

FBC POWELL, 5-1-19 PM NOTES
"The Trial of Worry, Part 2"
Philippians 4:1-8
#12 in Series, "The Truth About Trials"

Worry is saying to the Lord, "You can't be trusted."

One of Satan's tools that he uses to take us from "standing firm" to "falling by the wayside" is worry.

The Greek word translated "stand firm" (*streko*) means to be firmly entrenched, to persevere, to persist.

I. We Must Preserve Unity (vv. 2-3)

Ephesians 4:3 (NASB) "Being diligent to **preserve the unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

When unity goes, worry will reign.

II. We Must Practice Joy (vv. 4-5)

A. The Parameters of This Joy (v. 4)

B. The Possibilities of This Joy (v. 5)

Philippians 4:13 (NASB) "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

III. We Must Put Away Worry (vv. 6-7)

Philippians 4:6-7 (CSB) ⁶ "Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

It is impossible to "stand firm" and be filled with worry at the same time.

A. The Scope of Prayer (v. 6a)

B. The Specifics of Prayer (v. 6b)

C. The Satisfaction of Prayer (v. 7)

IV. We Must Ponder the Right Things (v. 8)

Proverbs 23:7 (NASB) "For as he thinks within himself, so he is..."

Sermon 12 The Trial of Worry — Part 2

Philippians 4:1-8

The temptation to worry is universal. I understand why lost people would worry but worry for Christians makes no sense. Worry is such a futile thing. Mark Twain said, "I'm an old man and I've known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened." What a great description of worry! Corrie Ten Boom used to quote this little couplet "Worry is an old man with bended head, carrying a load of feathers which he thinks are lead."

Another tragic thing about worry is that it gives rise to so many other sins. Worry about finances gives rise to coveting, greed, hoarding, and stealing from God. Worry about success in some endeavor can make you irritable and insensitive to others. Worry about relationships make you withdrawn and self-centered. Worry about how someone will respond to you can result in lying about your successes or your failures in order to impress them. Worry opens the door to a multitude of sins.

We can rename worry and call it concern, burden, or being troubled, but a skunk by any other name still smells like a skunk. In the first message on the trial of worry, we saw that when the mask is taken off of what we call worry, it is simply the sin of unbelief. Worry is saying to the Lord, "You cannot be trusted."

I am convinced that one of the greatest antidotes to worry is found here in Philippians 4:1. I am speaking of the phrase, "stand firm in the Lord." Some translations say, "stand fast in the Lord." The Greek word translated "stand firm" (*Streko*) means to be firmly entrenched, to persevere, to persist. It was a word used of a soldier in battle who refused to back down or retreat, no matter how ferocious the battle raged around him. I am convinced that one of Satan's tools that he uses to take us from "standing firm" to "falling by the wayside" is worry. With that in mind, I want to look at this whole passage and not just focus on worry. Paul doesn't get directly to worry until verse 6, but the verses before that lay the groundwork for verses 6-9. We began with verse 1 (especially that phrase, "stand firm in the Lord"). Let's move to verses 2-9. We will be moving fast as we see how to stand firm in the Lord.

I. We Must Preserve Unity (vv. 2-3)

The emphasis in Scripture is not that we achieve unity with other believers; the emphasis is that we keep the unity that is given by Christ to all believers. In Jesus' prayer in John 17, He prayed for His disciples to be "one" (in unity), and His prayers are always answered. There is true unity between true believers, but that unity can be damaged. That is why we are exhorted in Ephesians 4:3: "being diligent to *preserve the unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace." When there is disunity between true believers, the Holy Spirit is grieved, doubt and fear begin to reign, and the world is turned off. Disunity in the fellowship of churches has done more harm to the cause of Christ than all the persecution from the world could ever accomplish. I'm not talking about confrontation in love. That actually in the long run enhances unity. I'm talking about petty disagreements, a refusal to forgive a brother or sister who may have wronged us, getting our feelings hurt because we were overlooked or someone was hateful to us, or just personality conflicts. When unity goes, *worry will reign*, and Holy Spirit given confidence will be nowhere to be found. The atmosphere for standing firm is the atmosphere of unity in the body of Christ.

There were two ladies in Philippi (evidently prominent in the church) who weren't getting along. They were in a very open, very public disagreement. One of my seminary professors pronounced their names "odorous" and "soon-touchy". Notice how Paul deals with them. In verse 2 he pleads with them to be unified. The phrase "I urge" is translated "I entreat", "I implore", "I plead" in other translations. It is a very strong appeal. What is he pleading with them to do? He is pleading with them to be of the same mind in the Lord. The NASB says, "live in harmony in the Lord." He is reminding them that they are on the same side and the enemy is out there. It is a tragedy when soldiers in the same army get in fights with one another. Do you know when soldiers usually get in fights with one another? It is when they are not engaging the enemy!

Paul doesn't belittle these ladies. They were valuable soldiers in the Lord's army before they began fighting one another. Paul recounts their great track record in verse three. He brings a third party in to try to restore the unity. He realized that until these feuding ladies came together in unity, the church was crippled in its witness. This unity is no minor matter. Let me state it once more. Doubt and *worry* flourish in an atmosphere of disunity. In Ephesians 4:3 we see a strong word to emphasize keeping unity in the body. It says that we must be "diligent to preserve the unity." Standing firm requires preserving unity with other believers. That isn't easy!

Standing firm in an unstable world requires saying "no" to personal "rights" and preferences and in the unity that comes out of that, doubt is squelched.

II. We Must Practice Joy (vv. 4-5)

There is no joy in a divided church! Joy is something that has a supernatural origin. It is one of the characteristics of the fruit that only the Holy Spirit produces. Only those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells can experience true joy. A non-Christian can certainly experience momentary happiness, but not supernatural joy. Happiness depends on what happens, but joy depends on who is in control of our life. Joy is not tied to circumstances. Joy is that underlying confidence that God is in control and in His time it is all going to be okay and we are going to be conformed to Christ and He is going to be glorified. Do you see where joy and worry cannot coexist? Nothing can rob a Christian of true joy except that which grieves or quenches the Holy Spirit in us who is the source of true joy.

A. The Parameters of This Joy (v. 4)

It is "in the Lord." We rejoice because we are in Christ and in Him everything that is allowed in our lives is designed to conform us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:28-29). We do not look outside these parameters for joy; joy it is not to be found except "in the Lord." It is not found in the accumulation of stuff or worldly acclaims or position or prestige. It is in the Lord and in our confidence concerning our fellowship and walk with him that we experience joy.

B. The Possibility of This Joy (v. 5)

I believe that this is a description of a life that can rejoice in the Lord always. It is a life that is known for its "gentleness." This is a hard word to translate. *It means charity toward the faults of others, and mercy toward the failures of others.* It is quite the opposite of self-centeredness. In other translations, it is translated, "graciousness", "unselfishness", and "reasonableness". A critical, "no mercy" self-centered life spells the end of the possibility of joy, and it opens the door to worry. People without joy cannot stand firm.

In addition to a gracious, unselfish approach to others, joy comes when we live in light of the fact that the Lord is at hand. That could be referring to His second coming or it could be referring to His nearness to us now. I believe in this context it is referring to His nearness to us now. We can rejoice always in every circumstance and live without worry because the Lord is at hand; He is our strength and as the Bible says in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

To stand firm in an unstable world, to overcome worry, we must preserve unity and practice joy.

III. We Must Put Away Worry (vv. 6-7)

The CSB says, Philippians 4:6-7 (CSB): "Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." *You cannot "stand firm" and be filled with worry at the same time.* That word translated "anxious" or "worry" means to be pulled in different directions. It is probably best translated "worry". It is interesting that

the old English word for “worry” means to strangle. Nothing will strangle your joy and your ability to stand firm in the Lord like worry.

Someone has divided our worries into two categories today. The first is “macro-worries”. That is referring to worries that include the whole planet. It is worrying about “global warming” or the coming ice age. It is worrying about epidemics, food and water shortages, and large asteroids hitting the earth. The second type of worry is “micro-worries”. These are more personal in nature. It is the worry that maybe I have cancer, what if I lose my job, what if my spouse leaves me, etc. There’s never any shortage of things to worry about. The gloom and doom economists seem to continually be predicting that things are going to get worse. One study from “experts” came out saying that coffee contributes to cancer of the pancreas and just a few hours another study from “experts” showed that coffee helps prevent pancreatic cancer. I choose to believe the second study because I really like coffee! Several years ago Time Magazine published a study that showed that the oil in fish cuts the chances of heart attack drastically, but it increases the risk of breast cancer by 65%. In the midst of all this information which threatens to pull us in all different directions, we will either worry or pray. Let’s look at the kind of prayer that enables us to “stand firm in the Lord.”

A. The Scope of Prayer (v. 6a)

The scope of this prayer is found in those words “in everything”. It literally says, “in every little thing”. I don’t know about you, but I have more trouble trusting Him in the “little things” than in the things that seem “big” to us. A lady came to the London Pastor G. Campbell Morgan and asked, “Should we pray about the little things?” He answered, “Can you think of anything that is a big thing to God?” There is nothing too great for His power and nothing too small for his care.

B. The Specifics of Prayer (v. 6b)

He uses several words for the specific types of prayer. The first is “prayer”. This is a general umbrella term and it includes worship and praise. When you feel yourself being pulled in several directions, praise Him. Praise and worship set our mind and our eyes upon Him. When He is our focus, our actual or potential problems are seen in the proper perspective.

The next word used is supplication. It refers to praying for specific needs. It is translated “petition” in some translations. We make specific petitions about that brother who really gets under our skin. We specifically commit the future of our retirement account to the Lord. We begin to pray Scriptures that apply to the object of our anxiety. When the great prayer warrior, George Mueller died, they found some 30,000 names of people he had prayed for regarding their salvation. When they came to Christ, he would check their name off. His main ministry was providing for orphans and it was a totally faith ministry. He never sent out a fund-raising letter; he just prayed. God time after time answered Mueller’s specific petitions. It included one morning answering a prayer for milk for the children by causing a milk wagon to break down in front of the orphanage as the children were being seated even though they had no milk to give them!

The third word that he used for this prayer was “thanksgiving”. In the midst of circumstances that threaten our ability to “stand fast” we accompany our petitions with thanksgiving. The primary application here is not thanksgiving for what He has done in the past. The better interpretation is thanksgiving for what He is doing in us through the circumstance that is pulling us apart and what He is going to do in answer to our prayer. To pray with thanksgiving is one of the most powerful forms of faith. We are thanking Him instead of doubting or questioning Him. We are resting in his sovereign providence and expressing our trust through thanksgiving.

C. The Satisfaction of Prayer (v. 7)

When we refuse to be worried and pray, offer up supplications, and wrap them in thanksgiving, the result will be God's kind of peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. It guards our hearts and minds from what? It guards them from worry!

How do we "stand firm"? We preserve unity, practice joy, and persevere in prayer.

IV. We Must Ponder the Right Things (v. 8)

In past studies we have looked in depth at these eight categories of what we set our mind on. But I want to just briefly lay them out before you. Standing fast over the long haul requires that our mind be constantly set on the right things. Proverbs 23:7; "For as he thinks within himself, so he is..." If your thinking is not in agreement with Scripture, your actions will not be according to Scripture. We are told in 2 Corinthians 10:5b: "...*we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." What characterizes a thought life that is captive to the obedience of Christ?

- Things that are true – The source of truth on this earth is the Word of God. Jesus said in John 17:17: "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." When you fill your mind with God's truth, you will be stable and stand firm in the Lord will not worry.
- Things that are honorable – That which is honorable and worthy of respect.
- Things that are right – Whatever is in perfect harmony with God's Word.
- Things that are pure – This speaks of that which is morally clean and undefiled.
- Things that are lovely – It refers to that which is endearing and pleasing; don't set your thoughts on the ugly things of life. We don't deny that they exist; we just don't set our mind on them.
- Things that are of good repute – It refers to that which is winning, positive, and attractive.
- Things that are excellent – It is that which challenges you to excellence in any area of your life.
- Things that are worthy of praise – things that merit praise or approval from God.

He then tells us what to do with these eight categories – "meditate on these things". In other words keep your mind set on things that fit in one of these eight categories. If that which makes its way into our mind does not fit one of these categories, we don't allow it to make itself at home in our mind; we take it captive and march it to the door and kick it out!

If you would stand firm in an unstable world, there is one other thing you must do.

Conclusion (v. 9)

Remember that the God of peace is the One who gives victory over worry. When our mind is set on Him, and we live in Holy Spirit empowered obedience, the "God of peace" will be with us as His Holy Spirit indwells us and when that is happening, nothing can take away that peace which means that nothing can cause us to worry.

All scripture taken from the NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Scripture taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.