

Sermon Title: The Cure For Anxiety  
Scripture Text: Philippians 4:5-6 (Philippians #13)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 12-12-10

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Well, time sort of got away from us a little bit this morning, so please *listen* fast, and I will do my best to make the most of the passage that is before us this morning.

I guess I am not entitled to be anxious if I have a little less time than usual, because this passage is "The Cure For Anxiety." There is a fairly good chance that what we say here will offend some people, because the content of this passage includes a command which I have observed over the years that some people are *absolutely unwilling* to obey—just don't want to do it! It is quite possible some people who hear this—either today in person, or by recording or by radio—will be offended by the messenger because the message is one they don't want to hear. It gets to where the proverbial "rubber meets the road." It commands you to live in a way foreign to many people. And I would have to say: If you don't take advantage of what is *here*, your problem is ultimately with God. It's kind of like First Thessalonians 4:8, where Paul said: "So he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you." (NASB-1995—and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

Here is the punchline of this. Here is *why* this is so important, *other than* helping you deal with your problems. The truth is: People around us who observe us who are openly identified with Jesus Christ—they can examine our ability to cope with life, and they can use what they observe as a basis for judging the validity of our faith. People are *watching you!* And if God is who God says He is, if He is who He claims to be in His Word, and if Jesus Christ actually lives within us, there will be *abundant* evidence of the reality of God and the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives (Ezek. 36:27; 2 Cor. 5:17; Phil. 2:13, 15). And one of the *strongest* evidences is how we handle stressful circumstances (Ps. 37:24; Prov. 24:16). This passage is a frontal assault on how to handle anxiety.

Now, *everyone* is subject to anxiety; it is part of life. But to let anxiety *control* your life is both *unnecessary* and it is *wrong!* To let anxiety control your life is a *terrible* testimony. And probably as fast as anything else, it *ruins* your credibility to proclaim Christ. It brings *shame* to God (cf. Rom. 2:24). And so, as we look at this—which is actually not just the verses before us this morning, but I want you to realize that there is a whole paragraph here—first of all, recognize that Your Testimony *Is At Stake* by how you handle anxiety (e.g., Prov. 24:10; Dan. 11:32b).

You should learn to use the Emergency Antidote—that is where we are going for this morning. And then, I have good news for you: There is an Inoculation! You can actually *greatly increase* your ability to ward off anxiety—that is going to be the next time we visit Philippians Chapter 4.

But first and foremost: Your Testimony Is At Stake.

As I said last week, as we are making our way through Philippians, when we get here to Chapter 4, Verse 1 or 2 down through Verse 9, the issue of the end of one paragraph—where that is—and the beginning of the next paragraph is a matter of great debate among scholars and commentators. I looked at it from all angles, and I see that Chapter 4, Verse 4 goes with what goes before it, *and* it goes with what follows it. I think it is a connection, if you will.

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Verse 4, leading up to where we are, is: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" If you take that as a conclusion to the first three verses, it means that failure to resolve conflicts is a significant reason for the loss of joy. Remember, Paul brought up that conflict between those two well-known women, "Euodia and Syntyche"; and it is no accident that after he told them and the entire congregation to resolve it, *that* is when he said, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Every conflict between two Christians causes unnecessary loss of joy—*not only* by those involved, but it can affect a whole congregation.

If you take Verse 4 as the transition to Verses 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, then this is the first of five direct commands; they all have to do with how you live and the testimony of your life.

So, we left off with it last time; we will start with it today: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"

Now, how can you "rejoice...*always*"? Does that mean you have to forget your sinful past? Or, does that mean you are even *capable* of forgetting your awful past? Does it mean that you have to ignore the suffering of people that you love? Do you have to be just *happy* all the time? Does it mean that you avoid being realistic when your own circumstances are profoundly discouraging? Well, the answer is, "No"; it does not mean *any* of those things.

It means that none of those things *need* affect your joy in the Lord. "Rejoice in the Lord always." By your "faith" in Christ, there is *always* the basis for rejoicing (1 Jn. 5:4; cf. Rom. 8:18, 37; 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 2:14; 4:16-17; Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18; Jude 24).

Remember who wrote this: the Apostle Paul. And where did he write it from, where he was putting it into practice? *He was in jail*—unjustly (Eph. 6:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:9; cf. Acts 16:23; 26:32; Eph. 3:1; 2 Tim. 1:8). Along the way, he mentioned friends who were suffering. When he wrote this, his life was no picnic! Others believe, and it is quite possible that he had been in ill health for some time when he wrote this. But he believed, he practiced, and he commands: "Rejoice in the Lord always." Christian joy is provided to you by the Holy Spirit *all the time* (Ps. 51:11-12; Rom. 14:17; 15:13; 1 Thess. 1:6), and God *calls you*—He *orders you*—to cultivate and practice it every day.

Knowing God in Christ makes a *huge difference* in your demeanor and in how you respond to things. "The fruit of the Spirit"—Galatians Chapter 5, Verses 22 and 23—"is love"—and what is the next word? You have probably memorized it: "joy." That is something the Holy Spirit chooses to produce, if you will let Him, in your life *constantly* (see Lk. 10:21).

As we will see in the next few verses—not today, but it is okay if you want to read ahead—part of the secret to this kind of rejoicing, part of the secret to this ongoing joy, is to meditate upon and to systematically fill your mind with the proper things (Jos. 1:8; Ps. 1:2-3; 145:5; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:1, 16). The secret to joy is: "Rejoice *in the Lord* always." It is keeping your focus on God (Is. 26:3; Heb. 12:2). It is living according to what He says, rather than focusing on yourself and living by what you feel. Huge difference.

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Remember this one, from First Thessalonians Chapter 5, Verses 16, 17, and 18—"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." If you are *not* rejoicing, if you are *not* praying, if you are *not* giving thanks, you are *not* in God's will—*period!* There is no need to *pray* about what that means; it is *patently* obvious! *Anything less than that* is sub-Christian! Your testimony *is* at stake!

Now, the next verse in *our* text tells you that people *should* be able to look at your life and decide whether your faith is practical or not. Verse 5—"Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near." (NASB-1977)

The key word is translated "forbearing spirit." One translation actually says "big-heartedness"—not far off. It literally means "reasonableness in judging." Synonyms that are suggested for this word are "forbearance"—the one chosen by our translation; "yieldedness," "geniality," "kindliness," "gentleness," "sweet responsibility," "considerateness," "charitableness," "mildness," "magnanimity," and "generosity." Whatever that word means, one thing this verse tells you is: All men have the right to see in our lives that we ought to be exceptionally reasonable and gentle people (Matt. 11:29; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; Titus 3:2; Jas. 3:17; 1 Pet. 3:8).

Now, to many people, when you say, "Your testimony is at stake," they think of a "testimony" as a matter of being able to verbalize the essence of the Gospel—"that Christ died for our sins...that He was buried...that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). That is true; that *is* the Gospel. You can have "eternal life in Christ" (Rom. 6:23) *because* He "died for [your] sins" (1 Pet. 3:18).

But what is so easy to forget is that unless *your life shows the evidence* of eternal life, and that it *makes a positive difference* to know Christ, and your life *shows that*, then people are not very likely to listen to the words that we tell them about Jesus (Ps. 50:16-17). Your life plays the music that accompanies the words of the Gospel (e.g., Titus 2:7-10). It is *vital* to be able to articulate the Gospel—that is *good*; but your *life* also has to give it credibility (Matt. 3:8; 1 Cor. 9:27; Jas. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:11-15; 3:16; 1 Jn. 2:6).

Now, a strange phrase here—short sentence: "Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men." We see how *that* fits. "The Lord is near." Why did he put *that* in here? It may not seem relevant to the rest of the passage, but if you think about it for a moment, I think there are two legitimate ways that it applies: It *could* mean "near" in the sense of "in space"; and it could mean "near in the space of time." Either one is legitimate.

If it is "near in space," the meaning is that because the Lord is *near*—He is actually "*with you*" (Matt. 28:20; cf. Jn. 14:18-23), He is actually "*in you*" (Col. 1:27; cf. Jn. 6:56; 15:4-5; 17:23, 26; Col. 3:11)—then you understand that you have all the resources necessary to be "forbearing," to "rejoice," and to shun anxiety (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3).

Or, if the intended meaning is "near in time," then the application is that since the *coming* of the Lord is "near," you need not worry about things (Jas. 5:7-8), and you can act graciously in any situation because you know that He is coming before long to make all things right (Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Thess. 1:6-8).

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Both of those are biblical, and I don't think we need to split hairs. And Paul might have even *intended* it as a double-meaning.

A friend who is actually with the Lord now—we were talking one time when he, at that time, had been a pastor for 55 years; and we were actually talking about Philippians Chapter 4, and not being "anxious." What he said to me was, "I am 81 years old. I don't see the value in being anxious over *anything*."

Do you get what he was saying? "I understand that God is in control; and because of the nearness of the Lord, there is no need to worry." (see Ps. 73:28)

Now, I know I haven't yet talked about the verse that says "be anxious for nothing"—don't worry, it's coming; I'll get there soon enough.

But what I want you to be sure you understand is that part of a Christian testimony is how you handle anxiety, how you handle circumstances, how you handle people—even those *weird* people that are in your life, even those people in your life that you can't shake, even the ones that are foisted upon you because they happen to be your *boss* or a relative, not by your choosing. All that matters! Your testimony is at stake!

Tourists, for centuries, have visited the famous Acropolis—that's that hilltop religious citadel in Athens. And thousands of visitors from all over the world come there, and it is popular to pick up a little chunk of marble and take it home as a souvenir. It's like when I was in Israel, and they told us, "This is the valley where David confronted Goliath"—and there is a little dry creek bed there; and I picked up *the rock* that David used in his slaying, and I brought it home as a souvenir. Well, they've been doing that in the Acropolis for years.

And you might wonder: Thousands and thousands of visitors, week in and week out—why hasn't the supply of pieces of marble been exhausted a long time ago? There is a very simple answer: Ever few months, at night, a truckload of marble fragments from a quarry many miles away is brought in and scattered throughout the Acropolis area—so, tourists go home happy with what they *think* are authentic pieces of ancient history.

What many people have seen of Christianity is just like those worthless chunks of marble that people carry home from Greece. Many people who profess to know Jesus Christ, and say that they belong to "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3), misrepresent Christianity by living under a cloud of anxiety, or by being anything but gracious and gentle and "forbearing" kind of people.

One of the greatest earthly blessings of knowing Christ is described in this passage: You have the resources that you need in order to *never* be a victim of "anxiety" (1 Pet. 5:7).

Why would you *wallow* in anxiety if there is a way out? Why would you want to have a relationship with God if your life proclaims that He is not relevant, that He is not sufficient to handle your problems? Your testimony *is* at stake!

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So, *when* something happens that you didn't expect, *when* you get bad news, *when* you—to use James' terminology—"fall into various trials" (Jas. 1:2, NKJV), and you have that immediate emotional reaction—we call it "anxiety" (cf. Prov. 3:25)—I suggest you use the Emergency Antidote.

In the remainder of the paragraph before us: Verses 6, 7, 8, and 9—we are going to get to verse 6 and a half; we are going to touch on Verse 7 before we go—we have *two* solutions to the problem of anxiety.

The first is this Emergency Antidote—or, the "cure," if you will. It is the prescription or what to do *when* anxiety attacks you.

The second is long-term preventive medicine that you need to use to make yourself less and less susceptible to *attack* from anxiety.

I thought of an analogy that I think helps you grasp this. You can compare anxiety to an allergic reaction. Not everyone responds to everything the same way. I am allergic to some things, but there are other people who have allergic reactions to things that don't bother me at all, and vice versa.

There are two different treatments for allergies. There are pills that you take and there are things that you inhale to help you get over the reaction that your body has to a substance that has irritated it. These are "antihistamines"—they weaken the symptoms of the allergic reaction. But there are *other* things to deal with allergies where you don't wait for the reaction to occur. I use a pill every day during certain months of the year so that I don't have the reaction in the first place. Faithfully using that pill every day spares me from a lot of misery and from the more drastic measures necessary to overcome the allergy attacks. Sometimes you can take the antihistamines and you sleep so hard, you *don't care* that you had an allergic reaction.

People with allergies worse than mine often resort to inhalers or a series of shots which they take regularly over a long period of time, and eventually causes them to stop *having* the emergency reaction.

Verses 6 and 7 is the Emergency Antidote for anxiety.

Anxiety is to your emotions and to your spiritual life what an allergic reaction is to your body. Both of them are *inappropriate overreactions*. An allergy attack is the inappropriate overproduction of little beasties called "histamines" in your body, which causes significant discomfort; it *can* be life-threatening if it is serious enough. And it is a physical failure of your body to react properly to stimuli in your environment. That is an allergic reaction.

Anxiety is the inappropriate overproduction of *emotions* which causes you emotional discomfort and can cripple your ability to function normally. It is usually a spiritual and cognitive failure to react properly to circumstances in your life which cause the problem. Anxiety is the reaction you have when you fall short of living according to truth.

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Now, before we plunge into Verse 6, I need to comment on *physical* factors of anxiety. Have you ever heard the word "psychosomatic"? Of course you have. It comes from the Greek word "psyche"—or *psuchē*—which means "soul"; and *sōma*, which means "body." It's talking about the interaction between our body and your non-body—the real you and your physical body. There *are* psychosomatic illnesses, right? You can think yourself sick. Just go on the Internet and Google some disease. Read for five minutes, and you will come up with a symptom. That is a psychosomatic reaction. And it works *both* ways: You can "think" yourself "sick," and you can "think" yourself "well." That is why the "faith healers" of the world are still in business! They are *frauds*, but they are still in business because they can get some results! You just can't verify them over a long period of time.

Well, there are "psychosomatic" things; and I don't know that there is such a word, but there are also "somapychotic" things: Your *body* can also affect your *emotions*. Do you ever get sick and get depressed? Sure! Your body also affects your emotions, just like your emotions affect your body, because you and your body function as a unit (Prov. 17:22; 18:14).

Some people have *physical* conditions which have strong emotional side effects, and *those* people need—and they respond well to—medications because the core of the problem is *physical*. Have you ever been prescribed a medication for an infection in your little toe, and then you find out that it affects you emotionally? Yeah! If you change the chemistry of your body, you can change the way you think and the way you feel.

Now, in our world, there are *tremendous* abuses of medications, and they are often foisted upon people by doctors and psychologists who freely prescribe drugs for the purpose of altering people's mood and manipulating emotions. It is *exactly* the same as people taking illegal drugs or abusing alcohol to achieve euphoria or to numb emotional pain. It's just that some do it in a relatively moderate fashion, under the care of a doctor. There is a *huge* problem in our world with that, and the abuse is rampant.

But just because there is abuse *doesn't mean* there is no *legitimate* use of medications to help people who, because of physical reasons, are far more prone to anxiety or depression or paranoia or schizophrenia or any number of other problems. It's like this: Glue is good. I had to get some Super Glue a while back. It does a *really good job*, used correctly. Stick your fingers together—*that's a problem*. Sniff the glue in order to achieve an altered consciousness—that is *bad*, that is *sinful*, that is *stupid*, that is *dangerous*! But just because there is abuse doesn't mean that the thing that is abused is, in and of itself, wrong. There are preachers and authors in the Christian world who pontificate that a Christian should *never* use and *never need* medications—and those people who say that cause a lot of problems. Don't listen to them. That was the baby that was going out with the bathwater when they said that.

What I am going to tell you *does* apply to you—*regardless* of your physical condition, regardless of whether or not you take a mood-altering medication. This that we are going to talk about from God's Word is *always* true and *always* applies to *every* child of God *all the time*.

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But don't take something to an *extreme*. We happen to be blessed to live in a generation when there *are* such medications that can be used. A long time ago, there were not such medications, and so what did we do with such people? We would lock them up, keep them out of sight—unless they committed suicide before we could lock them up.

Now, I will say this—I *know* this to be true: Sometimes a Christian who has, in the past, been prescribed medication by a pill-pushing doctor who focusses only on symptoms and not on causes—sometimes a person *can* actually get *free* of the drugs by applying what God says; that *can* happen. But to say that there is *never* a good reason for a Christian to need medication to help them control emotions—that is just irresponsible, and we are not going to go there. Physical things are physical things, spiritual things are spiritual things, and they are not unrelated.

Now, with that said, let's look at the Antidote for anxiety. It goes like this: *Don't do it.*

Now, here is the expanded version: Verse 6 of Philippians 4—"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

It starts out with a command: "Be anxious for nothing"—or, "Do not be anxious for anything." A command that is in this form in the Greek language means both "Stop doing something"—if you are doing it, stop—and if you are *not* doing it, "Never start." It is a blanket command. "Stop being anxious about anything" would be a legitimate way to paraphrase this.

The word that is translated "anxious" here *can* actually have a positive connotation. Paul used it here in Philippians; back in Chapter 2, Verse 20, he described Timothy as "*genuinely concerned* for your welfare," because the root of the word is "to *care* about something."

But *most* of the time—and this is the case here in Verse 6—the word means "to be unduly *overly* concerned about something," or, "to be filled with anxiety," "to worry," "to be troubled," or "to be fretful." Reactions like that are unchristian—they do not honor God (see Ps. 16:8; 27:1-3; 46:1-2; 56:4; 118:6; Is. 41:10; Rom. 8:31-39).

And by the way: *Jesus* agreed with this. Have you ever read the Sermon on the Mount? Right smack in the middle of it, in Matthew Chapter 6, Verse 25 and following, Jesus says: "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious about your life, as to what you shall eat or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth far more than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his lifespan? And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not cloth himself like one of these. But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?" (vss. 25-30, NASB-1977).

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I have told you many times: When Jesus or others use the term "little faith," it means "knowing a lot, and not living up to it." "Great faith" is "not knowing very much, and living according to *all* of it."

And so, Jesus goes on to say: "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for *your heavenly Father knows* that you need all these things." (vss. 30-32, NASB-1977) Did you catch the *entire reason* why Jesus says anxiety is *unnecessary* and *wrong* and *foolish* for a believer? Very simple: "for your heavenly Father *knows*."

So, I want to ask you: Just *who is* your God? My friends, you are going to discover here that the antidote for anxiety is rooted *smack dab* in truth: *doctrine*, what God says! Who is your God? How much *does* He know? Well, let's see:

He is "omnipotent" (e.g., Job 42:2; Jer. 32:17)—He is "Almighty" (Gen. 17:1; Rev. 19:6).

He is "omniscient"—that means He is all-knowing (e.g., Ps. 139:1-4; 147:5; Heb. 4:13).

What *can* He do about your troubles? He is omnipotent—He is *all-powerful*. He knows, and He can *do* something about it.

And how much *does* He "care for you"? (1 Pet. 5:7; cf. Matt. 10:31) You are His special treasure (Ps. 17:8; Mal. 3:16-17; Lk. 12:32; Jn. 10:11; 17:26; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Following His command to not be anxious, *Jesus* framed a solution for anxiety; it is in the next verse, right after where we stopped: Matthew 6:33—"But"—there's the contrast—"But"—apply good theology to the rest of your life—"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." You get your focus on *God*, you seek to glorify *Him*, you seek to live by what *He* says, and "all these things will be added to you" (cf. Ps. 84:11). What do "these things" refer to? There are antecedents in the context: food, shelter, clothing—whatever you "need." Now, He may not give you all you *want*, but He will give you everything you *need* if you belong to Him (1 Tim. 6:8).

Paul put it in a slightly different package; he gave us a little more detail about *how* to go about "seek[ing] first His kingdom and His righteousness."

"Be anxious for nothing"—same command Jesus says. Now, if Jesus says, "Don't do it" and you do it, we call that *sin*, alright? It is sin to wallow in anxiety. When that wave of emotions comes over you, you are at a fork in the road: You are going to go down the path of letting your feelings ruin you, or you are going to go down the path of controlling your feelings by putting them in context according to who God is (Ps. 16:8).

"Be anxious for nothing"—and now, here comes the "but" in Paul's sentence. In Jesus' version, it was "*but* seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." Paul says: "but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."



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Now, when you have a verse that includes a "nothing" and an "everything," I think you have it all *covered!* "*At no time do this, and at every time do this.*" Alright, how many circumstances in your life does this apply to? *Each and every single one, every day, for every person, no matter what!* You *do not* have to decide *when* this verse applies to you! It applies to you *every day in every circumstance, without any exceptions, ever!* "For nothing...in everything"!

Here is what you do—two things: "But" is the "shift gears" part of the command. Disengage from the anxiety: stop, put it on the table, sit down, and operate on it. Disengage the anxiety, switch directions with your thoughts and with your words, and here is what you do: "Let your requests be made known to God." *That* is the Antidote!

Because, my friend, there is nobody else in the universe who can *always* deal with your circumstances (Ps. 121:2-4). You do not *first* sit down and call your best friend; you sit down, you disengage from the feelings, and you "call" on God (Ps. 50:15; 55:16; 91:15). When? *Always*. About what? "In *everything*"—without exception.

But we are not left with just *general* instructions; we have some specifics here: "Let your requests be made known to God." "Requests" implies a *specific thing* for which you ask.

And he says "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving"—there are three words there that fill in the picture quite thoroughly for you:

"Prayer" is a very general word for all kinds. It doesn't need to be fancy or flowery or ceremonial—just talk to God (Ps. 62:8; 1 Thess. 5:17).

But "supplication"—that is a more specific word. Both are legitimate words for prayer; this one is more specific. It describes asking in response to a specific need. It is a lesser one speaking to a greater one about a specific thing; that is what the word "supplication" means. It is something like: "God, the cupboard is empty, and the kids need to eat tonight." "Lord, You know that meeting is tomorrow. I know they are planning to do something that isn't right. I need Your wisdom and Your grace to 'speak the truth in love' (Eph. 4:15) and stand for what is righteous." (see 1 Sam. 1:15; 30:6; 2 Chr. 32:20; 33:12; Ps. 34:6; 55:22; Matt. 7:7) Specific. Tell it to God. Who *is* He? He knows it all.

And by the way: *Why would you want to talk to anybody else, when you can talk to the One—and the only One—who not only knows what you are going through, He knows it better than you do; He knows "the end from the beginning" (Is. 46:10), and He has the power, if He wants to, to remove you from the circumstances or to drastically change the circumstances! Why would you want to talk to anybody else? I know why: Because you have learned how much fun it is to wallow in anxiety! For some people, that is their identity! Take away their anxiety, and they wouldn't have anything to do! I say that facetiously, but it is tragically true...tragically true.*

"But in everything by prayer"—talking to God—"and supplication"—talking *specifically* to God. And *then*—oh, he is *so rude* to put *this* in: "with thanksgiving." That is as crucial as the rest (Ps. 9:1; 50:23; 100:4; 118:1; Col. 4:2; 1 Tim. 2:1).

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Now, listen: When you get bad news, when you hear something ominous, when someone maligns you, when you are going through a hard time—it is *hard*! We are told: "Weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). There are times when you are going to have a painful reaction to a painful situation, and "thanksgiving" is *not exactly* what is on your mind when you are in the crucible of testing, when your emotions are *throbbing* with self-centered cries for relief. But thanksgiving is *absolutely crucial* in the recipe for the antidote to anxiety.

Remember back in Chapter 2: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing" (vs. 14). Here, it's "prayer and supplication with thanksgiving."

Remember First Thessalonians 5:18—"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 5:20—"always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

Colossians 3:15—"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; *and be thankful*." And two verses later: "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks through Him* to God the Father" (cf. Heb. 13:15).

There is a *reason* for this being here. The reason that giving thanks in the midst of situations which make you anxious is *so important* is: It *turns your thoughts to God*. "Rejoice *in the Lord* always"—because I'll tell you what: You can't "rejoice in" *anything else* "always"!

Thinking about God—thinking about God *accurately*—is your ultimate attitude adjustment (e.g., Deut. 7:18; 15:15; Neh. 4:14; Ps. 77:11-15; 105:5; 143:5; Jonah 2:7, etc.). When you are in the midst of a problem, *don't* focus on the problem! There is probably something you need to do about it; don't worry—you'll figure that out. But tell God about it—He already knows more about it than you do—and then move on to asking Him to take care of it, and thanking Him for everything you can think of to thank Him for.

And you say, "But, *this is when I am hurting!* This is when things are *bad!*" Well, what can you give thanks for? Let's start with, um...*God*—what a concept! "God, You know this, don't You? You knew this was coming, didn't You? You know how this is going to turn out, don't You? I belong to You, don't I? I am even more valuable than the beautiful grass in the field, the beautiful leaves in the fall. You *know* me; You *know* my needs." See how your attitude can change so quickly?

I love so many of the psalms—especially some of David's psalms when he was fleeing from Saul. He is in a *big mess*, and he starts writing this psalm about what a big mess he is in; and then he starts talking about God, and he gets to the end and he is praising God and thanking God—and he is still in the mess! Well, *learn* from him! Fill your mind with those things. Consider *who He is* (e.g., Ps. 119:52; Jas. 5:11).

Sermon Title: The Cure For Anxiety  
Scripture Text: Philippians 4:5-6 (Philippians #13)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
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Jeremiah—now *there* is an interesting character. How would you like this? God calls you and says, "I have a *very* specific job for you. You are going to be *My* guy! You are going to be *My* mouthpiece! By the way: No one will ever, ever listen to you! And if they *do*, they will *do the opposite!*"

It's through Jeremiah that we read this: Jeremiah 33:2-3—"Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it, the Lord is His name, 'Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' " That is a good reason to, "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Or how about Isaiah? Here's a great one. You might have thought this was only on tee-shirts, but it is actually in your Bible: Isaiah 40, starting at Verse 28—"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth..." Just stop there. If you want to get an attitude adjustment, *get in touch with who God is!* Study Him! Learn about Him! Because *He* is the One you have to trust! "The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable." Now, you are in the midst of a trial. You've gotten *really bad news!* You are *really discouraged!* It is the *worst* day you have had, forever! Here is something God's Word says: "He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary" (vss. 28-31).

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And..." One of your requests might be, "And *then* what?" We have to stop for today. But it is okay with me if you want to study ahead! Look at this: The next verse begins with "And."

Step 1: Stop being "anxious." Step 2: "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." And do you want to talk about a *promise?* How about this one: Verse 7—"And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

I will unpack it more next time, but just look at the words—they are pretty obvious: "Peace"—that would be the opposite of "anxiety," in the context. This is "the peace of God"—it's not something you *conjure up!* It's not something you *talk yourself into!* It is something you *cannot get by yourself!* It is "the peace of God" (cf. Jn. 14:27; 16:33).

And how do you know when you have it? How do you describe it?—"which surpasses all comprehension." It is *humanly indescribable!* My friends, your testimony *is at stake!*

People ought to be able to look at *you* go through hard times—as hard as what *they* are going through—and *see a difference!* And the difference is God (Ps. 84:5-7; Dan. 11:32). It is humanly indescribable, but it is *oh, so real!*

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"And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, *shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" That is an ironclad promise! If you respond correctly to your anxiety, if you do what God says, He will do what He promises! That would be called a "conditional promise": You meet the condition, the promise is realized for you. It "shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." It gets to *the core of your being!* And by the way: That can affect you *physically* in a wonderful way.

Don't let your testimony be ruined by wallowing in an emotional quagmire of anxiety. *Climb out*, using God's prescribed Antidote.

And by the way: If you don't want to *fall back in* so easily, start taking the long-term preventive medicine—which, by the way, if you take it faithfully, *it will*, by and large, keep you from anxiety.

Your testimony is at stake. There *is* an Emergency Antidote. And you can Inoculate yourself. We are going to look at that next time. It is *not* unconnected. There is the *immediate* cure; there is the long-term Inoculation. Either way, God wants to be exalted in your life. And *you* can make the choices that determine that *that* will be the case.

You are familiar with First Corinthians Chapter 10, Verse 13—"No temptation"—and that applies to "testing" as well, the kinds of things that produce anxiety—"No temptation [or testing] has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted [or tested] beyond what you are able, but with the [testing or] temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" *without* becoming bogged down in endless anxiety.

Let's pray.