

Subject: *Marks of a Normal Christian Life – Part 5*

Scripture: *Philippians 4:6-9*

The Bible is laid out in such a way that we find that main doctrines are found throughout the 66 books, some here and some there. This is true when we come to the doctrine of prayer. We find many scriptures on the subject of prayer, and some texts that are pure gold because they contain so much truth. We come to one of those texts for our message.

So far we have considered four marks of a normal Christian life:

Mark # 1 is a serious commitment to Scripture

Mark # 2 is a serious commitment to Christ

Mark # 3 is a serious commitment to the church

Mark # 4 is a serious commitment to eternal things

The 5th mark of a normal Christian life is a serious commitment to prayer

Paul develops this theme of prayer around four commands.

1. WORRY ABOUT NOTHING

“Be careful for nothing” means worry about nothing. Worry is a kind of fear. The Greek word that is translated “be careful for” (*merimnao*) means “to divide the mind.”

Thoughts compete in your mind: Will this turn out good or bad? Does God know or not? Does God care or not? Back and forth the mind goes, and this leads to fear.

The two words “fear not” are found 365 times in the Bible, once for every day in the year. A former president famously said, “We have nothing to fear, but fear itself.”

This command to worry about nothing runs counter to everything we’ve been told since the day we were born. We’ve accepted worry as a way of life. Someone said that worry is America’s favorite pastime. Yet God tells us not to worry. Jesus taught us that we act like heathen people whenever we worry. He uses the same word as Paul (*merimnao*).

Matthew 6:25-34

When Sarah was a little girl she was very afraid of dogs, but as far as I know, she was never bitten by a dog. Now she has a great dane! We often worry about things that never happen. A soldier in WWI carried this reminder with him into battle: “Of two things, one is certain. Either you are at the front lines or you are behind the lines. If you are on the front lines, of two things one is certain. Either you are exposed to danger or you are in a safe place. If you are exposed to danger, of two things one is certain. Either you are wounded or you are not wounded. If you are wounded, of two things one is certain. Either you recover or you die. If you recover, there is no need to worry. If you die, you can’t worry.” The fact is that 40% of all worries never happen. Another 30% have to do with things that have already happened.

2. PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING

Instead of worrying we should pray. If you pray there is no need to worry.

1 Peter 5:7 *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

Psalms 55:22 *Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*

When we pray we recognize who God is and what He is able to do. We should offer our requests to God with gratitude for the privilege of prayer and God's providence in supplying ("supplication") our needs.

*Said the robin to the sparrow, I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so.
Said the sparrow to the robin, I think that it must be
They have no Heavenly Father such as cares for you and me.*

As we pray we know nothing surprises God, and nothing is too hard for Him.

3. BE THANKFUL FOR ALL THINGS

As we pray remember that God is in control of all circumstances, good and bad. He is a sovereign God. He directs or permits all that happens to us. Joseph understood this.

Genesis 50:20 *But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

Job understood this. When he had lost all his possessions and his precious children he was able to praise God in the storm.

Job 1:21 *And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*

We can be grateful in all circumstances because of God's promise.

Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

4. THINK ABOUT THE RIGHT THINGS

- A. What is true – the opposite of dishonest and unreliable; what is true is found in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and in God's Word (Jn. 17:17).

- B. What is honest – noble, worthy of respect
- C. What is just – what is right in God’s eyes
- D. What is pure – wholesome, morally clean
- E. What is lovely – pleasing, kind, gracious
- F. What is of good report – highly regarded, well thought of, respected
- G. The examples of godly spiritual leaders (like Paul)

All four commands (worry about nothing; pray about everything; be thankful for all things; and think about the right things) are based on knowing and trusting God. We must believe God is great, good, faithful, wise, powerful, and unchangeable.

What are the consequences of following or not following these commands?

These are God’s commands, not His suggestions or wishes. To disobey God is a serious matter.

***1 Samuel 15:22-23**²² And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

But if we obey these commands we have the peace of God to guard (keep) our hearts and minds (vs. 7) and we have the God of peace with us. The peace of God and the God of peace...a serious commitment to prayer is costly, but it is worth it.