God's Antidote For Anxiety

Philippians 4:6,7 (NKJV)

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world that is totally “stressed out.” Hardly anyone is unaffected by anxiety.

We in America, live in one of the richest, most affluent, most comfortable societies that has ever existed in the history of the world. And yet at the same time we are some of the most anxious, most worriesome, most stressed-out people who have ever lived.

To cope with the anxieties of life, many have resorted to drinking binges......pill binges......shopping binges......or eating binges.
We have more doctors.....more counselors......more therapists.......more psychologists and psychiatrists than any other nation in the world; all specializing in the area of helping people cope with the stresses, worries and anxieties of daily living.

Those who specialize in these fields have come up with a scientific name for virtually every type of worry and fear known to man.....and they can prescribe a medicine cabinet full of pills to lessen the severity of most every type of anxiety; but in the end all they are doing is treating the symptoms without providing a cure.

Only Jesus Christ offers us a cure for anxiety!

The apostle Paul understood our natural tendency to worry and become anxious. And he understood how anxiety is one of the greatest thieves of our joy and peace in the Christian life. And so the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write the words of the scripture text we are looking at this morning.

Let's look at GOD'S ANTIDOTE FOR ANXIETY.

First of all I would have you to notice...........

I. The PROHIBITION (v. 6a)

Philippians 4:6a “Be anxious for nothing........”

1. Don't you just hate it when someone tells you “not to worry?” You're thinking, “If they had to deal with what I’m dealing with,” or “If they could trade places with me for just one day,” they would probably worry too.

2. But this isn't just any old “Tom, Dick or Harry” telling us not to worry, this is the apostle Paul, who is echoing the very same thing Jesus said in Matthew 6:25 (NKJV) “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life.......”
3. Both Jesus and the apostle Paul are condemning worry or anxiety as one of the most foolish, counter-productive, useless activities we can engage in.

Worry and anxiety demonstrates a lack of **FAITH**, **TRUST**, and **CONFIDENCE** in God’s ability to help us handle the daily cares of life.

4. Just how foolish and counter-productive is worrying? Listen to some of these quotes about worry.

   “Worry gives a small thing a big shadow.”
   “Worry is interest we pay on tomorrow’s troubles.”
   “Worry pulls shadows over today’s sunshine.”
   “Worry is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do, but it doesn’t get you anywhere.”
   “Worry is an indication that we think God isn’t capable of looking after us.”
   “Worry is putting question marks where God has put periods.”

5. When Paul says, “**Be anxious for nothing**..” he means **N-O-T-H-I-N-G**!

   **NOTHING INCLUDES** not worrying over anything that happened yesterday.

   **NOTHING INCLUDES** not worrying over anything that “might” happen today.

   **NOTHING INCLUDES** not worrying over anything that could “possibly happen” tomorrow!
“Be anxious for nothing!”

6. That word “nothing” is a very important word here, because when you stop to think about it, **NOTHING IS WHAT CAUSES US THE MOST ANXIETY!** **WORRYING ABOUT “NOTHING” IS WHAT MOST OF US DO BEST!**

Do you know **92%** of the things that cause us to have panic or anxiety attacks are things that will never happen or things that are completely out of our control? In other words **92% of the stuff we worry about is NOTHING!**

Only about **8%** of the things we worry about are real problems we will face in life.

7. **Do you realize over 100 diseases and illnesses** have been directly attributed to chronic worrying? Worrying robs us physically.........mentally.......emotionally.......and spiritually!

8. **And so this prohibition to “Be anxious for nothing” is a critically important part of GOD'S ANTIDOTE FOR ANXIETY.**

9. **But everyone of us knows that's much easier “said than done” right?**

   I mean, we don't overcome anxiousness by simply saying, “OK, I'm NOT going to worry about this!”

10. **Because WORRYING is negative, counter-productive activity, we must replace it with a positive, productive activity.** **Paul goes on to tell us what that is:**
Let's consider .......

II. The PRESCRIPTION (v.6b)

Philippians 4:6b (NKJV) “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”

1. Listen very carefully! The very essence....... the very root of worrying is our lack of faith and trust in GOD to be able to handle the circumstance we are anxious about. In a sense, by being anxious over a particular circumstance we are saying, “God, this one's too big for you so I'm going to have to handle it myself.”

I mean doesn't the mere thought of that sound absolutely ridiculous?

2. What Paul is telling us to do here is to: “Be anxious for NOTHING and PRAY about EVERYTHING.!

In essence what Paul is saying is: “Stop talking to yourself and getting yourself all worked up, and START TALKING TO GOD!”

3. This is the antidote........this is the cure for worry and anxiety! Medically speaking, “an antidote” is a medicine or a remedy to counter-act a deadly poison that has gotten into our system.

**PRAYER is the antidote to counter-act the deadly poison of worry.**

3. I love the way this sixth verse is translated in the J.B. Phillips New Testament:

Philippians 4:6 (Phillips) “Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer.”
4. The late British preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon said it so eloquently:

“Carry your desires to the LORD of your life, the guardian of your soul. Go to Him with two portions of prayer and one of fragrant praise. Do not pray doubtfully, but thankfully. Consider that you have your petitions, and therefore thank GOD for His grace.”

5. Do you know the degree to which you and I worry reveals something about our prayer life? If you are a chronic worrier, it either means you don’t pray very much or you pray, but don’t truly “let go” and let GOD BE GOD!

**ILLUSTRATION**

In his book, “Still Married, Still Sober” David McKenzie talks about a very practical way he put this verse into practice in his own life.

He said, “To act out the principle of turning my worries over to God, I took a paper bag and wrote “GOD” in bold letters and taped it up high on the back of our kitchen door. As I prayed about matters such as my career, my role as a father, and my abilities to be a good husband, I would write down each concern on a piece of paper, and then I would put those pieces of paper in the paper bag marked “GOD.” I made a rule, that if I started worrying about a matter I had turned over to GOD, I had to climb up on a chair and fish that piece of paper out of the bag. I don’t want to admit how much time I spent sifting through those scraps of paper.”

**STILL MARRIED, STILL SOBER** by David McKenzie, p. 117

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6. There are two ways in which prayer acts as an antidote to worry and anxiety.

(A) One, it relieves us of the BURDEN.

When we “worry” or we are “anxious” about something in our lives, all of the weight……all of the stress……and all the burden is squarely upon our shoulders. We are burdened down with trying to figure out our own solutions rather than trusting in GOD for the solution.

But when we pray, we are “rolling the burden” from our shoulders on to the shoulders of God. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30?

Matthew 11:28-30 (NKJV) “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

(B) A second way PRAYER acts as an antidote to ANXIETY is that it helps us to focus on GOD rather than our PROBLEM.

When you and I are anxious about something or worrying about something its all we think about. We think about it in bed at night. We think about throughout the day. It consumes us! It controls us! Because we are so focused on our problem or our circumstance we can’t think about anything else. And when your focus is on that thing you are worried about it just gets bigger and bigger!
PRAYER helps us to focus on how BIG and how GREAT our GOD is. And the more we focus on HOW BIG GOD IS the thing we are worried about starts looking smaller and smaller.

Well we have looked at **THE PROHIBITION** “Be anxious for nothing.”

And we have looked at **THE PRESCRIPTION** “Pray about everything.”

Finally, let’s consider…..

III. **The PROMISE (v.7)**

**Philippians 4:7 (NKJV)** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

1. Paul is telling us what GOD promises to do if we will STOP worrying and START PRAYING.

   He’s not promising that our problems will go away.
   He’s not promising that our circumstance will change for the better by tomorrow. He’s not even promising that our situation won’t get worse before it gets better.

2. He is promising that all the stress, all the turmoil, all the churning thoughts that are racing through our minds will give way to a calm peace of knowing GOD has everything under control.
3. Adam Clark explains “the peace that passes all understanding” this way in his commentary on Philippians:

“The peace that passes all understanding is of a very different nature from all that can arise from human occurences; it is a peace which Christ has purchased, and which God dispenses; it is felt by all those who are truly godly, but can be explained by none. It is sweet communion with the Heavenly Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.”

4. When we pray, we are reminding ourselves that GOD is more than capable to handle all our burdens. When we pray we are reminding ourselves how much GOD loves us and cares for us even to providing our simplest of daily provisions. And when we pray we are reminding ourselves just how wise our GOD is to counsel us to turn everything over to Him and stop trying to handle it ourselves.

5. And as a result GOD will calm our troubled spirit with His peace that passes all understanding, that will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
The story is told of a man who got a permit to open the first liquor tavern in a small town. The members of the local Church were strongly opposed to the opening of the bar, so they began to pray that God would intervene.

A few days before the tavern was scheduled to open, lightning hit the structure and burned it to the ground. The members of the Church were surprised but very pleased at what had happened, until they received a notice that the would-be tavern owner was suing the Church.

His contention was that their prayers were responsible for the loss of his business. The Church denied the charge.

At the conclusion of the preliminary hearing, the judge remarked, “At this point, I don’t know what my decision will be, but it seems to me the tavern owner believes in the power of prayer and these Church members don’t.”

Do you truly believe in the power of prayer? Do you believe GOD is big enough to handle your greatest worries and fears? Do you believe GOD is big enough to handle that problem you are worrying yourself sick over?

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6,7 NKJV)