

Rx for Anxiety • Philippians 4:4-9 • Part I

I. INTRODUCTION – Read Matthew 6:25-33

A. Anxiety

1. Anxiety is a growing epidemic. It accounts for an ever increasing list of mental & physical problems.
2. Nationally, anxiety disorders affect 40 million or 18% of the adults.
3. Anxiety is the #1 mental health problem.
4. Women suffer from anxiety & stress **twice** as much as men.
5. Anxiety related-illness costs the workplace \$47 billion each year.
6. Anti-anxiety & anti-depressants account for the largest number of drug prescriptions.

B. The Answer

1. It's understandable why anxiety is on the increase.
 - a. Global terrorism means a colored rating system by Homeland Security telling us what today's threat level is.
 - b. The economy is shaking. The political scene is a mess.
 - c. We're constantly being told the environment is reeling.
 - f. Rogue nations like Iran are developing weapons of mass destruction.
2. No wonder people are freaked out!
3. But anxiety is nothing new. Every age has struggled with worry.
4. The believers in Philippi lived under tremendous stress because they were being persecuted for their faith.
5. So Paul wrote them the **prescription** for overcoming anxiety.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 4-5

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

1. To **rejoice** means to **celebrate with joy**.
2. It's to so **delight** in something that it **comes out** in what you do & say.
3. If Paul was writing this to SoCal's, he might say –
 - a. Get **stoked** in the **Spirit! Groove on God! Rejoice in Jesus!**
 - b. It isn't a quiet, sedate religiosity he's calling for.
 - c. It's an **energetic celebration** of our relationship with God.
4. **Take joy** in Him.
5. One of the great summaries of Christian Faith is called the **Westminster Catechism**.
 - a. It's most famous part says that the chief end of man is to glorify God & to **enjoy** Him forever.
 - b. I used to think the second half was kinda' selfish.
 - c. But now that I know God better, I realize God **IS** glorified when He's my joy.
 - d. He **wants** me to enjoy Him. **He's blessed** when He becomes my blessing!
 - e. **He's delighted** when I delight in Him.
6. Christian – **Take joy in Jesus**. Go to Him & **get your joy on!**
7. That's a good question for us this morning – Is God the source of my joy?
 - a. Is my relationship with Him THE fuel of my greatest passion?
 - b. Is your faith in God **producing joy** in your life?
8. I've always liked art & music but didn't know much about them.
 - a. Then I took an **art history** course one semester.
 - b. I enjoyed it so much I took a **music appreciation** course the next semester.
9. Now my joy in both has been deepened immensely because I hear & see things I never did before.
 - a. I know what to listen for, what to look at.
 - b. I understand the genres & styles & it all enhances the capacity to enjoy them.
10. So when I visit a museum or listen to a CD, I'm able to take more from them than before.
11. If God **isn't** the source of your joy, get to know Him better.
12. I guarantee: The more you know Him, the greater your joy will be.
13. And the greater the joy, the more it will affect your lifestyle.
14. I had a friend many years ago who refused to laugh just to be polite.
 - a. When others would ask him why he wasn't laughing at something **they** thought was humorous,

- b. He'd say, "Oh, I am. I'm totally cracking up, in here."
- 15. There's a lot of people who act that way with their faith in God.
 - a. It's very private, quiet, hidden.
 - b. They go to church most Sundays, but their neighbors & fellow-workers **have no idea** they're a Christian.
 - c. It's not because they're shy or quiet.
 - d. If they see a good movie or find a new restaurant, they talk it up.
 - e. But there's no hint of excitement over what they claim is the most important thing in their life – their faith in God.
 - f. If it **really** is – Won't it come out? Won't people know?
- 16. Look at it again – **"Rejoice in the Lord always."**
 - a. Not just on Sunday morning. On Mondays & Thursdays too.
 - b. To make sure we get it Paul says, **"Again I will say, rejoice!"**

⁵ Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

- 17. 'Gentleness' is one of those Greek words that **defies** translation.
 - a. The best way to understand it is as **reasonableness**.
 - b. It's the person who understands the priority of unity so he/she tries to get along with others.
 - c. They're **reasonable**! They aren't **contrarian**, always taking exception to everything everyone says.
 - d. They aren't a **rule-rigid perfectionist** who says, "This is the way it has to be & if everyone doesn't agree with me, too bad for them."
 - e. This isn't the "my way or the highway" guy.
- 18. They won't dilute the truth but they're also not going to be a stickler for rules that forget grace.
- 19. Paul calls for them be reasonable because the Lord is at hand.
- 20. Pretty soon we'll stand before Him, so we have to ask if the things we're making such a big deal, really are. Will they be that big then? If not, then they ought not be a big deal now.

B. Vs. 6-7

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.

- 1. Think of Paul's circumstances as he wrote this.
 - a. He was in prison in Rome, awaiting the verdict on his appeal to Caesar.
 - b. Either he would be cleared of charges & released or found guilty & executed.
 - c. Talk about a reason to be anxious!
- 2. But he isn't. He's at peace
- 3. He's knows about the hardships the Philippians endured, so he wrote to encourage them, giving them the **cure for worry**.
- 4. Paul says: **"Be anxious for nothing."**
 - a. Really Paul – Nothing?
 - b. Certainly there are **some things** to worry about. Can't I worry about -
 - 1) Iran getting the bomb ?
 - 2) Al Qaeda ?
 - 3) The Recession ?
 - 4) My family getting in a wreck ?
 - 5) The dog eating my homework ?
 - 6) What about when I leave the house & halfway down the street a little voice tells us – "You left the coffeepot on."
 - 7) Or I've settled into bed & – "Did I lock the front door?"
 - c. There's a proper caution for such practical things as coffeepots & doors.
 - d. But when you're **flooded by adrenalin** & that **panic** sets in you've gone overboard.
- 5. "Be **anxious** for nothing" means just that.
 - a. Anxiety is fear that **dominates** the mind.
 - b. Such fear is incompatible with faith in God.

- c. Worry is the absence of trust.
 - d. If we truly trust God, we won't worry.
 - e. [Daniel & the lions' den.]
6. But Paul doesn't just say, "Don't worry: Be happy!"
7. His **prescription** for anxiety is **prayer**. But it has to be **the right kind** of prayer.
Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God
8. Since anxiety is a **suspension** of our faith in God, this is how we go about **restoring** it; by **prayer, supplication, & thanks**. Read Daniel 6 when you get home. Daniel engaged in all 3 forms of communication with God when facing the lion's den.
9. **Rx is the universal symbol** for pharmacies & prescriptions for medication.
- a. The Rx comes from Latin for the word 'recipe' which means "Take this."
 - b. A doctor would prescribe a medication for a patient by writing out a recipe for an apothecary – medicine-mixer.
 - c. They'd write, "Take this: Bark of an alder tree. Powdered cinnamon. White of hen's egg. Leaves of mustard plant."
 - d. The patient would take the prescription to an apothecary who'd mix it up & give it to the patient to take.
 - e. Because the prescription **began** with the symbol **Rx**, Apothecary's used that as their sign so illiterate patients would know where to go.
 - f. Prescriptions were **mixtures** of various ingredients.
 - g. Here's Dr. Paul's prescription for the malady of worry – Prayer, Supplication, Thanksgiving.
10. **Prayer is all** communication with God, including worship.
- a. It's the most basic & powerful way to renew our dependence on Him.
 - b. If the cure to worry is restoring our trust in God, then prayer is where we start because it keeps us in that place of looking to Him in & for everything.
11. **Supplication is specific requests**.
- a. Jesus taught the disciples to ask God for specific things, even for daily needs.
 - b. "Give us bread for **today**." That's pretty **specific**.
 - c. Why not, "Give us bread for a week, month, year so I won't have to bug You."
 - d. We can't bug God! He **wants us** to ask him for bread daily because it's best for us to STAY dependent on Him.
 - e. That's why Paul says –
- Be anxious for **NOTHING**, but in **EVERYTHING** by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.
12. **Thanksgiving** is appreciation for the answers God gives.
- a. It completes the circle of dependency on God.
 - b. **First, Prayer** keeps us looking to God.
 - c. **Second, Supplication** focuses our faith on **specific** things for God to do.
 - d. **Third, Thanksgiving** affirms God's faithfulness, which encourages even greater dependence on Him.
13. When we take this divine prescription for anxiety, the result is -
- ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
14. Instead of being torn apart by worry, our minds & hearts can be at peace.
- a. It's not a peace that comes by **cold calculation & clever scheming**.
 - b. This isn't relief from worry because **we've got a plan**.
 - c. It's a supernatural peace FROM God that **transcends our understanding**.
- Hezekiah & the Assyrians [2 Kings 18-19] Isaiah 30:15 – "In returning & rest you shall be saved. In quietness & Confidence shall be your strength."
15. When you're in a sitch where most people are tied in knots by worry -
- a. But you're at rest, just chillin' with a smile on your face because you've prayed & turned it over to God -
 - b. And people look at you in disbelief & get angry, thinking you're **not being a realist** because

you're not freaking out like they are –

c. That's the peace Paul's speaking of.

d. I've known some precious saints who've been told they're only got a few months to live.

1) They'd love to be healed & ask God if it be His will to do so.

2) But if they die, that's good too because they trust God knows what's best & they're at complete peace.

3) But their unbelieving loved ones so often don't understand that peace and get angry.

4) They think being a realist means being panicky & worried.

5) Well, for the unbeliever, sure: Be worried about your soul!

6) But what's the believer have to be worried about?

16. If I didn't believe in Jesus, I'd be terrified about everything going down right now.

a. How unbelievers make it I have no idea!

b. But I'm not worried because my Jesus is the God of history.

c. If He can take care of my eternal soul, He can take care of whatever today throws at me.

17. I love the way Paul describes **HOW** God's peace replaces worry.

a. He says it **guards** our hearts & minds.

b. 'Guard' is a **military** word. It means to place a garrison.

18. When we turn to God in complete dependence on Him, He builds a fortress of peace within us that protects our affections & thoughts.

19. Remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount about worry.

20. Both He & Paul say the same thing: Keep your eyes on God & instead of anxiety, you'll have the confidence of knowing He loves you & has your best in mind.

21. Isaiah 26:3 says

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

III. CONCLUSION

A. The Pilot

1. In the early days of aviation, a pilot was making a cross-country trip.

2. While flying over the middle of the Country, he heard a strange twanging sound.

3. Feathering the engine back as quiet as possible, he listened closely & realized it was the sound of a rodent gnawing on one of the cables.

4. Panic gripped him as he realized he could lose control at any minute.

5. There was no landing strip anywhere near, so his fear grew.

6. Then he got an idea. Rodents can't survive at high elevation.

a. So he took the plane up to 15,000 & kept it there for some time.

b. Finally, the gnawing stopped.

7. At his next fueling stop, he opened up the plane to find a dead rat inside the fuselage.

B. Where To Take Your Anxiety

1. Anxiety is a spiritual rodent that gnaws on our thoughts.

2. The best way to kill it is to rise to the heights with Christ & walk in the Spirit.

3. To **rejoice always** in Him, **to pray** & ask Him to work His amazing grace in our lives.

4. Notice the end of v. 7 -

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.

5. When you're tempted to worry, put Jesus in the middle of it, & watch how quickly worry dies.

6. One day, Jesus and the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee when a storm whipped up.

a. The waves rose round them & crashed into the boat.

b. The disciples panicked, thinking they were going down.

c. Jesus was asleep in the bow; at perfect peace, because He knew the Father was taking care of Him.

d. The disciples woke Jesus, accusing Him of not caring they were all about to drown.

e. Jesus stood & rebuked the wind & waves.

f. Then the disciples, seeing the sea like glass were **terrified** of Jesus!

7. What's the sea of your life like today?

- a. If you're in a storm, don't worry about the waves.
- b. The only thing you need to ask is – Is Jesus in your boat?
- c. Is He in your life?
- d. He's the Master of Storms.
- e. He specializes in calming the tumult. ***Trust Him.***

Psalms 121:4 – “He who watches Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!”