

Please turn in your copies of God's Word to Philippians chapter 4. This morning we continue to look at this final chapter in which the Apostle Paul give us very practical application of the doctrines he has taught throughout the letter. Last week we looked at how to resolve external conflict among members in the Church. In our passage today Paul turns the focus inwardly to the internal conflict we so often experience. With that in mind, lend your ear now to the reading of God's holy Word from Philippians chapter 4 beginning at verse 4.

Read Philippians 4:4-9

Pray

One of the major talking points in our society today is that of mental illness. It seems to be the focus of so many people, many of whom seem to operate from this notion that every person alive today has some sort of mental illness. I find it incredibly disheartening to see online how many people make it out like having a mental illness is some sort of badge of honor, something one should be proud of. Before I go on a major tangent about this topic, let me stop myself here by simply stating that what passes off as mental illness in the vast majority of cases today is more rightly understood to be spiritual illness; it is the effects of having spiritual problems and those problems affecting one's physical being. Remember friends, we are a psycho-somatic unity, a unity of soul and body. When our spiritual state is suffering it can, and often does, cause our physical state to suffer as well. As many of you know, I am a biblical counselor. This understanding of how the spirit and the body work together is the foundation of biblical counseling. Yet this is not what is understood by the world in regards to counseling. The vast majority of our society has bought in to a clinical or medical or psychological understanding of these things. And the number one issue that people are facing today is anxiety. This is why, as of 2020, over 40 million Americans have some clinically diagnosed form of anxiety and are taking any number of various anti-anxiety medications, and that number very likely has gone up since then.

But it's not just the world around us; the Church is right there in the mix as well. Studies show that around 7% of professing Christians have some form of anxiety and are on medication for it. You may think that's not a lot, but in reality that's somewhere around 14.7 million Christians. This is a major problem. There must be a solution to this problem. There must be an answer for the anxious. Brothers and sisters, our text today gives us that answer, and it really is quite simple. The exhortation to you this morning is to cast your cares upon Christ Jesus, the Prince of peace. We will consider three ways in which this is done: first, prayer and petition; next, proper thinking; and finally, practice.

Paul uses verse 4 as the bridge between speaking on external conflict and internal conflict, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." The solution for any form of conflict, whether it be between two fellow believers or it be within your own self, is to rejoice in the Lord no matter the circumstance. Whatever you're going through, prosperity or poverty, plenty or want, great harvest or drought, ought to lead you to the same response which is to rejoice in the Lord. This is so counter-cultural compared to what everything around us tells us to do. And this reasonableness, this moderation, in the face of whatever may be happening in your life will catch the attention of those around you. Paul says in verse 5, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." We are to understand him as exhorting these to endure all things with a godly composure. Calvin says that this term is one "that is made use of by the Greeks themselves to denote moderation of spirit – when we are not easily moved by injuries, when we are not easily annoyed by adversity, but retain equanimity of temper." And there is the comfort given that the Lord is at hand. Some would take this to be a reference to the Lord's second coming, but from the context in which Paul is saying it, he seems to be using it to speak of the fact that the Lord is near to those in affliction. Friends, Christ Jesus has sent us His Spirit to come alongside of us and care for us in our time of need. He is spoken of as that great Comforter. How great a comfort it is that you have the Lord himself protecting and

comforting you, drawing near to you in your time of need. And so it is with that in mind that he gives the command in verses 6, “Be careful for nothing.”

Does this mean we are to care for nothing at all? Of course not. Matthew Henry writes, “There is a care of diligence which is our duty, and consists in a wise forecast and due concern; but there is a care of diffidence and distrust which is our sin and folly, and which only perplexes and distracts the mind.” This is what is in mind here. So the first way in which the Apostle instructs us to fulfill this obligation is through prayer and petition. Look at verses 6 and 7, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” It is with prayer and supplication that we can overcome the anxieties of this life. Crying out to the Lord, the God of the universe, the creator and sustainer of all things, the one who is sovereign over all, is what you are called to do. This is how you make your needs known to Jehovah, and you can be sure that He will hear your cries and answer them according to His holy will. David understood this as we see in Psalm 18:5-6, “The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.” It is the will of the Lord for you to be freed from anxieties and worry. In Matthew 6:31 Christ says, “Therefore take no thought.” That phrase can also rightly be translated, “Do not worry.” In Luke 12:11 we see the same phrase used once again. John 14:1, “Let not your heart be troubled.” 1 Corinthians 7:32, “But I would have you without carefulness.” The English Standard Version translates that verse as, “I want you to be free from anxieties.”

The Lord’s desire is clear, and so you must trust in Him. That is the root of all our anxieties, a lack of trust in God. So often we forget how great a mighty He is, that he is sovereign over all, and

this is why we are so quickly, even at the littlest thing, thrown into the depths of anxiety, because we far too often forget the fact that Jehovah cares for us. So you are called to pray, to cry out unto Him, because this is the primary way we show our submission to Him and our trust in Him. You are to pray like this in everything. That is, in every situation, in every trial, facing every temptation, on every triumph, in every joy and every sorrow, when the future is uncertain and you are tempted to worry — in everything — pray! And when the Lord provides, and even before He does, you must pray with thankfulness knowing that He will answer your prayers. So oftene pray urgently when the crisis comes, and when God is gracious to bring us through, do we linger in His presence to give Him praise and to thank Him? Our lack of thanksgiving probably relates directly to our lack of faith and our growing anxiety. If we took note of answers to prayer and gave thanks we'd boost our faith and remind ourselves the Lord is the hearer and answerer of prayer. What a marvelous encouragement to be people of prayer! Do you attend the church's weekly prayer meeting? Do you pray in the home? Do you pray in everything, in every circumstance of life? If you neglect prayer, no wonder anxiety lays siege to your hearts and invades your minds. You need Christ's own peace to keep your hearts and minds as you go through this life, and that is done through prayer and petition.

But prayer and petition is not the only thing to be done in casting your cares upon the Lord. There must be proper thinking. Look with me at verse 8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." What is anxiety but thinking in a way that creates worry in your own mind? If you are to be freed from anxieties then those worrisome thoughts must be cast out, and they must be replaced with new thoughts. So what are the things you are to think on? "Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely,

whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Yes, Pastor Josh, I know what Paul said, but what are these things? Where can such things be found? Psalm 19:7-10, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” Friends, you cannot have any hope of being freed from anxiety if you are not rooted in the Word of God. That is what Paul is instructing you to think on. Nothing else in this world will satisfy you. Nothing else in this world will comfort you. If you want rest for your weary heart then there is only one place to turn to, Jehovah and His Word.

So I ask you, what are the things which you are thinking on? So much of what we consume with our eyes and ears on a daily basis is designed to stir up the emotions and to strike fear and anxiety in the mind. Sometimes you just need to turn off Fox News or CNN or Facebook or Twitter and empty your mind of all those vain things. Then you must fill your mind with the things of God, the things of His Word. Remind yourselves of His promises, that He is a faithful God who will remain faithful to His covenant people. Remind yourselves that there is not a sparrow which the Lord does not care for and that not a single hair falls from your head without the Lord’s doing. Those who look here and there to the vain comforts of the world, may appear to be in some degree relieved; but there is one sure refuge – leaning upon the Lord. Are you leaning upon the Lord? Are you making His thoughts your thoughts? Is that mind in you which is also in Christ Jesus, as we have seen earlier in this letter? I don’t normally do this but I am going to tell you a personal story of how this way of thinking transformed me and relieved me of anxieties. When I got back from Iraq I had some problems with anxiety. I wasn’t in the heat of combat, but I saw some very

gruesome things and experienced some incredibly high-stress events. Certain things would cause mini panic attacks. But in receiving counseling while at the seminary I was instructed to take a psalm and commit it to memory, and whenever something happened that would cause moments of anxiety I was to recall that psalm and sing it. Friends, it works. Psalm 46 became such a great comfort to me that what once were nearly daily bouts of anxiety have now become almost nonexistent. Will you do the same? Commit a portion of the Word of God to memory and use it as a shield against the anxious thoughts of your own mind. I love the blunt way in which D.A. Carson puts this, “If you think holy thoughts, you will be holy; if you think garbage, you will be garbage.” Beloved, if you are to cast your cares upon Christ you must have proper thinking.

And all of this must impact the way you live your life. So much of our lives is consumed by the trivial duties of being in this world. But your prayer life and your way of thinking must inevitably affect your practice. Look with me at verse 9, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” You must put all of these things into practice. They must become part of your daily life. And interestingly enough Paul once again tells these saints in Philippi to follow the example that he has set for them. This is now the third time in which he uses himself as an example. Take the things you have learned, the things which you have been instructed in, and put them into practice. It is not enough to simply know the right things or to believe the right things, you must do the right things or else it is evident that the truth which you profess may have not changed your life. You must obey what is required of you in Scripture. You must live a Christian life. You must follow the apostolic teaching and example laid out for you in the Word of God. I can assure you that a sure way in which to guarantee that your life will be plagued with anxieties and worry is to be disobedient to the commands of the Lord, to live a disobedient life. We see in Psalm 19:11 in speaking of the law of the Lord, “Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.” The reward for keeping

the commands of the Lord is a closer communion with Him, which will always bring about a comfort in the soul. But if in keeping them there is great reward then in disobeying them there is not a reward. The hands of the Lord's blessing will be far from you if you are from Him in your actions and disobedience. So you must examine yourselves and see where it is that you are living in disobedience to Him and repent.

When was the last time you truly took a spiritual inventory of your life? When was the last time you said with the psalmist in Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"? Friends, if you are living an unrepentant disobedient life then the call to you today is to repent and turn unto Christ. Perhaps the reason your life has been plagued with great anxiety is because you do not have the peace of God with passeth all understanding. Perhaps the reason you do not have peace is because you do not know the Prince of peace; you have never been captivated by His love, shown the beauty of His holiness, been confronted by the vileness of your sin, and come unto a saving knowledge of Him. If that is you then I plead with you to turn from your wicked ways and turn unto Christ. The anxieties of this life will be nothing compared to the eternal torment which awaits you in hell if you are not found in Christ. Come unto Him this day and be made clean. Come unto Him this day and be made new. Come unto Him this day and receive the peace with passeth all understanding. But maybe you're sitting here today and that's not you. You are in Christ, but you still fight a constant battle against anxiety. Saints, cast your cares upon Christ Jesus. Cry out to Him to preserve you from this great affliction. Examine your hearts to see the ways in which you are disobedient to His commands and repent of them. We are four weeks away from coming to the Lord's Table and partaking of the sacrament of communion together. The command to you is to come prepared, to come having examined yourself and having repented of your sins. If anxiety has made its bed within your own soul then I call on you to spend these weeks in self-examination,

prayer, and repentance. Or maybe you're here today and you do not fight that battle against anxiety and worry. Rejoice in the Lord; praise His holy name; give thanks unto Him for His mercy which He has shown to you. But don't get so complacent as to think you will never experience a great affliction of anxiety. Prepare yourself now by taking those things which you have learned and received and heard and seen and do them now. Do not wait until you have to be on the defensive; prepare yourself now. Everyone here has a duty to ensure that their practice is one of Christian conduct. This is the way to have the God of peace with you —to keep close to your duty to Him. The Lord is with you while we are with Him.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that your hearts will not be troubled. I pray that you will know that peace which passeth all understanding. I pray that you will be careful for nothing, that you will worry for nothing, that you will be anxious for nothing. Our passage today is meant as a comfort, a practical means by which you may know the Lord is near and is coming alongside you through whatever you go through. This passage is speaking about the careful, patient spreading of our needs before God, detailing our situation and our anxieties. This is what it means to cast our burdens on the Lord in the assurance that He will sustain us (Psalm 55:2). The ways of the world will not remedy what ails you. Popular psychology will not remedy what ails you. Anti-anxiety medication will not remedy what ails you. Only the Lord can do that, and He promises that He will if you only lean upon Him. Pray in every circumstance with thanksgiving in your heart. Be saturated with the Word so as to be able to recall Jehovah's great promises. Reach out to someone if you need aid in fighting this battle. Your elders are here to counsel you through whatever it is that afflicts you. We are not the answer, but we know the One who is. So cast your cares upon Christ Jesus, the Prince of peace.