

FINAL CHAPTER

If anybody had an excuse for worrying, it was the apostle Paul. His beloved Christian friends at Philippi were disagreeing with one another, and he was not there to help them. We have no idea what Euodia and Syntyche were disputing about, but whatever it was, it was bringing division into the church.

Along with the potential division at Philippi, Paul had to face division among the believers at Rome (Phil. 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 the secret of victory over worry.

What is worry? The Greek word translated “anxious” (careful) in Philippians 4:6 means “to be pulled in different directions.” **Our hopes pull us in one direction; our fears pull us the opposite direction; and we are pulled apart!** The Old English root from which we get our word worry means “to strangle.” If you

have ever really worried, you know how it does strangle a person.

In fact, worry has definite physical consequences: headaches, neck pains, ulcers, even back pains. Worry affects our thinking, our digestion, and even our coordination.

From the spiritual point of view, worry is wrong thinking (the mind) and wrong feeling (the heart) about circumstances, people, and things. Worry is the greatest thief of joy.

Worry is an "inside job," and it takes more than good intentions to get the victory. **The anti-dote to worry is the secure mind:** "And the peace of God ... shall keep [garrison, guard like a soldier] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). When you have the secure mind, the peace of God guards you (Phil. 4:7) and the God of peace guides you (Phil. 4:9). With that kind of protection—why worry? Discuss....

If we are to conquer worry and experience the secure mind, we must meet the conditions that God has laid down.

There are three: right praying (Phil. 4:6–7), right thinking (Phil. 4:8), and right living (Phil. 4:9). Right Praying (4:6–7) Paul did not write, “Pray about it!” He was too wise to do that.

He used three different words to describe “right praying”: prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving. “Right praying” involves all three. The word prayer is the general word for making requests known to the Lord. Discuss.....

It carries the idea of adoration, devotion, and worship. Whenever we find ourselves worrying, our first action ought to be to get alone with God and worship Him. Adoration is what is needed. We must see the greatness and majesty of God! We must realize that He is big enough to solve our problems. Too often we rush into His presence and hastily tell Him our needs, when we ought

to approach His throne calmly and in deepest reverence. The first step in “right praying” is adoration.

The second is supplication, an earnest sharing of our needs and problems. There is no place for half-hearted, insincere prayer! While we know we are not heard for our “much speaking” (Matt. 6:7–8), still we realize that our Father wants us to be earnest in our asking (Matt. 7:1–11). This is the way Jesus prayed in the garden (Heb. 5:7), and while His closest disciples were sleeping, Jesus was sweating great drops of blood! Supplication is not a matter of carnal energy but of spiritual intensity (Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:12).

After adoration and supplication comes appreciation, giving thanks to God (see Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:15–17). Certainly, the Father enjoys hearing His children say, “Thank You!” When Jesus healed ten lepers, only one of the ten returned to give thanks (Luke 17:11–19), and we wonder if the percentage is any higher today. We are eager to ask but slow to appreciate.

You will note that “right praying” is not something every Christian can do immediately, because “right praying” depends on the right kind of mind. This is why Paul’s formula for peace is found at the end of Philippians and not at the beginning. If we have the single mind of Philippians 1 then we can give adoration. (How can a double-minded person ever praise God?) discuss.....

If we have the submissive mind of Philippians 2, we can come with supplication. (Would a person with a proud mind ask God for something?) Discuss.....

If we have the spiritual mind of Philippians 3 we can show our appreciation. (A worldly-minded person would not know that God had given him anything to appreciate!) In other words, we must practice Philippians 1, 2, and 3 if we are going to experience the secure mind of Philippians 4.

Paul counseled us to take “everything to God in prayer.” “Don’t worry about anything but pray about everything!” was his admonition. We are prone to pray about the “big

things” in life and forget to pray about the so called “little things”—until they grow and become big things! Talking to God about everything that concerns us and Him is the first step toward victory over worry.

The result is that the “peace of God” guards the heart and the mind. You will remember that Paul was chained to a Roman soldier, guarded day and night. 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). When we give our hearts to Christ in salvation, we experience “peace with God” (Rom. 5:1), but the “peace of God” takes us a step further into His blessings. 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.

Daniel gave us a wonderful illustration of peace through prayer. When the king announced that none of his subjects was to pray to anyone except the king, Daniel went to his room, opened his windows, and prayed as

before (Dan. 6:1–10). Note how Daniel prayed. He “prayed and gave thanks before his God” (Dan. 6:10) and he made “supplication” (Dan. 6:11). Prayer supplication—thanksgiving! And the result was perfect peace in the midst of difficulty! Daniel was able to spend the night with the lions in perfect peace, while the king in his palace could not sleep (Dan. 6:18).

The first condition for the secure mind and victory over worry is right praying. Right Thinking (4:8) Peace involves the heart and the mind. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa. 26:3). Wrong thinking leads to wrong feeling, and before long the heart and mind are pulled apart and we are strangled by worry. We must realize that thoughts are real and powerful, even though they cannot be seen, weighed, or measured. We must bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny!

Paul spells out in detail the things we ought to think about as Christians. Whatever is true.

Dr. Brent Boles a family friend of ours reported a survey on worry that indicated that only 8 percent of the things people worried about were legitimate matters of concern! The other 92 percent were either imaginary, never happened, or involved matters over which the people had no control anyway.

Satan is the liar (John 8:44), and he wants to corrupt our minds with his lies (2 Cor. 11:3). "Yea, hath God said?" is the way he approaches us, just as he approached Eve (Gen. 3:1ff.). The Holy Spirit controls our minds through truth (John 17:17; 1 John 5:6), but the devil tries to control them through lies. Whenever we believe a lie, Satan takes over!

There are many things that are not respectable, and Christians should not think about these things. This does not mean we hide our heads in the sand and avoid what

is unpleasant and displeasing, but it does mean we do not focus our attention on dishonorable things and permit them to control our thoughts.

Whatever is pure, lovely, and of good report. "Pure" probably refers to moral purity, since the people then, as now, were constantly attacked by temptations to sexual impurity (Eph. 4:17–24; 5:8–12). "Lovely" means "beautiful, attractive." "Of good report" means "worth talking about, appealing." The believer must major on the high and noble thoughts, not the base thoughts of this corrupt world. Whatever possesses virtue and praise. If it has virtue, it will motivate us to do better, and if it has praise, it is worth commending to others.

No Christian can afford to waste "mind power" on thoughts that tear him down or that would tear others down if these thoughts were shared.

If you will compare this list to David's description of the Word of God in Psalm 19:7–9, you will see a parallel. The Christian who fills his heart and mind with God's Word

will have a “built-in radar” for detecting wrong thoughts. “Great peace have they which love thy law” (Ps. 119:165). Right thinking is the result of daily meditation on the Word of God. Right Living (4:9) You cannot separate outward action and inward attitude.

Sin always results in unrest (unless the conscience is seared), and purity ought to result in peace. “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and peace” (Isa. 32:17). “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable” (James 3:17). Right living is a necessary condition for experiencing the peace of God.

Paul balances four activities: “learned and received” and “heard and seen.” It is one thing to learn a truth, but quite another to receive it inwardly and make it a part of our inner man (see 1 Thess. 2:13).

Facts in the head are not enough; we must also have truths in the heart.

In Paul's ministry, he not only taught the Word but also lived it so that his listeners could see the truth in his life. Paul's experience ought to be our experience.

We must learn the Word, receive it, hear it, and do

it. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). "The peace of God" is one test of whether or not we are in the will of God. "Let the peace that Christ can give keep on acting as umpire in your hearts" (Col. 3:15). If we are walking with the Lord, then the peace of God and the God of peace exercise their influence over our hearts. Whenever we disobey, we lose that peace and we know we have done something wrong. God's peace is the "umpire" that calls us "out"!

Right praying, right thinking, and right living: these are the conditions for having the secure mind and victory over worry. As Philippians 4 is the "peace chapter" of the New Testament, James 4 is the "war chapter." It begins with a question: "From whence come wars and fighting's among you?" James explained the causes of war: wrong praying ("Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss," James 4:3), There is no middle ground. Either we

yield heart and mind to the Spirit of God and practice right praying, thinking, and living; or we yield to the flesh and find ourselves torn apart by worry.

There is no need to worry! And, worry is a sin! (Have you read Matt. 6:24–34 lately?) With the peace of God to guard us and the God of peace to guide us— why worry? Instead of having spiritual ups and downs as the situation changed, he went right on, steadily doing his work and serving Christ.

His personal references at the close of this letter indicate that he was not the victim of circumstances but the victor over circumstances: I can accept all things (Phil. 4:11); “I can do all things” (Phil. 4:13); I have all things (Phil. 4:18). Paul did not have to be pampered to be content; he found his contentment in the spiritual resources abundantly provided by Christ. Discuss.....

Contentment is not complacency, nor is it a false peace based on ignorance. The complacent believer is

unconcerned about others, while the contented Christian wants to share his blessings. Discuss.....

Contentment is not escape from the battle, but rather an abiding peace and confidence in the midst of the battle.

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). Two words in that verse are vitally important—"learned" and "content."

Discuss.....The verb "learned" means "learned by experience." Paul's spiritual contentment was not something he had immediately after he was saved. He had to go through many difficult experiences of life in order to learn how to be content. The word content actually means "contained."

It is a description of the man whose resources are within him so that he does not have to depend on substitutes without. In this chapter, Paul named three wonderful spiritual resources that make us adequate and give us

In this day of scientific achievement, we hear less and less about the providence of God. We sometimes get the

idea that the world is a vast natural machine and that even God Himself cannot interrupt the wheels as they are turning. But the Word of God clearly teaches the providential workings of God in nature and in the lives of His people.

The word providence comes from two Latin words: pro, meaning “before,” and video, meaning “to see.” God’s providence simply means that God sees to it beforehand. It does not mean that God simply knows beforehand, because providence involves much more. It is the working of God in advance to arrange circumstances and situations for the fulfilling of His purposes.

The familiar story of Joseph and his brothers illustrates the meaning of providence (Gen. 37—50).

Discuss.....Paul experienced this divine providence in his life and ministry, and he was able to write, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

God in His providence had caused the church at Philippi to become concerned about Paul's needs, and it came at the very time Paul needed their love most! They had been concerned, but they had lacked the opportunity to help. **Many Christians today have the opportunities, but they lack the concern!** Life is not a series of accidents; it is a series of appointments. The Unfailing Power of God (4:11–13) Paul was quick to let his friends know that he was not complaining! His happiness did not depend on circumstances or things; his joy came from something deeper, something apart from either poverty or prosperity. Most of us have learned how to "be abased," because when difficulties come, we immediately run to the Lord! But few have learned how "to abound." Prosperity has done more damage to believers than has adversity. "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17).

The word instructed in Philippians 4:12 is not the same as "learned" in Philippians 4:11. "Instructed" means "initiated into the secret." This word was used by the pagan religions with reference to their "inner secrets."

Through trial and testing, Paul was “initiated” into the wonderful secret of contentment in spite of poverty or prosperity. “I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me” (Phil. 4:13). It was the power of Christ within him that gave him spiritual contentment.

The most important part of a tree is the part you cannot see, the root system, and the most important part of the Christian’s life is the part that only God sees. Unless we draw on the deep resources of God by faith, we fail against the pressures of life. Paul depended on the power of Christ at work in his life (see Phil. 1:6, 21; 2:12–13; 3:10). “I can— through Christ!” was Paul’s motto, and it can be our motto too. The Living Bible puts it this way: “I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power.” No matter which translation you prefer, they all say the same thing: the Christian has all the power within that he needs to be adequate for the demands of life. We need only release this power by faith.

Every believer ought to read Hudson Taylor's *Spiritual Secret* by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, because it illustrates this principle of inner power in the life of a great missionary to China. For many years, Hudson Taylor worked hard and felt that he was trusting Christ to meet his needs, but somehow, he had no joy or liberty in his ministry. Then a letter from a friend opened his eyes to the adequacy of Christ. "It is not by trusting my own faithfulness, but by looking away to the Faithful One!" he said. This was a turning point in his life. Moment by moment, he drew on the power of Christ for every responsibility of the day, and Christ's power carried him through. Jesus taught this same lesson in the sermon on the vine and branches in John 15. He is the Vine; we are the branches. A branch is good only for bearing fruit; otherwise you may as well burn it. The branch does not bear fruit through its own self-effort, but by drawing on the life of the Vine. "Without me, ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). As the believer maintains his communion with Christ, the power of God is there to see him through. "I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency" (Phil. 4:13, amp).

The overruling **providence of God** and the unfailing **power of God** are **two** spiritual resources on which we can draw that we might be adequate for the tasks of life. But there is a **third resource**. The **Unchanging Promise of God** (4:14–20)

Paul thanked the church at Philippi for their generous blessings God's provision—4:14–23 gift. He compared their giving to three very familiar things.

A budding tree (v. 10). The word flourished carries the idea of a flower or tree budding or blossoming. Often, we go through “winter seasons” spiritually, but then the spring arrives and there is new life and blessing. The tree itself is not picked up and moved; the circumstances are not changed. The difference is the new life within.

An investment (v. 14–17). Paul looked on their missionary gift as an investment that would pay them rich spiritual dividends. The word communicate is our familiar word “fellowship.” The church/believer entered into an arrangement of “giving and receiving”; **the church/Christian/believer gave materially to Paul**

and received spiritually from the Lord. The Lord keeps the books and will never fail to pay one spiritual dividend! That church is poor that fails to share materially with others.

A sacrifice (v. 18). **Paul looked on their gift as a spiritual sacrifice, laid on the altar to the glory of God. There are such things as “spiritual sacrifices” in the Christian life (see 1 Peter 2:5).** We are to yield our bodies as spiritual sacrifices (Rom. 12:1–2), as well as the praise of our lips (Heb. 13:15). Good works are a sacrifice to the Lord (Heb. 13:16), and so are the lost souls that we are privileged to win to Christ (Rom. 15:16). Here, Paul saw the Philippian believers as priests, giving their offering as a sacrifice to the Lord. In the light of Malachi 1:6–14, we need to present the very finest that we have to the Lord.

But Paul did not see this gift as simply coming from Philippi. He saw it as the supply of his need from heaven. Paul’s trust was in the Lord. There is an interesting contrast between Philippians 4:18 and 19. We might

state it this way if we were to paraphrase **Paul: "You met my need, and God is going to meet your need. You met one need that I have, but my God will meet all of your needs.**

You gave out of your poverty, but God will supply your needs out of His riches in glory!" God has not promised to supply all our "greeds." When the child of God is in the will of God, serving for the glory of God, then he will have every need met. **Hudson Taylor often said, "When God's work is done in God's way for God's glory, it will not lack for God's blessings".**

Contentment comes from adequate resources. Our resources are the providence of God, the power of God, and the promises of God. These resources made Paul sufficient for every demand of life, and they can make us sufficient too.