

TBC – 5/11/03 p.m.

## CAREFREE HEARTS AND MINDS

Philippians 4:6-7

**Intro:** Alexander Maclaren called these verses “an impossible injunction.” Every command of Scripture which has to do with pleasing God is impossible. But this seems to be especially impossible because we know that we all worry, and there is probably not a day that goes by but what we worry about many things, large and small. And that is what this verse is all about – worry, anxiety, apprehension, fear. The old English word *careful* means *full of care*. This is what the Lord Martha that she was guilty of as we learn from Luke 10:41. As we use that word “careful” today we need to apply it to everything. We need to be constantly careful all day, every day. We need to be careful when we walk. We need to be careful when we talk. We need to be careful about what we eat. We need to be careful about the friends that we make. The list could go on and on.

Actually this word can be used in a good sense, and Paul used it that way right here in his epistle to the church at Philippi. See what he said about Timothy in Phil. 2:20. Peter used the noun from which this verb comes in 1 Pet. 5:7, and there it is used of God. It means that God is looking out for us. He is concerned, deeply concerned, about each one of us. That is the reason we can safely commit ourselves to the Lord and submit to His purposes in what is happening to us.

But the Apostle Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit here in Phil. 4:6, tells us that we are not to worry, not to be anxious, not to be fearful about anything.

This word was used by our Lord in His Sermon on the Mount, and we find it in Matthew’s account in Matt. 6:31 and 34. In Matt. 13:22 and Mark 4:19 where we have the parable of the sower and the four different kinds of soil where the seed, the Word, is sown, he mentioned that the thorny ground represented “the cares of this world, “ the worries, the anxieties of this world, along with “the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things” come along and choke the Word.

We worry about problems we are facing today. They may be physical. They may be financial. But we carry this over into the future. Actually we have very little control over our lives, and God never intended that we should. He meant from the very beginning that we should trust Him and look to Him to take care of us.

Now we might think that the Apostle Paul was being very unrealistic to tell the Philippians, and, ultimately, to be telling us tonight that we are not to worry about anything *until we learn that he was being held as a prisoner of Rome in Rome when he wrote this letter. And we can tell that he was telling us to do what he had done even though he did not know how his imprisonment would turn out. It could be death! And yet the theme of this letter is that we are to rejoice in the Lord, and to keep rejoicing in the Lord.*

Now none of us is in prison. We might be some day for the same reason that Paul was in prison. But for now things are relatively quiet in our lives. Some of our men are in need of work. And various physical problems are being experienced by some of us. But when you compare our circumstances with what some people are going through, it is easy for us to see the goodness of the Lord. And if we are faced with some problem that may be discouraging to us, we can see many things in our lives for which we can truthfully praise the Lord, and rejoice in Him. *But still we worry. It is right for us to be concerned about our health, about financial needs, and many other things, but it is never right for us to worry because when we are worrying, we are carrying burdens that the Lord wants us to cast upon Him. If we are worrying, we are not trusting, and the Lord wants us to trust Him. Worrying is a sin.*

*What is the cure for worry? It is "prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" where we "let our requests be made known unto God."* But why? Doesn't God know the needs that we are facing, the problems that make us worry? Of course He knows! But he wants us to talk to Him about them the way we would if He didn't know! The one who wrote that Gospel song that we used to sing, really understood this. His words are:

I must tell Jesus all of my troubles;  
I cannot bear my burdens alone.

And so even though we know that the Lord knows our problems, we tell Him what they are. We pour out our hearts to Him. We tell Him everything mainly because this is what He has told us that we are to do. We read this in Psa. 62:8:

8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Prayer is speaking to God. Why did Paul say "supplication" also. What is "supplication"? Bishop Lightfoot in his commentary on Philippians says that in these two words, "prayer and supplication," prayer means that

we are going to God about that which concerns us instead of going to someone else, and “supplication” means that we are going to be specific. We are as specific with the Lord as we would be to someone who didn’t know anything about us until we started to tell them. But how often we neither go to the Lord nor anyone else, and if we go to Him we really aren’t specific like He wants us to be.

An example of prayer and supplication is in the story of Bartimaeus. Cf. Mark 10:46-53. (Read.)

But note the added words, “with thanksgiving.” What would Paul give thanks for in his situation? Well, he could be thankful to know that the Lord was in absolute control of his circumstances. He could be thankful that God had a purpose in his imprisonment. He could be thankful that the Lord was with Him. He could be thankful that he could pray and know that the Lord was listening to him. And he could be thankful that the Lord could do something about it – either to deliver him, or to give him the grace to go through whatever might be ahead. And there probably were many other things he could include in his thanksgiving. But in the words “prayer” and “supplication” and “thanksgiving” we see Paul’s emphasis on laying it all before the Lord, and then at the end of the verse he actually repeated himself, only in different words: “Let your requests be made known unto God.” Tell God what has you worried, and tell Him like He was hearing this for the first time.

But then what? Verse 7 gives us a promise.

When we read our Bibles one thing that we need to be concerned about is the truth that we are to learn – the truth about God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit). We need to learn the truth about salvation. We need to learn the truth about ourselves. We need to learn about God’s plans and purposes for this world, for His people, actually, for everything. But we also find as we read our Bibles what it is that God wants us to be, and how we become what He wants us to be by doing what He wants us to do. And then we find also that God has scattered all through His word many wonderful promises which want us to expect that He will fulfill.

Pay attention as you read your Bible to the commandments that he has given to us about what He wants us to do. And then notice that many times in Scripture, like sending an attachment with your e-mail, God has

attached promises to the commandments as incentives for us to obey His commandments. God said to Jeremiah, “Call unto Me.” That is the command. And then He went on to say, “And I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” Cf. Jer. 33:3.

Now here in Phil. 4:6 we have more than one commandment. The first is, “Be careful [or anxious] about nothing.” Don’t worry about anything. But Paul followed that with another very inclusive commandment. The first commandment was negative. That is, it is what we are not to do. And there are plenty of negative commandments in Scripture which are just as important as the positive commandments. In fact, the negative usually leads to the positive, i.e., don’t do this, but do this!

What was the positive commandment? It is the remainder of verse 6, and as I have mentioned, it is really stated in two ways. The repetition indicates how very, very important it is. Don’t worry, but pray. And the more we are inclined to worry, the more we need to pray.

And then follows the promise in verse 7. But remember that the two go together. You and I have no reason to expect the promise unless we have kept the commandment. But let me emphasize about the commandment, it is only with God’s help, by His grace, that you and I can do what the Lord tells us to do, or not to do. When He says that we are not to worry about anything, He knows our frailty, and so He intends, as we pray, to enable us to stop worrying and to really pray.

What is the promise? This also is twofold. This is not something we earn, but it is a blessing that God gives as we obey Him. Why have we obeyed verse 6? Because God has told us what we are to do, and we do it in faith. We don’t see how we can stop worrying, but God has the answer. He has promised us peace, and we know that God never fools us. He never deceives us. He can never fail to do what He has said that He would do because He is God!

“The peace of God” is God’s own peace. Can you find a single passage of Scripture where we find God worrying? We can find plenty of them where He shows His concern for His people, but He never worries. We have peace with God; that is salvation. But daily we need the peace of God. And Paul says that it passes “all understanding.”

I used to think that that statement meant one thing; but just lately I have discovered that it means two. Maybe as time goes on I will find out a third thing that it means, but let me give you the two that I know of now.

It means that you and I will have peace when humanly speaking there is no evident reason what we have it. We will be surprised at ourselves, but it is only because of the faithfulness and grace of God in response to the faith which He has given us to believe His Word. We read these verses and by them God gives faith to act upon them as God's promise to us.

But this statement, that God's peace "passeth all understanding" means that no human being has the understanding, no human being regardless of who he might be, can even begin to do for us what God alone can do. Why trust in ourselves, or in anybody else, when you and I as the people of God can go directly to Him for our help.

But there is one more point to made in this verse, and then I want to say just a word about verse 8.

Will you notice the word "keep"? It is really a military term. It means that the peace of God will act as a guard to protect us against any return of our enemy called, Worry. The Devil knows how prone we are to worry, and he knows how disabling worry can be. It is going to mean that prayer will have a bigger place in our lives than before, but we take everything that tempts us to worry, and we do all over what we have been talking about doing so that instead of anxieties we have God's peace.

Now for the last point.

I haven't said much about the context of Phil. 4:6 and 7. The context is really the whole epistle. But in thinking about these verses as we have memorized them, or re-memorized them, I began to wonder why Paul wrote what he did right after these verses in verses 8 and 9. And I wonder if what Paul was telling us is this: we worry when we let our mind dwell on things which actually make us more fearful. And so as a further safe-guard against worry with all of the damage it does, Paul recommended two things:

- 1) Be careful to think about the right things.
- 2) Paul was telling the believers at Philippi to let his life be an example to them, "and the God of peace shall be with you."

Phil. 4:6-7 (6)

We are not in this battle alone. Anxieties abound in the hearts and lives of people in the world. Listen to the news. Be aware of what is going on, and you will see that the world and its people are not the answer for us. But God is, and the Lord Jesus Christ is, and the Holy Spirit is, and it is all spelled out for us in our Bibles. So may we be guided by the Spirit of God using the Word of God that our hearts may be kept in peace. And not only our hearts, our affections, but also our minds, our thoughts, will be kept free from the anxieties which fills the lives of the people of the world. By God's grace we can be different. We need to be different. And we will be different as we carefully follow the Word of God.