

# The Antidote for Anxiety

## Philippians 4:4-7

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

“It is good for a man to have a holy care, and to pay due attention to every item of his life; but, alas! it is very easy to make it into an unholy care, and to try to wrest from the hand of God that office of providence which belongs to Him and not to ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

Even though God counts every hair on our heads (Luke 12:7) and promises to take care and do good to those He calls His own (Romans 8:28) we as Christians can’t help but worry about our present and future circumstances! While we know that trials and tribulations are meant to be viewed as a source of joy in our lives because when persevered they lead to spiritual maturity, for most Christians they are nothing more than the source of great anxiety. Even though God tells us that our worry and concern cannot add a single hour to our lives (Matthew 6:27) we are often consumed in “care-full” laboring to control our circumstances while living in this fallen world. Foolishly one thinks “if I plan better” or “if I work harder” I can purchase for myself an easier path to travel than the one I am currently on! When we fail to obtain this easier path, we feel anxiety and as a result plan and work even harder. Apostle Paul told the church of Philippi the only way to get out of this anxiety spiral is through prayer and trust in a sovereign God. This sermon is going to focus on Paul’s five steps to curing anxiety: living by grace, replacing anxiety with prayer, telling God everything, having a thankful heart and by receiving the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

### Anxiety – Care-Full Statistics

Even though we are under the providence of a sovereign God this does not stop Christians from becoming so full of care (care-full) for the needs of this mortal life that it consumes everything they think or do!<sup>2</sup> For instance, it is hard when looking into the eyes of one’s spouse not to think about how fragile marriage is when four out of ten marriages end in divorce.<sup>3</sup> For almost half of the Canadians who are \$1.70 in debt per dollar earned<sup>4</sup> and living paycheck to paycheck finances are never far from their thoughts.<sup>5</sup> Whom amongst us are not overly concerned about our health in light of the statistics that say one in two Canadians will get

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<sup>1</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “[Prayer, the Cure for Care.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 40 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), 109.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “[Prayer, the Cure for Care.](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 40 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), 110.

<sup>3</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/4-in-10-1st-marriages-end-in-divorce-report-1.953894>

<sup>4</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/payroll-salary-survey-1.4276782>

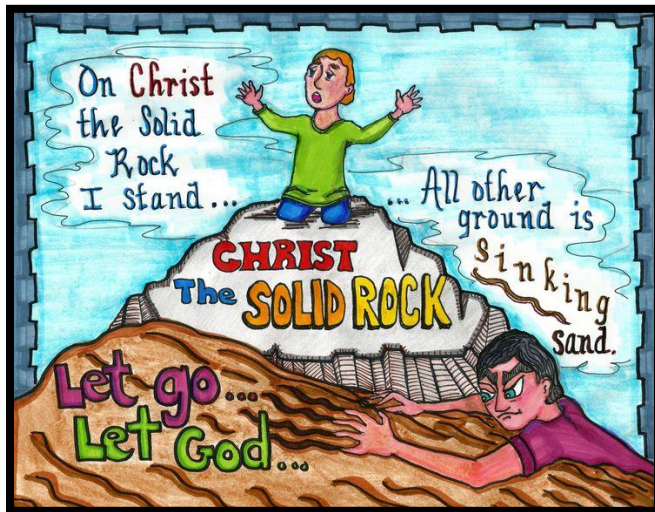
<sup>5</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/47-of-canadians-living-paycheque-to-paycheque-survey-finds-1.848429>



cancer<sup>6</sup> and about 60% will get heart disease in their lifetimes?<sup>7</sup> Out of those people anxious about violence aren't their feelings reasonable in light of the facts that 60 % of our children having been bullied,<sup>8</sup> one person is being murdered every 60 seconds and someone in this world dies from armed combat every 100 seconds?<sup>9</sup> So consumed are we with all the bad things that can happen to us that approximately 50% of the population will or have had a mental illness<sup>10</sup> and for those that can't cope,<sup>11</sup> one person every 40 seconds will commit suicide<sup>12</sup> rather

than have faith in God and preserve in their trials and tribulations!

### Believers Only Antidote



While the world offers many ways to reduce anxiety and stress such as exercise, taking supplements, reducing caffeine intake, spending time with friends and loved ones, laughing, taking yoga classes and/or practicing mindfulness;<sup>13</sup> these “natural” or “worldly” methods are pale in comparison to the real cure of baptizing every anxious thought through prayer into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup> Does it not make sense that He who created and knit humanity

<sup>6</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-101/cancer-statistics-at-a-glance/?region=on>

<sup>7</sup> Taken from the following website: <http://healthland.time.com/2012/11/07/study-shows-more-than-half-of-all-americans-will-get-heart-disease/>

<sup>8</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-murder-a-minute/>

<sup>9</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-murder-a-minute/>

<sup>10</sup> We have to be careful with this statistic for some of the people whom have mental issues are more due to physical than psychological problems.

<sup>11</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://cmha.ca/fast-facts-about-mental-illness>

<sup>12</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/47-of-canadians-living-paycheque-to-paycheque-survey-finds-1.848429>

<sup>13</sup> Taken from the following website: <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/16-ways-relieve-stress-anxiety#section11>

<sup>14</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “Prayer, the Cure for Care,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 40 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), 110.

into His own image (Genesis 1:27; Psalms 139) is sovereign and the only one who can strengthen, sustain and provide peace to our fragile hearts of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7-9)? Faith in God is a cure for anxiety only when one has a relationship with His Son. Nonbelievers who cry out during calamity<sup>15</sup> will not have their prayers heard by God<sup>16</sup> because they do not have belief in the only way to approach Him, through belief in the atoning sacrifice of His Son (John 14:6)! Since unbelievers have not made Jesus the rock of their salvation (Psalms 18:2), they should be anxious in the face of trials and tribulations because their “house” of “certainty” has not been built on a firm foundation (Matthew 7:24)! Christians on the other hand have put their trust in a sovereign God whose promise to take care of and do good to them will never fail to be their reality (Romans 8:28)!

### Step 1: Living by Grace (verse 4-5)

**<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near**

The first step in overcoming anxiety for a Christian is to live by grace. Even though a born-again believer has the Spirit of God living inside of them does not mean that God always hears their prayers.<sup>17</sup> When a believer cherishes sin in his/her heart God promises He will hide His face and not hear his/her prayers (Psalms 66:18; Isaiah 59:1-2)! We are told in Scripture to hate evil and every wrong path (Romans 12:9; Palms 119:104), confess our sins (1 John 1:9) and to rejoice in the Lord and His ways. Paul told the Christians at Philippi that they were to feel joy in the face of their intense hardships and persecutions by remembering the grace they had received in the resurrection power of Christ.<sup>18</sup> The “ongoing presence of



Christ in the believer’s heart”<sup>19</sup> whom has received forgiveness, grace and comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-5) should naturally have a gentle attitude towards others. Instead of insisting on

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<sup>15</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Philippians: An Expositional Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 239.

<sup>16</sup> The only prayer God hears of the nonbeliever is one of confession and asking Jesus into his/her heart!

<sup>17</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Philippians: An Expositional Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 240.

<sup>18</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [\*The Letter to the Philippians\*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 288.

<sup>19</sup> Ben Witherington III, [\*Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2011), 245.

their rights or seeking retaliation they are to live by grace and as such have a gentle attitude of forbearance towards all others, even their enemies!<sup>20</sup> This does not mean that believers are to be “immune to sorrow or insensitive to the troubles of others”<sup>21</sup> but are to at the same feel unspeakable joy knowing that the Lord will soon return and they will see God face to face (1 Peter 1:18)!<sup>22</sup> Anxious thoughts soon melt away when we remember He who raised us from spiritual death and granted us life will never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)!

## Step 2: Replacing Anxiety with Prayer (verse 6)

**Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.**

The antidote for anxiety is prayer.<sup>23</sup> Anxiety is counterproductive to living one’s life in grace because it “betrays a significant failure to trust in the Lord!”<sup>24</sup> Spurgeon states “it is that



cage of carnal trust, and that box of seed that we are always laboring to fill, that make the worry of this mortal life.”<sup>25</sup>

As Christians we are not supposed to be so filled with care, “care-full”,<sup>26</sup> that life becomes nothing more than roller coaster ride of worry tossed from one tribulation to another! With the “same trustful spirit as children show when they ask their fathers for things”<sup>27</sup> we are to bow our knees and make our requests known to God. It is precisely in our commune with the Father that we realize He who feeds the birds and

clothes the grass with flowers (Matthew 6:26-32)<sup>28</sup> is sovereign and willing to grant any request we make when it agrees with His will (Matthew 7:7; John 14:143). Prayer is not apathy or

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<sup>20</sup> I-Jin Loh and Eugene Albert Nida, [A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 128.

<sup>21</sup> Homer A. Kent Jr., “[Philippians](#),” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 151.

<sup>22</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, [The Epistle to the Philippians](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1997), 246.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas J. Moo, “[The Letters and Revelation](#),” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2422.

<sup>24</sup> Ben Witherington III, [Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2011), 247.

<sup>25</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “[Prayer, the Cure for Care](#),” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 40 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), 109.

<sup>26</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “[Prayer, the Cure for Care](#),” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 40 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), 110.

<sup>27</sup> F. F. Bruce, [Philippians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 143.

<sup>28</sup> F. F. Bruce, [Philippians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 143.



inaction<sup>29</sup> nor is it the “last resort” to escape tribulations but is the “passionate and persistent integration of human hopes and fears into the redemptive purposes of God in Christ!”<sup>30</sup> Anxiety dissipates the moment we trust that His care is more than sufficient<sup>31</sup> to either endure or escape the most difficult of turbulent seas!

### Step 3: Telling God Everything (verse 6)

In every situation we are to make our requests known to God. Even though this world of ours might seem like one insignificant “sand on the seashore of this vast universe,” the “all-knowing, all-foreseeing, all-planning, all-governing God wills for your Christ-exalting prayers to



be the occasion of his action.”<sup>32</sup> One can be rest assured that He who created us in His image (Genesis 1:27) and loved us so much that He sent His one and only Son to die for us (John 3:16) loves and will grant both our “small” and “large” requests so that He might fulfill His promise to do good to us (Romans 8:28). Whether one is troubled with “work, family, the future, money, sex or happiness”<sup>33</sup> God invites us to tell Him of our issues not because He does not know of them but so that our faith might increase when He grants our requests. Also, don’t forget to pray for others (Ephesians 6:18-20; 1 Timothy 2:1). The “prayer of a righteous person is

powerful and effective” (James 5:16) for it “allows us to share in the blessings He gives to others and delights in using our prayers as a means through which He operates.”<sup>34</sup> Let me illustrate this truth with a story:

“More than a generation ago a man named Hotchkiss went to Nigeria where he spent over forty years as a missionary. One day he was late for a service he was to have in a village located across a large plain. There was a rule in Nigeria in those days that no one ever crossed a large open space for fear of stampedes by the herds of wild game that roamed at large in the country. A safe path always passed within a short run of the trees. Hotchkiss was late, and he knew the quickest way

<sup>29</sup> Homer A. Kent Jr., “[Philippians](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 151–152.

<sup>30</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, [The Epistle to the Philippians](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1997), 247.

<sup>31</sup> J. A. Motyer, [The Message of Philippians](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 211.

<sup>32</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(2000–2014\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Philippians: An Expositional Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 242.

<sup>34</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Philippians: An Expositional Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 241.

to the village was to go directly across the plain. So he started across it. Halfway across the worst happened. He heard the thunder of rhinoceros hoofs, and as he looked up he saw a herd of the monstrous animals headed toward him. There was nowhere to go, so Hotchkiss knelt down in the middle of the plain, clasped his Bible to his chest, and prayed, “Lord, here I come.” An eternity passed as the roar grew louder and then faded away into the distance. At last all was quiet and Hotchkiss arose. He was standing in the midst of the plain marked with the hoofprints of a hundred or more rhinoceros. But he was alive, and he went on to his meeting in the village.

Years later, a couple from Ohio visited this man in Nigeria. In the course of their conversation the husband said to Hotchkiss, “I had a most unusual experience once that concerned you. One night I woke up suddenly with an irresistible urge to pray for you. And I did, committing you to God’s safekeeping.” Hotchkiss asked if he remembered when it was. The man had written it down that night in his Bible, and when they compared the times, it was on the same day and at the same hour that Hotchkiss had been spared on the Nigerian plain.

Someone may argue that God would have saved Hotchkiss anyway, even if the man had not prayed. Probably. But the point is that in God’s marvelous working he moved a man halfway around the world to pray for Hotchkiss in that hour”<sup>35</sup>

#### Step 4: Having a Thankful Heart (verse 6)

The kind of prayers that eliminate anxiety are those that are given out of a cheerful, joy filled and thankful heart! I believe every prayer should not start until one has spent time reflecting on all the times God has saved and blessed one in the past.<sup>36</sup> Was not God the one who transformed you from being dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1) into being His very own child



(John 1:12)? Was He not the one who helped you during your financial crises, ailments, moments of fear and difficulties in your marriages? Did God ever ignore your cries for help, even when they were at 2 in the morning? Every time we count a blessing God has given us it reminds us we are to go to God in prayer not with commands or demands<sup>37</sup> of a spoiled child<sup>38</sup> but with humble requests and faith that He who can do more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20) will either give us the strength to persevere or a way to escape whatever difficulties we face!

Apostle Paul often paired thanksgiving and prayer together (Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18; 1 Timothy 2:1; cf. 1 Thessalonians

<sup>35</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 241–242.

<sup>36</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 143.

<sup>37</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2011), 247.

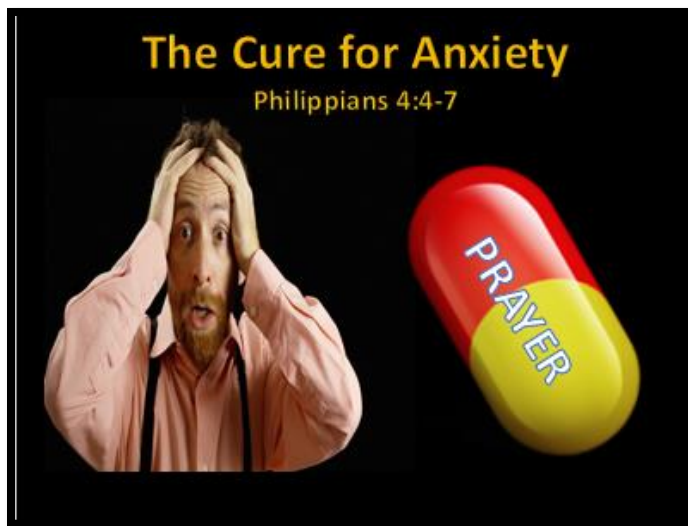
<sup>38</sup> Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Philippians*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 84.

3:9–10)<sup>39</sup> because he believed with all his heart that in response to his prayers God would not give him a stone (Matthew 7:9-11) but bread and living waters that would quench and satisfy his soul! Prayer is to be given with the following paradox of Christian living in mind: when I am weak, I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9) for that art with me, my Rod and Staff (Psalms 23)!

### Step 5: Receiving the Peace of God (verse 7)

**And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Once we learn how to live by grace and are taking everything to God in prayer with



thanksgiving the final step is to have our anxiety replaced with His peace!

This is the kind of peace that is unfathomable and immeasurable<sup>40</sup>

because it comes from God who knows the end from the beginning<sup>41</sup> and is

unruffled<sup>42</sup> but firmly in control of all things seen and unseen (Colossians

1:16). This is the kind of inward peace that is grounded in the promises and

healing presence of God<sup>43</sup> that fills the heart with unspeakable joy and the

overwhelming knowledge that no spiritual harm<sup>44</sup> will befall those who

commit themselves into His tender care! Above all this is the kind of peace

that is not humanly devised or achieved but granted,<sup>45</sup> an unshakeable foundation made perfect by the blood of the cross (1 Colossians 1:20).<sup>46</sup> This this does not mean prayer ends all strife

<sup>39</sup> I-Jin Loh and Eugene Albert Nida, [\*A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians\*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 130.

<sup>40</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Prayer, the Cure for Care.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 40 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), 116.

<sup>41</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [\*The Letter to the Philippians\*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 292.

<sup>42</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Prayer, the Cure for Care.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 40 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), 116.

<sup>43</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [\*The Letter to the Philippians\*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 292.

<sup>44</sup> Ben Witherington III, [\*Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2011), 249.

<sup>45</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, [\*The Epistle to the Philippians\*](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1997), 247.

<sup>46</sup> Ralph P. Martin, [\*Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 176.

and trouble in a Christian's life<sup>47</sup> but that during the raging storms of tribulations Jesus Christ will guard a person's heart and mind<sup>48</sup> so that anxious worry and care cannot enter.<sup>49</sup> The cure for anxiety is to surrender that which one cannot keep, one's very life, to obtain that which one cannot lose, eternal peace and security of being a child of God!

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<sup>47</sup> I-Jin Loh and Eugene Albert Nida, [\*A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Philippians\*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 130.

<sup>48</sup> F. F. Bruce, [\*Philippians\*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 144.

<sup>49</sup> Roger Ellsworth, [\*Opening up Philippians\*](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 84.