

Place: Lurgan Baptist 10:5:2015

Reading: Philippians 4:4-9

THE JOURNEY TO JOY

16. WINNING OVER WORRY

Joe used to worry all the time. His friends called him, “*Joe the Worrier.*” One day Bill was walking down the street when he saw something that amazed him. Joe was bouncing along as happy as he could be. He was whistling and it seemed as if he had not a care in the world. Bill could hardly believe his eyes so he crossed over to see what had happened. He asked, “*Joe what has happened to you ? I've never seen a happier man.*” Joe said, “*It's wonderful Bill, I have not worried now for several weeks now.*” Bill continued, “*That's great Joe, but how did you manage it ?*” Well,” said Joe, “*I've hired a man to do all the worrying for me.*” “*What,*” said Bill, “*You've hired someone to do all the worrying for you.*” “*Right,*” said Joe. “*Well,*” said Bill “*that is something new, tell me how much does he charge you ?*” “*A thousand dollars a week.*” “*What,*” said Bill, “*A thousand dollars a week, how could you possibly raise a thousand dollars a week to pay him ?*” Joe replied, “*That's his worry.*”

Wouldn't that be great ? Don't you wish that it were possible for someone else to handle all your worries for you. No one can deny that we live in a world of worry. The slogan for many 21st Christians is, “*Why trust when you can worry ?*” Worry is a favourite

pastime for many people. Worry seems to be an integral part of our living and if we live we worry. But what do we mean when we talk about worry ? The Greek word for “*worry,*” is a combination of two words (*merimna*) the first means, “*to divide,*” and the second means “*mind.*” Put them together and you have a definition of worry. *Worry is a divided mind. To be anxious is to be divided and distracted.* “*Worry,*” literally means “*to be pulled in opposite directions.*” Do you get the picture ? Our hopes pull us one way and our fears pull us another. We are torn apart by the cares in our lives. (Lk 10:38) Now if anyone had an excuse for worry it was the apostle Paul. His beloved Christians at Philippi were squabbling among themselves and he was not there to help them.

Two sisters in the assembly were at it bringing division into the church. Along with potential division at Philippi Paul had to face division among the believers at Rome. (1:14-17) Added to these burdens was the possibility of his own death. Yes, Paul had a good excuse to worry, but he did not, instead he took time to explain to us how to win over worry. You see, worry is a divided mind and worry robs us of joy. ***Circumstances*** rob us of joy that's why we need the ***Single Mind:*** (Ch1) ***People*** rob us of joy that's why we need the ***Submissive Mind:*** (Ch 2) ***Things*** rob us of joy that's we need the ***Spiritual Mind:*** (Ch 3) ***Worry*** robs us of joy, that's why we need the ***Secure Mind:*** (Ch 4) The antidote to worry is the Secure Mind: “*And the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” (4:7) The word “*keep,*” is a Greek word which means “*to*

guard.” It can also be translated “ *kept with a garrison.*” (2 Cor 11:32) In a garrison we are protected. We have a defence, someone to shield us from danger. We are guarded. My that’s the word that Paul uses here. God’s peace will stand like a guard at the door of our minds, protecting us, guarding us. Now when you have the secure mind, the peace of God guards you (4:7) and the God of peace guides you. (4:9) With that kind of protection, why worry ? Now if we are to conquer worry and the experience the secure mind, we must meet the conditions that God has laid down. Notice first of all Paul talks about,

(1) THE OUTWARD ASPECT OF OUR LIVES

Do you recall what was said of the early Christians ?
“ *Having favour with all the people.*” (Acts 2:47)
They were not “ *iceberg,*” Christians, they were not believers who had a “ *chip on their shoulder,*” they were not saints who were always “ *getting into a twist,*” no, there was something winsome, holy, attractive, Christ-like about them. My we may not be “ *of the world,*” but we have to live “ *in the world,*” Paul sees us here mixing with society for he talks about “ *all men.*” (4:5) How then are we to live in society before “ *all men,*” ?

(a) WE ARE TO LIVE RADIANTLY:

What are we to do ? “ *Rejoice ?*” In whom are we to rejoice ? “ *the Lord.*” When are we to rejoice ?
“ *Always.*” Perhaps the spirits of the Philippian believers were down. Outside pressure from the

enemies of the cross and now division on the inside had them discouraged. So Paul told them, “ *Rejoice.*” In this letter the word “ *rejoice,*” is used nine times, and the word “ *joy,*” five times. Now when Paul exhorted the Philippians to rejoice, he was not asking them to seek happiness. Joy is not happiness. Joy is a relationship. One of the best definitions of joy that I ever read goes like this, “ *Joy is the flag flying high from the castle of my heart, for the King is in residence there.*” My are you rejoicing Christian ? Fellow-preacher, Sunday School teacher is your ministry a joyful ministry ? The problem is that some Christians have a joy that is so deep it rarely rises to the surface. Vance Havner reckoned that he had seen “ *more cheerful faces on iodine bottles than on some Christians.*” After years of Christian experience the saintly George Mueller had to confess,

“ *I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how the inner life might be nourished.*”
There are many who will serve the Lord as long as everything goes well, as long as they have money in the bank, health, and everything they want. But when circumstances change their faith fades. Paul tells us that we are to rejoice in the Lord **always**. You see, hard circumstances had not made Paul bitter. I mean Paul’s situation was so that there appeared to be no reason for him to rejoice. Here he was imprisoned, facing possible death, chained twenty four hours a day to a

Roman soldier, Epaphroditus was about to leave him to return to Philippi with this letter. Here's a man facing an uncertain future and yet from prison walls there comes the shout of victory, "*rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.*" Paul is joyful in spite of **his Flogging:** Do you see him with Silas in the dungeon at Philippi? His back is bleeding, his hands are tied, his feet are fastened. Now shall we see if he is rejoicing or not? Paul said, "*always.*" Is he talking rhetoric or reality? Listen, "*at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God.*" (Acts 16:25) Paul is joyful in spite of **his Fetters:** he is chained by the wrist twenty hours a day to a Roman soldier. Paul is joyful in spite of **his Future:** for as he waits for his trial he does not know whether it is life or death. Would you be joyful in such circumstances?

My life can be grim. Sometimes we are called to bear burdens that crush us to the dust. Painful bereavements may cause us to long for death. Regrets and remorse may tear out our hearts, and haunt us and torment us until we groan of agony of soul. Paul's answer is always the same: think about the Lord. We are not to rejoice in what overwhelms us, that would be foolish. We are to rejoice in the Lord. (a)

(b) WE ARE TO LIVE REASONABLY:

Do you see what he says in (4:5)? Now that word "*moderation,*" has been translated in a variety of ways. It has been translated "*yieldingness, gentleness, big-heartedness, sweet reasonableness.*" Paul uses the same word in (2 Cor 10:1) when he says, "*Now I*

Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." What is Paul saying? Just this, let all the world know that you will meet a man half-way. Do you have a reputation for gentleness? Now Paul is not talking about doctrinal or ethical compromise. (2:15) Do you recall the context? Two women have fallen out in the church, each determined to have their own way, insisting upon their rights, not willing to yield ground, so Paul says, "*Let your sweet-reasonableness be known unto all men.*" Why are many of the Lord's people so unreasonable? They forego even common courtesies in their determination to have their own way. Surely if anyone should be a gentleman it's a Christian? Surely if anyone should be prepared to go the second mile it's a believer? "*Let your sweet-reasonableness,*" Why? "*The Lord is at hand.*" Or as the old Quaker translation put's it "***The Lord is at your elbow.***"

You see, the Lord is near ***Beholding us:*** He's see's your every action, pierces your every intent, and is grieved by anything that is not Christ-like. The Lord is near ***Upholding us:*** For its far from easy to be forbearing, and God's people are so difficult to deal with. My we need help to show the "*gentleness of Christ,*" and the Lord is at hand to help. So here is the (1) we are to live radiantly, we are to live reasonably. Are you? Are you a joyful Christian? Among family and neighbours are you known for being sweet? In your relationships with other believers do you have a reputation for gentleness? (1)

(2) THE UPWARD ASPECT OF OUR LIVES

Some years ago a distinguished psychiatrist once addressed the British Medical Association in these words. “ *As one whose whole life has been concerned with sufferings of the mind, I would state that of all the hygienic measures to counteract disturbed sleep, depression of the spirits, and all the miserable sequels of a disturbed mind, I would undoubtedly give first place to the simple habit of prayer.*”

Is that not exactly what Paul is saying ? He’s saying that the Christians antidote for worry is prayer. For when we pray, “ *the peace of God,*” stands like a guard at the door of our mind. Do you remember when the decree went forth in Babylon, that no-one was to pray for a month ? Do you recall what Daniel did ? He prayed. Do you remember how he prayed ? “ *He prayed and give thanks before his God.*” And he made supplication. (Dan 6:10) Prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving. Do you recall the result of his prayer ? He slept like a baby with the lions in the den. He had peace in the midst of the storm. Will you notice that by three golden thoughts Paul gets to the heart of carefree living. He says,

(a) BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING:

Literally it reads, “ *Do not under any circumstances worry about anything.*” The word translated “ *careful,*” means “ *anxious.*” The Lord Jesus Himself introduced the idea behind this verse in the Sermon on the Mount. Do you recall His words ? He said “ *Take no thought (be not careful, full of care, overanxious)*

for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?”

(Matt 6:25) The Lord Jesus pointed to the birds and grass as evidence that God providentially cares for His creatures. The Gentiles, He said, were preoccupied with material things, but those who know God as their Father should be occupied with the affairs of His kingdom. Then “ *all these things,*” will be added unto them. (Matt 6:33) My we are not to worry. Why ? Because we have a Heavenly Father who is all powerful and all loving and who knows what his children need and is able to supply all their need. Yet so often we worry. Do you ever come before the Lord with your nagging cares and pour out your heart to Him ? Do you ever get up from your knees pick up your bag of worries and walk away with them again ?

Like the man who said, “ *I’ve got so many troubles right now that if anything bad happens today, it will be two weeks before I can worry about it.*” Vance Havner said, “ *Worry is like a rocking chair, it will give you something to do but it won’t get you anywhere.*”

Worry ? Why worry ? What can worry do?

It never keeps a trouble from overtaking you.

**It gives you indigestion, and wakeful hours at night,
And fills with gloom the days, however fair and
bright**

**It puts a frown upon the face, and sharpness in the
tone.**

**We're unfit to live with others, and unfit to live
alone**

**Worry ? Why worry ? What can worry do?
It never keeps a trouble from overtaking you**

**Pray ? Why pray ? What can praying do?
Praying really changes things, arranges life anew.
It's good for your digestion, gives peaceful sleep at
night,
And fills the gravest, gloomiest day with rays of
glowing light**

**It puts a smile upon your face, and a love note in
your tone,
Makes you fit to live with others, and fit to live
alone.**

**Pray ? Why Pray ? What can praying do?
It brings God down from heaven, to live and work
with you**

(b) BE PRAYERFUL FOR EVERYTHING:

“ But, (instead of worry) in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God.” Now our requests are known to God already, yet He loves to hear us ask. My prayer is one of many mysterious factors in God's administration of the universe. We do not know how prayer works, but God arranged it to encourage us to come to Him. He longs for us to come, come often, and linger long. He longs for us to talk to Him, tell Him all about our troubles, and make our requests known to Him. My are you prayerful in everything ? *Do you realise that there is*

nothing too great for God's power and that there is nothing too small for God's care ? A couple who did a lot of entertaining in their home had a little boy. Usually visitors would acknowledge him by pressing a few coins into his hand. These small gifts he put in his money box. One day a guest seemed to be unaware of this kindness shown to the child, and so the little boy fetched his money box and rattled it in front of the visitor. The expected contribution was supplied, but afterward the father took the boy aside and said, “ *Son, you are never again to ask a stranger for anything. You are to ask me. I'll never tell you off for asking me.*” And he added, “ *Because I'm your Dad.*” My do you come to your Heavenly Father about anything and everything ? Do you realise that He is interested in every detail of your life ? That He says, “ *If you need anything, come to Me. For I am your Father.*” (a) (b)

(c) BE THANKFUL FOR ANYTHING:

Do you see it ? “ *With thanksgiving,*” (4:6) Someone has said that, “ *prayer without thanksgiving is like a bird without wings, such a prayer cannot rise to heaven, and can find no acceptance with God.*” Do you pray with thanksgiving ? For past favours, present blessings, future hopes ? A bright and cheery old lady in a testimony meeting said, “ *You know dears there is always something for us to be thankful for. I have only two teeth but thank God they both meet.*” My talking to God about everything that concerns us and Him is the second step toward victory over worry. The result is that the “ *peace of God,*” guards the heart and mind. You will remember that Paul was chained to a

Roman soldier guarded day and night 24/7. In like manner, “ *the peace of God,*” stands guard over the two areas that create worry, the heart (wrong feeling) and the mind (wrong thinking) You see, when we give our hearts to the Lord in salvation we experience “ peace with God,” (Rom 5:1) but the “ *peace of God,*” takes us a step further into His blessings. My this does not mean the absence of trials on the outside, but it does mean a quiet confidence within, regardless of circumstances, people, or things. So Paul is talking here about (1) (2) and now,

(3) THE INWARD ASPECT OF OUR LIVES

Did you know that one of the greatest conflicts taking place in the world today is the battle for the control of our minds ? You see, the mind is the control centre of our beings where the direction of lives is established. What goes on in the mind determines what we are, and what we shall become. Three thousand years ago Solomon wrote, “ *For as he thinketh in his heart so is he.*” (Prov 23:7) Someone has said, “ *You are not what you think you are, but what you thank you are.*” Can you understand now why the mind has become a battleground. Did you know that the ads you see on television are designed by a specialist in mind control ? You see, if they can control our attitude toward a product which they are trying to sell, they can control our actions, and ultimately our money. Did you know that Satan tries to control the mind of the child of God ? (Rom 7:23-25) He does it through *the media, through false doctrine,* (1 Tim 4:1) *through repetition, through music, through peer pressure.* Are you ever

surprised how quickly your minds darts from one thing to another ? Have you had the experience of picking up your Bible and as you began to read, you suddenly realised that your mind is miles away ? Or bowing in prayer, and as you prayed you became occupied with other things ? What has happened ? Satan has succeeded in diverting your mind away from the things of God. How can we win the battle for the mind ? Well, God has provided us with a mind screen, a measuring rod or testing device to examine and filter our thoughts. Paul says, there must be

(a) A MEDITATION ON THESE THINGS:

On what things ? The things he lists in (4:8) My do you think on these things ? The word “ *think,*” here means to consider, ponder, dwell on, mull it over and meditate on it. Here then are eight questions by which we can sift our thoughts. **Is it True ?** The word conveys the idea of reality. Dr. Walter Cavert said that on a survey of worry that only 8 per cent of the things people worried about were legitimate matters of concern. The other 92 per cent were either imaginary, never happened or involved matters over which the people had no control anyway. **Is it Honest ?** The idea is, worthy of respect. **Is it Just ?** Does it look at things from God’s perspective ? **Is it Pure ?** This refers to moral purity, especially in sexual matters. Do you allow your mind to dwell on that which is smutty, shabby or soiled ? **Is it Lovely ?** You see, if we are mulling over matters that increase tension and strife with someone, we are not growing in the Lord or enjoying peace of mind. The word refers to that which

is winsome, amiable or agreeable. Is it of **Good Report** ? Literally it means, “ *Does it speak well of ?* ” In other words we are to think of the good things in other people, the things that put them in a good light. Is this what you do ? Is it **Virtuous** ? The word seems to refer to things that have eternal value. Is it **Praiseworthy** ? Is this something God would want me to thinking about ? Does it please Him ? Would it bring praise from Him ? My when you place God’s measuring rod against your internal life, how do you fare ? Are these “ *the things,* ” that you are thinking on ? Do you give much attention to the hygiene of your mind ? Think on these things. You say, “ *I can’t help what comes into my mind.* ” Listen, “ *you can’t prevent a bird flying over your head but you can prevent it making a nest in your hair.* ” Think on these things. And where will such thoughts lead us ? **To Christ.** For in Him all these abstracts are translated into a warm and wonderful personality. (a) But that’s not all, for there must be,

(b) A MANIFESTATION OF THOSE THINGS:

“ *These things,* ” (4:8) but “ *Those things,* ” (4:9) that which has been taught by precept and practice, they are not only to “ *think on,* ” (4:8) but they are to “ *do.* ” (4:9) the virtues that have been taught and lived out before them. My it’s one thing to meditate, it’s another to manifest. But remember “ *these things,* ” are not given for our admiration only, but for their emulation. We are to behold them, and then behave them, to learn them, and then live them. We are to think like Christ, and then live like Christ.

Winning Over Worry. (1) Be Pleasant: (2) Be Prayerful: (3) Be Positive:

David Jeremiah tells the story that in the pioneer days of aviation, a pilot was making a flight around the world. After he was two hours out of his last landing field, he heard a noise in his plane, which he recognized as the gnawing of a rat. He realized that while his plane had been on the ground a rat had gotten in. For all he knew the rat could be gnawing through a vital cable or control of the plane. It was a very serious situation. At first he did not know what to do. It was two hours back to the landing field from which he had taken off and more than two hours to the next field ahead. Then he remembered that the rat is a rodent.

It is not made for heights, it is made to live on the ground and under the ground. Therefore the pilot began to climb. He went up a thousand feet, then another thousand and another until he was more than twenty thousand feet up. The gnawing ceased. The rat was dead. He could not survive in the atmosphere of those heights. More than two hours later the pilot brought the plane safely to the next landing field and found the dead rat. Worry is a rodent. It cannot live in the secret place of the Most High. It cannot breathe in the atmosphere made vital through prayer and familiarity with the Scripture. Worry dies when we ascend to the Lord through Prayer and His Word. It begs the question, are you winning over worry ?