

Principles for Stability in Your Christian Life

Pt 4

ANXIOUS FREE LIVING

Pt 2

Philippians 4:1-7

Luke 12:22-34

²² Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. ²³ Life is more than food, and the body *is more* than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? ²⁵ And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁶ If you then are not able to do *the* least, why are you anxious for the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more *will He clothe* you, O *you* of little faith?

²⁹ “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, **nor have an anxious mind.** ³⁰ For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. ³¹ But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

³² **“Do not fear,** little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Introduction:

We all have to admit that worry is a common temptation in life--for many it is a favorite pastime. America, the most affluent society in the world is also the most worry-filled society in the world--that is, if spending on security, mental illnesses, and intoxicants are any indication. Americans worry, and worry is a sin. It is neither insignificant, nor inconsequential. And for the Christian, it is absolutely contrary to faith Christ.

Jesus categorically prohibited worry in a familiar portion of the Sermon on the Mount--**Matthew 6:25-34**. Three times in that short passage He commanded, "Do not worry!", and the way He said it shows the comprehensiveness of His charge. In verse 25 He acknowledges worry as a common practice and says, "Stop worrying;" in verses 31 and 34 He uses the same word, but in a way that means "Don't even start worrying." To continue worrying about anything, or to start worrying in the first place, is to violate the Lord's command.

If you worry, what kind of faith do you manifest? "Little faith," according to Jesus (**Matt. 6:30**). Now if you are a child of God, by definition you have a Heavenly Father. To act like you don't--nervously asking, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink? With what shall I clothe myself?"--is to act like an unbeliever in God's eyes (vv. 31-32).

Think about it this way: Christians who worry believe God can redeem them, break the shackles of Satan, take them from hell to heaven, put them into His kingdom, and give them eternal life, but just don't think He can get them through the next couple of days. That is pretty ridiculous, isn't it? That we can believe God for the greater gift and then stumble and not believe Him for the lesser one reveals an embarrassing lack of faith.

The Worrier Strikes Out at God

Someone might say, "Why make a big deal out of worry? It's just a trivial sin." No, it is not. I suspect a majority of mental illnesses and some physical illnesses are directly related to worry. Many cases of drunkenness and drug addiction are symptomatic of worry. And because of worry, many make foolish life decisions, incurring painful consequences. Worry is devastating. But more important than what worry does to you is what you are communicating about God. When you worry you are saying in effect, "God, I just don't think I can trust You." Worry strikes a blow at the person and character of God.

The Worrier Disbelieves Scripture

It breaks my heart to hear some Christians claim to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, and then live as perpetual worriers. If you do that, you are saying one thing out of one side of your mouth, and another thing out of the other. It is incongruous to say how much you believe the Bible and then worry about God fulfilling what He says in it.

The Worrier Is Mastered by Circumstances

When you worry, you are choosing to be mastered by your circumstances instead of by the truth of God. The vicissitudes and trials of life pale in comparison to the greatness of salvation.

Jesus wants you to realize it doesn't make sense to believe God can save you from eternal hell, but not help you in the practical matters of life. The Apostle Paul reflects a similar desire in **Ephesians 1:18-19**: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." When you catch yourself worrying, go back to Scripture and let God open your eyes again.

The Worrier Distrusts God

When you worry, you are not trusting your Heavenly Father. That means you don't know Him well enough. Take heart--there's an effective remedy: Study the Word of God to find out who He really is and how He has supplied the needs of His people in the past. That will build confidence for the future. Stay fresh in the Word every day so that God is in your mind. Otherwise Satan is apt to move into the vacuum and tempt you to worry about something. Let God's track record in Scripture and in your own life assure you that worry is needless because of God's bounty, senseless because of God's promise, useless because of its impotence to do anything productive, and faithless because it is characteristic of unbelievers.

Worry Is Unwise Because of Our Future

Jesus said, "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (**Matt. 6:34**). He was saying, "Don't worry about the future. Even though it will have its share of problems, they have a way of

working themselves out at the time. Just deal with them as they come, for there's no way to solve them in advance." Providing for tomorrow is good, but worrying about tomorrow is sin because God is the God of tomorrow just like He is the God of today.

Lamentations 3:23 tells us His mercies "are new every morning." He feeds us like He fed the Children of Israel--with just enough manna for the day.

Worrying paralyzes you, making you too upset to accomplish anything productive. It will seek to do that to you by taking you mentally into tomorrow until you find something to worry about. Refuse to go along for the ride. The Lord says you have enough to deal with today. Apply today's resources to today's needs or you will lose today's joy.

God gives you the glorious gift of life today; live in the light and full joy of that day, using the resources God supplies. Don't push yourself into the future and forfeit the day's joy over an anticipated tomorrow that may never happen. Today is all you really have, for God permits none of us to live in tomorrow until it turns into today.

Understand this: God gives you strength one day at a time. He gives you what you need when you need it and doesn't encumber you with excess baggage. Perhaps your worst fear is how you'd handle a loved one's death. Let me assure you as a pastor who has kept watch over many Christians finding themselves in that situation, this is the attitude I most often encounter: "It is so wonderful how God has sustained me! I naturally miss my beloved, but I feel such incredible strength and confidence and a gladness in my heart that my loved one is with the Lord." God gives us His grace in the hour we need it. If we worry about the future now, we double our pain without having the grace to deal with it.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever" (Heb. 13:8). That means He will be doing the same thing tomorrow that He was doing yesterday. If you have any question about the future, look at the past. Did He sustain you then? Don't worry--He will sustain you in the future as well.

There is in chapter 12 a very long discourse given by Jesus. It actually starts in chapter 12 verse 1 and runs all the way to chapter 13 verse 9. That is one event, one place, one discourse with a couple of interruptions to answer some questions, but nonetheless this is one long teaching time with the Lord Jesus. And here in His teaching in verses 22 to 34 the issue is in the Kingdom of God we can have anxiety-free living. Our Lord told people they should not be anxious. They should not worry. And they should not be afraid. Anxiety-free living, worry-free living, fear-free living is part of what the Lord offered those who put their trust in Him. It is not just heavenly bliss and heavenly peace and heavenly joy, but here and now there is peace and joy to be found.

If you will notice the emphasis of this passage comes in three particular commands. Verse 22, "Do not be anxious." Verse 29, "Do not keep worrying." Verse 32, "Do not be afraid." They could all be translated with the word "stop." Stop being anxious, stop worrying, stop being afraid.

Lesson:

I.Worry is a failure to understand God's priority.

22 Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. 23 Life is more than food, and the body *is more* than clothing.

"Do not be anxious for your life." Now what do you mean by "life?" Your physical life, He explains it, meaning what you eat. Don't be anxious about your body, what you're going to wear.

Now this deeply concerned people in Jesus' day. I mean, they basically lived to survive. There were no fast-food places, no stores to go buy the endless elements of clothing that are available to us. If you wanted to eat, you had to grind it out yourself and cook it yourself and do all the preparation. And if you wanted clothing you went somewhere and you bought thread and you...you made it on a loom and you made the fabric or you bought the fabric and you made the garment and if you were poor you had a real struggle for your food and struggle for your clothing and, I mean, **1 Timothy 6:8** says, "With food and covering be content." And that was what life was about. It was about getting enough meals each day to survive and the clothes you needed to stay warm and to be protected from the blazing heat of the middle eastern sun. But He says, "Look, don't worry about your life, don't worry about what you're going to eat to support your life. Don't worry about your body, what you're going to put on." Verse 23, "For life is more than food and the body than clothing."

Here's another way to say that. You exist for a higher reason, okay? You exist for a higher reason. Life is more than food and you have a body for more reasons than just clothing. In other words, God didn't make you so that you could be like an animal. You're not just an eating machine. You're not just the ultimate end of the food chain. You're not the final product of evolution. And your body is not designed as something that's just supposed to be clothed for its environmental protection. It's really not about that at

all. You're not an eating machine and a mannequin. You know, it's hard to convince our culture of that. Food and fashion...food and fashion...OD'ed on restaurants and clothes. But without God, you are an eating machine and a mannequin. But God didn't give His people life for that reason. I'm not here just to exist. It's in God that I live and move and have my being. But God has a purpose for my life. I'm under divine priority. The simple idea is this, folks, get it. For those who are in the Kingdom, if God gave you life, and He did, if He wants you to live, and He does if you're alive, if He brought you into His Kingdom, and He has, then He has a purpose for you to fulfill in His Kingdom to His glory and so He will sustain you to that fulfillment. Okay?

I mean, it wouldn't make any sense for God to say, "I will save you and I will give you eternal life, I'll give you spiritual life, and I have a purpose for your life and a destiny and a plan and a purpose and I gifted you and I've called you, and I've laid out circumstances and, man, if you can just keep yourself alive to fill this deal out, this will be really good." No. In all honesty, the people who are not in God's family come and go and live and die with no contribution to the divine Kingdom. But those of us who are His are fulfilling divine purpose and that's why you can say with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not...what?...want." He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me through the valley of the shadow of death and out the other side. The earth is the Lord and all that is in it, the Psalmist says.

So if God gave you life, and He did, if God redeemed you and He did, if God has a purpose for your life and He does, then He will provide what you need to survive. So be rich toward God and you will have the promise that as you're rich toward God, He'll be lavishly rich toward you. As long as He has that unfolding plan in your life, He will sustain it. We have a life, we have a body for the purposes of God to live to His glory, to fulfill His will, to fulfill His

plan and as long as that plan is operating, He will sustain us. You don't have to build bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger barns to take care of yourself, to protect yourself. Be wise, be faithful, don't be foolish, be a good steward, do some planning for the future, but you're not the one who has obligated himself to your care, God has. No need to horde so that you can survive in the future, you will be sustained by the Creator until His purpose for your life ends, He'll feed you till the very, very end. You can divest yourself of everything, everything you have, that wouldn't change God's commitment to sustain you until it's your time to enter into His heaven. So you have to understand the priority, right? And the priority is spiritual purpose. If you understand that, if you understand God's gifted you, He's called you, He's regenerated you, He's put you into His family, He's put you into a place of witness and ministry and service, and all He wants you to do is live to His glory...and He will take care of your life. Your life is not about food. Your life is not about clothing. It's not about making sure you can survive. That's God's commitment, that's the priority. And if you understand the divine priority, that is that you live and exist for the purpose of God, and God will sustain your life until that purpose is fulfilled, then you don't have to worry about it. Worry then fails to understand divine priority.

II. Worry is a failure to understand God's provision.

²⁴ Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?

Now I think He picks birds because they're sort of, I guess, the most fragile...they just are here and kind of gone, but they are a great illustration of divine provision. Do you know that every crow that's ever lived, every raven that's ever lived God wanted to live? And for however long God wanted that bird to live, He provided its food. And if God feeds birds that only in a very modest way, in a very limited way give Him glory, as any of His creation does, don't you think He's going to take care of making sure you can eat who have the highest and noblest capacity to give Him glory? This, by the way, is also in [Matthew 6:26](#), it's an analogy from the lesser to the greater, common in Jewish teaching. Consider the ravens...and I just think this is probably true, anyway Jesus is teaching in the outdoors typically and wherever there was an agricultural society, wherever there was a field, there were crows. That's why we have such a thing as a scarecrow. And that was certainly a problem over there. By the way, there were more birds in Israel, probably still true, than any place on the planet. That is because the birds that migrate out of northern Europe out of all of Europe and even stretching into the Middle East and the East, if they want to migrate south in the cold winter, they have to go through Israel. It's the largest area of bird migration on the planet because east is the desert, barren with little or nothing and west is the Mediterranean, that little land is the most fertile soil in the world. And it's always been a dense place for bird migration. The Israeli Air Force has lost more pilots and more planes to birds, decapitating pilots by going through the cockpit because they're flying so fast into a flock than they have in military combat. And all the planes that go in and out of Ben Gurion and Tel Aviv where I've gone many times are having to deal with these birds and so they've done migration studies to determine what flocks come at what period of the year and how they come and where they come and where they land and they've relocated pools of water, etc., etc., to protect the jets because the birds get in the engines, and that's obviously a problem. Massive place of bird migration which

fits the biblical scene in Ezekiel and Revelation where after Armageddon the carnage of the dead bodies in that part of the world is so great, it says the birds come and eat them. It may indicate that during that migration season is when that event might happen. But anyway, birds were everywhere.

Job 38:41 says, "Who prepares for the raven its nourishment when its young cry to God and wander about without food?"

Psalms 104: 25.27, "There is the sea great and broad in which are swarms without number animals both small and great," verse 27, "They all wait for Thee to give them their food in due season."

In Psalm 145:15, "The eyes of all look to Thee and Thou dost give them their food in due time. Thou dost open Thy hand that Thou dost satisfy the desire of every living thing."

Psalms 147:9 " He gives to the beast its food and to the young ravens which cry."

Rabbi Simeon said, "In my life I've never seen a stag as a drier of figs, I've never seen a lion as a porter, I've never seen a fox as a merchant, yet they're all nourished without worry. If they who are created to serve me are nourished, how much more ought I who am created to serve my Maker to be nourished?"

Thomas Watson said, "This life is like an inn, you spend a couple of nights there, but you never forget where your home is."

In his book "God's Psychiatry," Charles L. Allen tells this story:

"As World War II was drawing to a close, the Allied armies gathered up many hungry orphans. They were placed in camps where they were well-fed. Despite excellent care, they slept poorly. They seemed nervous and afraid. Finally, a psychologist came up with the solution. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold after he was put to bed. This particular piece of bread was just to be held—not eaten. The piece of bread produced wonderful results. The children went to bed knowing instinctively they would have food to eat the next day. That guarantee gave the children a restful & contented sleep."

III. Worry is a failure to understand God's privilege

²⁵ And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁶ If you then are not able to do *the* least, why are you anxious for the rest?

It's a measurement from the tip of your elbow to the tip of your fingers. Turns out to be about 18 inches, that's how they measured things in cubits. So is it saying which of you by being anxious can add 18 inches to your height? I mean, who wants to go from 5'10" to 7'6", there's no point in that? And whoever thought you could do it by worrying? No, He's not talking about that, he's using cubit simply as a metaphor for length and He's talking about the length of your life, not your height. And He's simply saying, "Do you think by worrying

you're going to add to your life span?" This is a matter of divine privilege.

hélíkiá: maturity, i.e. age

Original Word: ἡλικία, ας, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: hélíkiá

Phonetic Spelling: (hay-lik-ee'-ah)

Short Definition: age, stature

Definition: age, term of life; full age, maturity; stature.

HELPS Word-studies

2244 *hēlikía* (from *hēlix*, "full-aged") – properly, the *end-stage* of a *full life-span* (Mt 6:27; Jn 9: HE IS OF AGE ask him

Worry doesn't help. If you worry about how long you're going to live and you spend all your money on that and you waste all your money, really waste all your money being unable to add anything to your life, that's not good stewardship. And I'm not talking about being healthy. You need to be healthy. You need to beat your body into subjection. You need to be reasonable in how you conduct your life and how you use the resources that God gives you and not be dissipated and gluttonous and all of that kind of stuff that steals your energy and robs you of the strength that the Lord desires to use. But you're not going to do anything to add to your life. In fact, if you worry about it, you're going to contribute to your disability. You know, worry, anxiety and fear affects the heart, the circulation, nervous system, the glands, everything else. We are...here's the point...we are not the determiners of the span of our lives, this is divine privilege. So you don't want to be ignorant of God's privilege. It is His privilege to determine where we're born, to whom we're born, when we're born and how long we're here. God has given us life. He will sustain that life until our service is done. Worry makes no contribution. The Lord gives, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. If we live obediently to His Word, He will sustain our life to the end. You can shorten it by sin, but you can't lengthen it beyond the purposes of God.; Heb 11:11, etc.).

IV. Worry is a failure to understand divine preference.

27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?

I know we live in a society that teaches evolution, and, you know, we're just supposed to be the latest form of an ape, we're just the last monkey, at least the newest monkey at this particular point in the evolutionary process. And we're no different than anything else. We're just animals and these environmentalists and these lovers of animals get all caught up in this. But look, we're Christians and you can look at the world of God's creation and you will see a massive gap between everything He created and man created in His image, and we bear the divine preference.

Our Lord turns from the issue of food to the issue of clothing here. In a physical world, those are the two things people are concerned about. They're concerned about nourishing their body and protecting it. And He makes a comparison that reveals His preference for people, especially, of course, His own children. And He says, "Consider the lilies." The word "lilies" is not something to be understood in a technical sense because in verse 28 He says, "God so arrays the grass." The word "lilies" is broad enough, the word "grass" is definitive enough to let us know that He's talking about the wild grasses that grew all through the Middle East and the land of Israel that flowered in various ways. In **1 Peter 1:24** Peter quoting from Isaiah, "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass, the grass withers and the flower falls off." So this is just Jesus saying, and He may have pointed as He may

have to the birds. I mean, consider...look at the wild flowers growing all over at the end of these stems of grass. There were so many different kinds of them in Israel. You see terms in the land of Israel, even in ancient times like Iris and Nasturtium and Gladioli, those are more modern terms, Latin derivative terms to describe various kinds of flowering plants. They even had certain kinds of Daisies and Poppies, such as we have in California, and Cap-lilies. It's just the general grasses that flower. Look at them how they grow. They don't toil. They don't spin. They don't labor over their clothes. They don't labor over their beauty. And yet if you take a petal off of a flower, even a wild flower, and you look under a microscope at its intricate texture, color, design, form...it's staggering. You can take the most beautifully manufactured garment out of wool or out of cotton or out of some synthetic and look at it under a microscope and it looks rough, and you look at a flower petal and there's a refinement there that only God can make. And so He says, "Look, they don't work to get their clothing. I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory didn't clothe himself like one of these."

Now the best dressed man in the history of Israel was Solomon. If you read 1 Kings 10 and 2 Chronicles 9, you read about the lavish attire and the lavish life of Solomon. And as the best-dressed man, he had the finest garments, but even Solomon in all his glory didn't wear things like the petals of a flower.

V. Worry is a failure to understand God's paternity.

²⁹ "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. ³⁰ For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that

you need these things. ³¹ But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

Psalm 34 verse 8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good. How blest is the man who takes refuge in Him. How blest is the man who takes refuge in Him."

Verse 9, "O fear the Lord, you His saints, for to those who fear Him, who worship Him, who honor Him, there is no want."

Verse 10, "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing." That's what the psalmist says from God.

Verse 15, "The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry." God knows, God hears.

Verse 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, the Lord delivers him out of them all." God takes care of His own.

Psalm 37

"Trust in the Lord, do good, dwell in the land, cultivate faithfulness, delight yourself in the Lord, and He'll give you the desires of your heart." You delight in Him and He'll take care of all the rest.

Verse 5, "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him." Just trust Him, "And He'll deliver." He'll do it.

Verse 7, "Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and He will provide."

In fact, verse 9 says, "Evil doers will be cut off and those who wait for the Lord will inherit the land."

Verse 11 says, "The humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity." In other words, the psalmist again understands the provision of God if He is honored and trusted, He provides.

And then down in verse 25,

"I have been young," says David, "and now I'm old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or His descendants begging bread."

Spurgeon, "If there was an ant at the door of your granary begging for help,

it would not ruin you to give him a grain of your wheat." –"Remember, you are but a tiny insect at the door of God's all-sufficiency...do not doubt His sure supply!"

Haggai 1:5

⁵ Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways!

⁶ "You have sown much, and bring in little;
 You eat, but do not have enough;
 You drink, but you are not filled with drink;

You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;
 And he who earns wages,
 Earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes.”

⁷ Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Consider your ways! ⁸ Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the Lord. ⁹ “*You* looked for much, but indeed *it came to* little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says the Lord of hosts. “Because of My house that *is in* ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. ¹¹ For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of *your* hands.”

VI. Worry is a failure to understand divine pleasure.

³² “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What does please God? Where does God find His pleasure? Where does He find His delight? Amazingly that takes us down to verse 32. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the Kingdom." He didn't say He'd give you something out of the Kingdom. He doesn't say He'd give you

resources from the Kingdom. He says He'll give you...what?...the Kingdom. Your Father has chosen gladly, eudioko(?), to delight in, to take pleasure in. And that's a wonderful translation, He's chosen gladly. What delights God is to give you everything you need...every resource in His Kingdom. And in **Romans 14:17** it says, "The Kingdom of God is righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit." Everything that brings about righteousness and joy and peace, every resource in the Kingdom your Father delights to give to you.

Spurgeon preached

"THE CHIEF CONCERN of a man should be, to see that his own soul is right in the sight of God. Solomon said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Many persons think a great deal about the adorning of the body, but do not think anything about the ornaments of the soul. The feeding of the physical frame engrosses much care, but the supply of spiritual food is often neglected. Yet, O man, thou thyself art better than thy body! Thine immortal soul is worth far more than that poor carcase of thine which will soon become food for worms; and all the things that thou hast, what are they compared with thine inner self,—thy real self,—thy heart, thy soul, thy spirit?"

