

Do Not Be Anxious

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life free from anxiety and worry, and outlines practical steps to achieve this through rejoicing in the Lord, being forbearing with all men, knowing that the Lord is at hand, turning anxieties into specific prayers to God, and being thankful.

Scripture: Psalm 55:22, Matthew 6:25, Philippians 4:4, Colossians 3:15, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Anxiety And Peace", "Prayer And Gratitude"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the importance of finding peace in God amidst life's uncertainties and challenges, drawing inspiration from how Jesus, though fully human, maintained inner peace by taking His worries to the Father through prayer. By following the practical steps outlined in Philippians 4:4-7, such as rejoicing in the Lord, being patient and kind towards others, remembering the Lord's presence, turning anxieties into specific prayers, and expressing gratitude in all circumstances, believers can experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

Transcript

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

When it is pointed out that in all circumstances our Lord somehow maintained His inner peace, we often shrug it off by saying to ourselves at least, "After all, He was the Son of God and He knew things would have to turn out all right. It was easy enough for Him to stay calm, but we don't know what's going to happen next. Besides, the pace is faster these days. It's a lot easier to be a nervous wreck now that it was then."

We keep forgetting that while Jesus was God the Son, He was really a man. The mind that He was born with was just as human as yours and mine. And He was born into an age when there was

no social security,

no unemployment insurance,

no bankruptcy law,

no penicillin, no Valium,

no plumbing. Life didn't go any more smoothly for our Lord than it does for us.

Things were constantly going wrong.

- Disciples turning away.
- John the Baptist getting uptight.
- The authorities trying to trap Him.
- His own family questioning His sanity.
- The Cross waiting for Him at the end of the road.

Yet, never once do we see Him biting His nails with anxiety or throwing up His hands,

"What's the use! It's never going to work!"

or worried about the attendance at His meetings. It doesn't seem to matter to Him whether He's talking to 5000 or to one Samaritan woman at the side of the well. And the reason for this equanimity is very simple;

The things that you and I worry about, our Lord took to His Father.

When it was time to choose twelve apostles, Jesus didn't pace the floor for days on end, or flip coins, or call up His mother.

He went into the hills to pray - continued all night in prayer to God. In the morning it was settled. He called His disciples together and out of them chose the twelve.

After Jesus fed the 5000 the people were so sure that He was the prophet foretold by Moses they wanted to take Him by force and make Him a king. To solve the problem, He withdrew into the hills by Himself to pray. The next day Jesus comes on with such strong teaching that not only are the multitudes offended, but many of His disciples turn away from Him and they forget about trying to make Him a king for a while.

The night before His crucifixion Jesus can see the Cross looming up and He's tempted to become anxious. So, He goes to Gethsemane to pray. And notice, Jesus doesn't pray in generalities. He prays specifically about that cross.

"Father, if there's some way that this cup might pass from me,

take it.... nevertheless, not my will but yours be done."

The Cross isn't taken away from Him, but when Jesus gets up from the ground He's absolutely filled with divine peace.

By contrast, look at us. Our ministries hardly get rolling before the Evil One jumps on board and starts rattling the windows and kicking at the doors. And we become anxious. And the energy that should be going into the work God gave us to do is dissipated in worry. The slightest set-back throws us into a fit of

depression.

- Somebody didn't say "Good morning" in the right tone of voice and we're upset.
- A brother didn't smile when we came in the door and we're alarmed.
- Somebody makes a critical remark about you and it comes back to you by mistake. Within an hour you're making plans to leave the country. "Maybe they'll miss me when I'm gone."
- You're trying to witness to a woman at work. She shakes her head and expresses mild disappointment that you're another "Jesus freak." You walk to the drinking fountain embarrassed and confused. "I guess I just don't have what it takes. I just never have the right thing to say.

What's the use!"

Or, when the layoffs start coming,

Or when unforeseen expenses hit the family, right away our mind is picturing ruin and starvation.

Indeed, there is so much uncertainty in this world, so many surprises waiting to hit us, so many possibilities for defeat, that if our minds are not really anchored in God, our whole life will be filled with nothing but worry. Worry, even while we manage to fool our brothers and sisters into thinking that we are bubbling with confidence.

We can't minister with any power when we're anxious about what's going to happen tomorrow.

- Worried about our reputation.
- Crestfallen because someone dislikes us.

Philippians 4:4-7 is a practical list of things we can do to be delivered from the curse of anxiety. If we will do these things our lives, like the life of our Lord, will absolutely be wrapped in the peace of God.

I. Let the Lord be your joy - as the Father was His joy.

"Rejoice in the Lord always....."

Whenever I'm anxious, this is a signal that something other than the Lord is my joy. I may be getting joy out of hope of success. As long as it looks as if I might reach that success I have some peace. But when things start falling apart I become a nervous wreck. But, when the Lord really is my joy,

when His word is my delight,

when doing His will is my meat and drink,

when He Himself is the goal of my life, who can threaten that? Not even the devil can mess with that joy.

2. Be forbearing with all men.

- Patient, kind.

- Give them room to breathe.
- Give them the benefit of the doubt.

All men - even your wife,
even your husband,
even your grouchy boss,
even that cantankerous man down the alley.

We make ourselves nervous wrecks by thinking we have to play god over everyone else's life.

Praise God that the destiny of other people is not ours to decide. Our job is to give them evidence of God's mercy in Jesus Christ. And what better evidence can we give them than a forbearing spirit?

3. Know that the Lord is at hand.

When I have my mind on the coming of the Lord, I'm not going to be wasting time building my own little kingdom and getting upset over people who threaten it.

If I really expect the Lord to be coming soon,

If I really believe that His Kingdom is the only Kingdom that will stand,

And, if I really believe that He is in charge of His Church right now,

I'm going to be free from the curse of pinning my hopes on my great work,

or my fellowship, or my fruit, -- getting an oversized head when things go well, and ulcers when they don't.

4. Turn your anxieties into specific prayers to God.

- Then they won't be anxieties any more,
- they'll be prayers.
- And they won't be attached to the uncertain future,
- but to the God who never fails his children.

In everything by prayer and supplication.....

let your requests be made known to God.

You're worried about a loved one -- turn your worry into prayer. If there's something you can do for that person God will show you. If not, God will give you peace that He is listening. If worry about that person hits you fifteen times a day, turn it into prayer fifteen times a day.

You're worried about a problem you have to face in two weeks. Take that problem and lay it out specifically before the Father. Your heavenly Father isn't going to become angry because you're pestering Him. He loves to be pestered like that. As you keep pestering Him, He will not only work changes in the

circumstances, He will settle your mind,
clarify your vision,
and strengthen your faith.

5. Be thankful.

In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving,
let your requests be made known to God.

- You're praying to the God who adopted you as His child before you were born.
- You're praying to the God who sent His Only Begotten to lay down His life for your sins.
- You're praying to the God who even, at this moment, moves upon your mind with the healing grace of His Spirit.

If your life were to end this day, an eternity of thanksgiving wouldn't be enough to thank Him for what He has done in you up to now.

So thank Him. And as you thank Him, whatever anxiety is left in you will evaporate like a morning mist before the blazing sun.

As we look back over our lives we have to praise God that He used us even though we've been "worry-works." But to accomplish the work that lies before us now,

God would have us a people free from anxiety,

a people who are confident,

joyful,

clear-minded, in the midst of rapid changes,

sudden set-backs, total chaos, so that we can keep right on doing the things that need to be done even when the sky is falling in.

If we take these words of Paul and live them, the Spirit of God will turn them into reality in every one of our lives:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

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