jesus' coming is near. So, we must always be ready.
- Revelation 22:12 – "Look, I [Jesus] am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done." When Jesus comes, He will reward us according to what we have done, including enduring our trials and suffering.

John Piper suggests that we should read verse 5 like this: Let your gentleness be evident to all **BECAUSE** the Lord is near. This is what Piper says about what it means that the Lord is near:

He is near, in the sense that His coming is supposed to function in its unexpected suddenness as a motive for us always to be spiritually awake and ready to meet Him without shame, as good stewards of our gifts. "He is near" means: Our ignorance of the time of His coming should never function to picture Him as far and slow, but as near and sudden (John Piper).

Brothers and sisters, may our anxiety **NOT** paralyze us from rejoicing in the Lord and showing gentleness to all. We can rejoice in the Lord and let our gentleness be evident or made known to all people **BECAUSE THE LORD IS NEAR**; because we have hope in the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus the Messiah came, died on the cross for our sins, resurrected on the third day... He will come again. And on that day, every pain, suffering, anxiety will be lifted, and we will spend all of eternity rejoicing. And brothers and sisters, we don't have to wait for that Day. We can start now!

However, in order to do that, we need the antidote and this is where the hope and promise that the Lord is near helps us to apply the antidote: The Lord is near [THEREFORE], do not be anxious about anything, BUT in every situation, by PRAYER and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (verse 6). Prayer is the antidote for anxiety. And that's our second point.

## **POINT #2: PRAYER IS THE ANTIDOTE FOR ANXIETY.**

Here are a couple mottos we should consider:

1. Be anxious about nothing. Pray about everything.
2. Turn our anxieties into a prayer list.

In prayer, you acknowledge your need of God's help. In petition, you're addressing your situation with God. In presenting your requests, you're asking God to solve the problem. All of this is prayer. And why do we pray to God? Because He cares for us. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast your cares [burdens] on the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken". Similarly, in 1 Peter 5:7: "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." Listen to this quote by John Calvin:

Apprehension and fear mark the life of the unbelieving, the untrusting, for whom the present is all there is, and for whom the present is so uncertain – or for many so filled with distress and suffering, as in the case of the Philippians. On the contrary, Paul urges, "in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God".

We are prone to wander, prone to be shaken by temptation. But we can find comfort in this: That we can cast our anxiety on God because He cares for us. **God wants you and me to let our requests be made known to Him. He is saying, "Come to me, share your burdens and anxieties, everything that you're feeling, thinking, going through... come to me!"** Calvin said, "Confidence, it is true, brings tranquility to our minds, but it is only in the event of our exercising ourselves in prayers." So, brothers and sisters, when we are tempted, burdened, anxious, what stops us from going to God in prayer?

- Could it be that in our anxiety, we cannot pray with trust and faith that God will help us?
- Perhaps we are cherishing sin and not in the right frame of heart and mind to approach God in a holy and humble way.
- Maybe it's a sense of unworthiness that makes us afraid to seek the Lord.
- Or we feel distant from God.
- In dealing with our anxieties, maybe we're trying to be self-sufficient and figure it out on our own and looking to worldly things. Do you know that worldly mindedness is a great enemy to prayer and a praying spirit? The cares of the world choke the word so that it cannot grow up in the soul.
- Finally, maybe we're spiritually lazy. We are not stirred to call on the Lord and seek Him. Each day passes by and it becomes more and more difficult to pray.

Do any of these reasons of why we don't pray resonate with you? This seems like a daily struggle for me. Especially during these times.

Paul says in every situation, meaning in all the details and circumstances of life, we are to submit our requests to God in prayer. In situations where others may worry and be anxious, those who believe in Jesus and know that He is near have the confidence to go before Him. And Jesus knows and cares for us. He is our High Priest, our intercessor. Hebrews 4:15-16:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Do we believe this? If so, then we must, in every situation, approach our God in prayer. But you might be saying, “Tim, I do pray. Whenever I am burdened, I pray to God. But there are times when I don’t feel any different. Well, let’s look at what Paul said again: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, WITH THANKSGIVING, present your requests to God. We are to pray with thanksgiving. In thanksgiving, we acknowledge that, even before the problem is solved, God will respond in His sovereignty and love. This changes the way we pray and the power of prayer. Too often I’m guilty of going to God with a complaining and impatient spirit. Don’t we struggle with this? How many times do we recall going before Him with thanksgiving, especially in trying times? That’s why the ACTS acronym for prayer (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication) really helps because particularly thanksgiving provides a posture to trust that the Lord is good and that we don’t deserve anything. Thanksgiving changes our perspective of our circumstances.

There are many times when we feel crippled in prayer. Paul wrote this letter to a community! And this exhortation is not just for the individual, but for the whole church; the body of believers. So, when prayer is a struggle, we must ask our brothers and sisters to intercede and pray for us. We pray for those who are sick in our congregation and for their families. We pray for our Missions Partners. We pray for this pandemic. When we are trapped in sin, we ask one another to pray so that victory and freedom would be found in Christ. We need the community to grow in prayer and praying for one another. APPLICATION: What’s your prayer life like these days? Use A.C.T.S.

Prayer is the antidote! Thanksgiving gives us the posture to pray to Him trusting that He is a good God who will lead and guide us through all circumstances and what happens when we bring our anxieties to God in prayer? We receive His peace and that’s our final point.

**POINT #3: WHEN WE BRING OUR ANXIETY TO GOD IN PRAYER, WE RECEIVE HIS PEACE.**

Follow with me as I read verse 7: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Paul uses the word “And” to connect verses 6 and 7. When we apply verse 6, which is prayer, God gives us His peace. The word means “quietness, rest, or calmness”. This peace is from God. It can only be found in God. It’s a peace that reassures the heart. Therefore, the peace of God is given by God and it is a sense of quietness and reassurance that He will come through. Notice that it’s the peace of God, which means that it reflects who God is. Since God is never rattled or anxious over any situation, He is sharing that part of His character with us!

God's peace transcends, or surpasses, all understanding. Reason and logic cannot express this peace. It goes beyond our human mind's comprehension. We worry and are anxious because of our thoughts; the fears and uncertainties flood waves of thoughts of "what ifs" that make us restless and it's chaotic. But God's peace calms the storms in our minds and hearts. The Apostle Paul was in prison when he wrote about joy and peace. Our minds can't understand how someone can rejoice and be at peace in situations like that. It's a glorious mystery.

When, with gratitude, we pray, we can expect that God will protect us from sinking in our troubles and unrest and give us His peace which will guard our hearts and our minds. His peace will protect us from the very thoughts that lead to fear and anxiety which prevents us from going to God in prayer. And it also protects us from giving into those thoughts.

Finally, this peace is found in Christ Jesus. Romans 5:1,10 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**...For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!" Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). It is through Christ's saving work that guarantees we have peace with God, and therefore, we can rejoice, be gentle to all, and not be anxious by praying to the Giver of Peace.

Paul seemed to figure out a secret: Skip a few verses to Philippians 4:11-13:

<sup>11</sup> I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned **to be content** whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the **secret of being content in any and every situation**, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Paul has learned how to be content, or at peace, with whatever his circumstances may be. And he is only able to do this through Jesus Christ who gives him strength. This contentment, the peace of God, counters anxiety that we all go through. The peace of God may not change our circumstances. But it'll change our perspective of those circumstances. Amidst the chaos, storms, and unrest of our anxiety, God's peace gives us quietness, a stillness, a calmness, and rest. Doesn't that sound amazing? I want that. And I pray that for each of you.

## **APPLICATION**

Church, what are you anxious about? What do you do when you're anxious?

**ILLUSTRATION:** This week... How I dealt with anxiety. Prayer was the last thing I just Saturday night. I was anxious about preaching this week. But I knew this was a word that God wanted everyone of us to hear, including me. As I look out in the sanctuary, as I think of each of you joining us online, I know you are hurting. I know you are fearful. And as your pastor, I realized all I can do is fervently pray for you, trusting that God is good. And that He cares for you.

## CONCLUSION

I want to just close with this. Here are the lyrics to the hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!  
**O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear.  
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!**

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer!  
**Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer!**

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumber with a load of care?  
Precious Saviour, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer!  
**Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.**

Let's pray.