

## The Peace of God

It is a universal truth that we worry. We constantly worry about many issues affecting our lives. Even more consternating is the present Covid19 pandemic that effects the entire world. Every country on the planet is ever so cautiously reassuming the life, as it were, post-pandemic. Everyone is anxious until an effective vaccine is produced to confidently concourse without fear of being infected.

At a personal level we feel anxious about a multitude of factors affecting our lives. Our finances. Our jobs. Medical bills. Retirement. What if the economy completely fails? Wane and wax of the moon may unhinge some. Perhaps the fear of anxiety causing anxiety! Indeed if we don't learn to deal with anxiety properly it can lead to all sorts of psychosomatic problems.

But unto us who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ we are reminded of his promises in John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”.

These comforting words were spoken by our Lord on the night before His crucifixion. In other words, despite the tremendous burden He bore on the way to Calvary He was most concerned for the welfare of His disciples. The peace that the Lord Jesus spoke of can be the constant experience of every Christian, no matter what the circumstances appear to be (Mtt 14:30).

In Philippians 4:6&7 Apostle Paul is directing Timothy not to be anxious about anything.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

What Paul is expressing here is that when anxiety as a concern becomes fretful it is inappropriate as we fail to recognise the providence of God in our self-absorbed state.

There are four key words to remember in these verses: Anxious; prayer; thanksgiving; and, peace. Being anxious is the problem we are told to put away. Pray is the procedure we are to apply. Thanksgiving is the assurance we experience, and the peace is the product we are promised by God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord made it clear that anxiety proceeds from a lack of faith and from a wrong focus on the things of this world instead of on the kingdom of God. (Matt 6:25-34). It may be human to experience anxiety but in order to overcome such fretful affectations it is necessary to confront the root cause of it which is our sin of not believing in God and not seeking His providential care.

Christians are to have God's peace in every situation, not just so that they will be happy people, but so that they will be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ (Phil 2:14-18). In other words, as a Christian if you are given to much worry and anxiety there is no one who will ask you how he can have what you have. Anxiety is the antithesis of peace. Moreover the peace of God is not of this world whereby a Christian is able to endure anxiety and trials with the assurance of the eternal.

Jesus said, “Whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it”(Mark 8:35).

Philippians 4:6 does not say that “If you are anxious, try prayer; it will work.” But it does call on us when fraught with worries to examine either your lack of faith in the living God, who has promised to supply all your needs (Phil 4:19) or, to examine your focus, whether you are living for Christ and for the gospel's sake or for yourself. Anxiety is the true symptom that unveils the root cause of unbelief. In other words, anxiety is sin that must be confessed to God and put your trust in Him who will never break His promises (Num 23:19).

As Christians we must exercise deep concern for one another (1Cor 12:25). Apostle Paul mentions the concerns that he bears daily for all the churches (2 Cor 11:28).

The word concern and anxiety is very much the same. However, as opposed to sinful anxiety proper concern depends on faith in God as the Sovereign Lord who is able and willing to sustain according to His purpose. Our peace is knowing, "it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure (Phil 2:13). Therefore, one must examine whether the anxiety is due to a lack of faith or to a wrong focus on self. Confess the sin to God and yield to Him.

When we pray, we commune with God face to face. We come directly before Him. To the one who dwells in the most holies, where even the holy angels cover their faces and cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isa 6:3). Yes, He welcomes us into His presence as a father welcomes his children because of the mercy granted to us through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 4:16). This means we must always examine our hearts and confess and forsake all sin when we come in prayer to God (Ps 66:18). The primary focus of our prayers should be on God's kingdom and righteousness, and, as a distant second, on our personal needs (Mtt 6:9-13).

Our prayers casts us in dependence on Him, so that we will seek, love, and serve Him while we become more and more accustomed to flee to Him as our anchor of hope. The assurance of God's providence (Rm 8:28).

Our prayers are grounded in the remembrance of God's provisions in the past and an acknowledgement of His sovereignty in the present and trusting in His sufficiency for every need in the future. For we know that nothing is too difficult for God (Jer 32:17).

The peace of God which surpasses all comprehension (Phil 4:7) is not some psychological peace obtained through coping techniques. It is the peace that Jesus promised, "not as the world gives" (Jn 14:27). It is not humanly explainable. However, every child of God has known it and has known that it comes from God alone.

In times of trial, you draw near to the God of peace, you focus on His grace to you in Christ Jesus, you pour out your heart to Him, and as result His peace "which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:7).