

Mastering the Mind

Text: Philippians 4:6-9

Introduction:

1. This section deals with the believer's mind. Observe the emphasis on the mind in these verses – “be careful for nothing” (Vs. 6); “your hearts and minds” (Vs. 7); “think on these things” (Vs. 8).
2. Remember: Paul is writing from prison. If anyone had an excuse to fear and worry it was him!
3. One of the pivotal commands in this passage is the command found in Vs. 6 – “Be careful for nothing”.
 - The word ‘careful’ means “full of care, anxious” (Webster).
 - It means to be pulled in different directions. “Our hopes pull us in one direction, our fears pull us in the opposite direction; and we are pulled apart!” (Wiersbe)
 - The Old English root for our word ‘worry’ means to strangle, bite, harass.
4. Question: What sort of cares/fears tend to trouble us?
 - Cares about daily needs (food, drink, clothing) (Matt. 6:25, 28, 31).
 - Cares about the future (Vs. 34) The following expanded definition and explanation of anxiety and worry by Jim Berg is helpful:

1. Anxiety is a subset of fear—the emotion of uncertainty.
2. Anxiety often shows up in “what if” thinking.
3. Worriers meditate upon possibilities (uncertainties) instead of certainties.
4. Worriers meditate upon impossibilities instead of certainties.
5. Worriers scare themselves with their imaginations and fantasies.
6. Worriers are masters at meditation.
7. Worry is the root cause of the “anxiety disorders” today (panic attacks, obsessive thinking, compulsive behaviour, anorexia, bulimia, generalized anxiety, phobias, self-mutilation) and many sleep disorders.
8. Worry is the root cause of many physical problems.
9. Anxiety disorders are showing up in children at younger and younger ages.
10. Anxiety is the fear that I will not get what I need or want. It is driven by unbelief and discontent. This is why anxiety is always portrayed in the Bible as a spiritual problem: “God is not enough for me; I need something more, and I’m afraid I won’t get it.”

In an attempt to control the uncertainties—the *possibilities* of something going out of control—we allow fear to control *us*.

- Cares about home duties (Luke 10:41)
 - Cares about marital responsibilities (1 Cor. 7:33-34)
 - Cares about ministry responsibilities (2 Cor. 11:28)
5. There are three antidotes for a troubled, worried mind in these verses – Right Praying (Vs. 6-7), Right Thinking (Vs. 8) and Right Living (Vs. 9). Let’s consider each one briefly.

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The first antidote to fear and worry is...

I. RIGHT PRAYING (VS. 6-7)

God's recipe for defeating anxiety is prayer. Instead of fretting and worrying, pray! Imagine how different our lives would be if we spent as much time praying as we did worrying.

A. The Burdens we Bring in Prayer (Vs. 6)

1. **What** we are to pray (Vs. 6a)
 - a. 'but' = a word of contrast. We are presented with God's alternative to fear and worry.
 - b. "in everything" = God wants us to worry about nothing and pray about everything!
 - c. Psalm 62:8 "Trust in him at all times; ye people, **pour out your heart before him**: God is a refuge for us. Selah."
 - d. Illustration: Daniel responded to the evil edict of Darius with prayer.
2. **How** we are to pray (Vs. 6b)
 1. Prayer = general word covering all aspects of prayer but with a particular emphasis on adoration.
 2. Supplication = a petition for help arising from a sense of need. The same word is translated "making request" in Phil. 1:4. Wiersbe defines it as "an earnest sharing of our needs and problems."
 3. Thanksgiving = to accompany every aspect of prayer and is a form of prayer itself. 1 Thess. 5:18 "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Our Heavenly Father delights to hear us say "Thank you" (See Lk. 7:11-19 – the 10 lepers). We can always be thankful in our praying, no matter how dark our circumstances may be. Thanksgiving also lifts the spirits and gets our minds away from constant negativity.
 4. Requests = specific petitions. "...ye have not, because ye ask not." (James 4:2)
 5. Unto God = prayer is directed to God. Take your burdens to the Lord!

B. The Blessing God Bestows through Prayer (Vs. 7)

We enjoy peace when we follow the command of Vs. 6. Notice 3 facets of this peace:

1. The **Heavenly** origin of this Peace – "the peace of God"
For the Christian there is...
 - a. Positional peace (salvation) – "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1).
 - b. Practical peace (sanctification) – "peace of God".
2. The **Quality** of this Peace – "passeth all understanding".
3. The **Activity** of this Peace – "shall keep your hearts and minds"

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- a. 'keep' = a military term, used of a garrison of soldiers or sentries on duty (Gromacki). It means "to guard, protect by a military guard." (Strong's) The word was used of the governor of Damascus who **'kept'** the city with a garrison in order to apprehend the Apostle Paul (2. Cor. 11:32). "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)." (Wiersbe)
- b. "hearts and minds" = emotional and mental peace. God's peace stands at the gate of our heart and mind and prevents troubling thoughts from gaining entrance!
- c. Illustration: Modern homes are often guarded so that the occupants can sleep undisturbed. In like manner, the peace of God can prevent anxiety from disrupting the feelings and thoughts of Christians.
- d. "through Christ Jesus" = Christ dwells in our hearts (Col. 1:27) and He is the channel of God's peace to us when we pray.
4. Isaiah 26:3 "Thou wilt keep him in **perfect peace**, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."
5. Psalm 55:22 "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and **he shall sustain thee**: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."
6. Hymn: "Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear; all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer."
7. Illustration: "A study conducted by certain psychologists found that only 8 percent of a person's worries are legitimate. They assert that 40 percent of such anxieties will never happen, that 30 percent are undue self-criticism, that 12 percent are about old decisions, and that 10 percent pertain to health and aging."

The second antidote to fear and worry is...

II. RIGHT THINKING (VS. 8)

Having emptied our minds of troubling thoughts through prayer, we then need to fill the void with wholesome thoughts (replacement principle). The renewing of the mind is a big part of experiencing godly transformation as a believer (See Rom. 12:1-2).

A. The Points for our Thinking (Vs. 8a)

Here we have a Divine menu we can select from as our food for thought. There are **six objects** for thought and **2 qualities** that go with them. Each one is introduced with "whatsoever things", indicating that many thoughts can be grouped under each category:

1. The six objects for thought

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- a. What is 'true' – the opposite of lies and falsehood. At the root of most problems in the Christian life lies one of the devil's lies we have believed. We have 66 Books of Truth in the Book of Truth to occupy our minds. Turn off the devils lies and listen to God's truth!
 - b. What is 'honest' – grace, reverent. Refers to dignified, sober thoughts.
 - c. What is 'just' – righteous, that which is right and in harmony with God's law.
 - d. What is 'pure' – chaste, clean, uncontaminated. God's Word can purify an impure mind! (Psalm 119:9; Eph. 5:26; John 15:3).
 - e. What is 'lovely' – beautiful, attractive, pleasing in a wholesome sense. Godly art, music and literature are good for the mind. The opposite is true of that which is ungodly.
 - f. What is of "good report" – the sin nature in us has a bias and a bent towards gossip, slander and negative news. You may have heard the saying that "good news doesn't sell papers!" The majority of the world's media is weighted on the side of negative reporting.
 - g. Illustration: Just as you need to feed your body the right kind of food to be physically healthy, so also you need to feed your mind the right things so you will be spiritually healthy. "You can't feed on mental road kill and be spiritually healthy!" (Jim Berg)
2. The two accompanying qualities
 - a. Virtue = moral goodness, in relation to physical things, strength.
 - b. Praise = that which is praiseworthy and valuable

B. The Practice of our Thinking (Vs. 8b)

1. 'think' = the mind is like a muscle and needs to be exercised in the right way. Mental habits can be very hard to break but with the help of the Word of God and the Spirit of God, they can be overcome.
2. 'think' = word is in the present tense. We are to cultivate a biblical mindset as a way of life and it is a daily challenge!
3. 2 Cor. 10:5 "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and **bringing into captivity every thought** to the obedience of Christ;"

The third antidote to fear and worry is...

III. RIGHT LIVING (VS. 9)

Right living is a by produce of right thinking.

A. The Practice (Vs. 9a)

1. "those things" = identified by 3 words
 - a. Learned

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- b. Received
 - c. Heard
 - d. Seen
2. 'do' = truth applied! Through prayer and meditation on truth, we experience inner transformation that in turn leads to outer transformation. We go from thoughts to actions, from beliefs to behaviors.
 3. Prov. 23:7 "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..." Never underestimate the power of your thoughts to shape and mould your whole life.
 4. James 1:22 "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."
 5. Pentecost: "Maturity in the Christian life is not measured by what a man knows but by what he does."

B. The Promise (Vs. 9b)

1. "the God of peace" = note emphasis on peace in these verses.
2. "shall be with you" = you will experience the ministry of God's presence in your life when you walk in obedience to Him.

Conclusion: What are you stressing and worrying about today? Commit it to the Lord in prayer, direct your mind to godly things, live in obedience and experience God's peace!