

**Lesson 16****Preventing Worry**

Philippians 4:4-5

**I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Statistics indicate that every other hospital bed in the USA is occupied by a person who has a sickness or condition that is mentally or emotionally related.
  
- B. Mental illness is costing this country multibillions of dollars each year. The suicide rate is skyrocketing and the cause is usually given as stress or anxiety related. Around 20 million Americans are suffering from some form of mental illness. Chances are that one in ten of us in this auditorium may be suffering from some form of mental illness right now.
  
- C. Doctors tell us that many of the mentally ill are in this condition due to guilt and worry. Many physicians are saying that 70% of all mental patients could cure themselves if they could only rid themselves of fears and worry.
  
- D. Christians have an answer for both guilt and worry. Through His death and resurrection, Christ gives a person the forgiveness of sins, removing the tremendous guilt of sin that all people experience. Christ, of course, does not forgive all men, but forgives only those who avail themselves of His death and resurrection. After the basic guilt problem is dealt with, then Christ instructs His people on how to be victorious over worry.
  
- E. In Philippians 4:6, the Apostle Paul, speaking in Christ's authority, tells the Philippian Christians, "Do not be anxious about anything" or to put it more understandably, "Stop worrying about anything." In 4:4-9, the context is about how to have the blessing of God and it all seems to be related to the concept of avoiding worry. In today's message, we will see how Paul tells the Christian to prevent worry or how to prevent some forms of mental or emotional illness before they ever get started. NOTE. It must be pointed out that not all mental illness is the result of worry which ultimately a spiritual problem. Some mental illness is physical and it needs to be treated like tonsillitis or appendicitis.

- II. PREVENTING WORRY THROUGH REJOICING (4:4): **Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!**
- A. Christians are given a divine command “to keep on rejoicing” or “to habitually rejoice” or “to be characterized by rejoicing.” Christians are not told to rejoice in the Lord period but rejoice always. The natural tendency is to stop rejoicing in a time of crisis. We are never told to rejoice when everything is coming up roses but when facing the difficulties, struggles and problems of life.
- B. Philippians 4:4-5 appears to be bridge verses between 4:1-3 and 4:6-9. There are two barriers to keep us from rejoicing in the Lord. In Philippians 4:10-13, we see the barrier of disunity in the local church. Euodia and Syntyche were fighting and they were to get this solved immediately so the work of the Lord could go on. If Christians are squabbling and at each other’s throats, it is very difficult to rejoice in the Lord in that environment. Division and strife are enemies of rejoicing. The solution is for Christians to settle their disputes and begin to rejoice in the Lord, seeing the good in a person or situation instead of the bad. It is impossible to be rejoicing in the Lord and upset with your Christian brother or sister at the same time. In Philippians 4:6-7, we have a second barrier to rejoicing. The subject is about worry and anxiety. Rejoicing in the Lord is an antidote and preventative to worry.
- C. Worry no matter how we slice it or rationalize it is sin. The way to prevent the sin of worry is to have the joy of the Lord. Worry and rejoicing are antithetical; one cannot do both at the same time.
- D. The Apostle Paul repeats the command to rejoice twice. Why? Because Paul knew how difficult it is for Christians to rejoice in all circumstances. He repeats the command to rejoice for emphasis because we need it so badly as Christians.
- E. What is rejoicing? What do we mean when we say we have the joy of the Lord or we are rejoicing in Him? Joy is an inner assurance that all is well with the Lord. It is an inner confidence that God has all things under control. Joy is supernatural. It is not something a Christian can emotionally work up. It is a characteristic that only the Holy Spirit can produce (Gal. 5:22-23). One of the supernatural fruit of the Spirit is joy. Joy is a Christian virtue. Happiness is the virtue of the world. Happiness is entirely external. IT is circumstantial. We have all seen Charlie Brown’s cartoon that defines happiness as a warm puppy dog. But suppose there is no puppy. Well, then, there is no happiness. Happiness depends on the things we have or acquire whether that be power, prestige or possessions. When these things go, happiness goes right out the window. Joy is internal and supernatural and never depends on circumstances. Again we must repeat, no one can whip up this joy emotionally. It is Holy Spirit produced. When a song leader says to the congregation, “Smile and have the joy of Christ, “he does not understand that if it is not supernaturally in the heart,

it cannot be produced externally. Conversely, if there is supernatural joy in the heart, there will be external evidences of this internal joy.

There was a dear old farmer who liked to shout in church. The congregation had recently called a new preacher, from Princeton and was trying to get this country church to be a bit more formal and sedate. In about the middle portion of the service this farmer would begin shouting. Every single service! Finally a committee was appointed to speak to him about it. When they arrived, he was plowing his field but he stopped his mule and told them he knew why they had come. He said, I understand. I know we are trying to make things more formal and sedate. And I try not to shout. I really do! I tell myself that I am just not going to do it this Sunday... then I begin thinking about what the Lord has done for me... I was a ruined sinner...going to hell... and God so loved me and sent His Son... He paid for my sins and by faith in Him I have been justified... and I'm going to heaven. HERE, HOLD THIS MULE WHILE I SHOUT!"

- F. Why should a Christian rejoice? All the reasons for rejoicing are spiritual. The Christian has innumerable spiritual blessings the world knows nothing about: Salvation (*Luke 10:20:... but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*), anticipation (*1 Pet. 1:8-9: Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*), fellowship (*Psa. 16:11: You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*), Word (*Psa. 19:7- 8: The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.*), truth (*2 John 4; 3 John 4: I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*), testing (*James 1:12: Blessed (happy, joyful) is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*), and suffering in witnessing (*Acts 5:41: The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*).

When our circumstances are tough and people tell us, "Put on a happy face. Smile and everything will get better; it may be a cover-up, a denial for the hurt and the pain we really feel on the inside. Sometimes we smile and things get worse. Every cloud does not have a silver lining. Yet in it all we have Christ and an inner joy that it is all in the hands of God and will work for our good.

- G. Where is the source of joy? Joy does not depend on circumstances; it is not determined by the situation. When we say, "I don't feel like rejoicing. I don't feel like expressing joy," we are really saying that we are engulfed with our circumstances, and, therefore, we cannot be happy. What is the real problem? We have forgotten our sovereign God who has control over circumstances. We have lowered our concept of the omnipotence of God. We cannot rejoice in God without

also rejoicing in the circumstances, no matter how unpleasant, for God is also sovereign over circumstances. There is no condition or circumstance that can justify worry. NOTE. Outward circumstances should not change our inward spiritual relationship with the Lord, for we know all things are going to work out for good (Rom. 8:28). Because we are in the Lord, we have the privilege of experiencing joy and externally rejoicing. We have no right to allow anything or anyone to rob us of the joy which should be ours in Christ Jesus. Yet, so many of us do just that. There are many of us who are unjoyful Christians. Unjoyful Christians project and incorrect image of vital Christianity to the unsaved world. By our actions, we are saying to the lost, "I don't recommend the Christian Faith to others. This business of being a Christian is not so hot." We do not recommend our Lord Jesus to others if we don't demonstrate joyfulness. It is when the unsaved sees we are different in actions not beliefs that they find Christ and Christianity attractive.

A preacher friend of mine and his uncle Fritz were flying to Hawaii for some rest and relaxation. The preacher is well known in this country for his biblical and theological understanding. His uncle Fritz is known only among his friends as a very practical, down to earth Christian. As they were somewhere over the Pacific Ocean, there was an explosion. They looked out the window and the engines were on fire. The preacher began to panic and said, "Fritz, we are going down. We are going to die." Fritz very calmly looked over at him and said, "So what! God has got this whole thing under control. Rejoice, Bob, this may be the appointed hour for our entrance into heaven." The crew put out the fire. The plane did not go down. But Fritz had a tremendous opportunity to witness to those who overheard this conversation. The world is not impressed with what we believe but how we act in times of crisis.

- H. How is joy to show itself in our circumstances? Things happen to the Christian that no one, including the Christian, would be happy about. But there still can be joy. Will we rejoice when the children get on our nerves? When a business deal falls through? When a job is lost? When a boyfriend or girlfriend drops us? When a loved one dies? When these things happen, will we curse God or humble ourselves under His sovereignty and thank Him for all things, knowing that it will all work together for good, even though we do not understand why God permits things? Joy is not found in circumstances but in the God of circumstances.

Madame Guyon, who spent ten years in prison and underwent the most unbelievable atrocities for the cause of Christ, said that she sang songs of joy while she was in prison and the very stones of her prison cell became like rubies.

### III. PREVENTING WORRY THROUGH SELFLESSNESS 4:5a: ***Let your gentleness be evident to all.***

- A. We have no real good translation for the word "gentleness." Some have translated this word "forbearance, yieldedness, geniality, kindness, gentleness, sweet

reasonableness, consideration, charitableness, mildness, magnanimity and generosity.” Another word might be “big-heartedness.”

- B. The Christian is to be big-hearted. He is to give himself away to other people. One cannot live a selfless life and be selfish at the same time. At the core of all worry is selfishness. What will happen to me if I do such and such? How will people perceive me if I act in a certain manner? Where will I go if I have no money to retire on? Who will help me if a certain crisis arises? However, when we are thinking of others, being big-hearted in our attitudes and actions, we simply do not have time to worry.

#### IV. PREVENTING WORRY THROUGH CONTEMPLATING THE NEARNESS OF CHRIST 4:5b:

##### ***The Lord is near.***

- A. Consciousness of the nearness of Jesus Christ is a big incentive not to worry. Commentators have disagreed as to what “the Lord is near” means.
- B. Christ’s Present Nearness. Some think it refers to the Lord being near the Philippians with all that His close presence brings. The thought being that the Lord is watching.

A little fellow was told by his mother never to fight, always to take what the other boys said, but not to fight. She knew the Lord, and she wanted her son to know the ways of the Lord. She understood that he would not have much standing with the other boys if he did not fight, but still she was against fighting. One day several boys attacked him right near his own home, and he was all ready to fight, but he looked around at his house, and his mother was standing at the window. Mother was near and he changed his mind about fighting.

- C. Second Coming. This may also mean that the Lord is near in His return for the Church in the Second Advent. This says the Lord is near in coming. It does not necessarily mean an any moment or imminent return of Christ, but that His coming is soon. He could return in any generation. If we believe Christ could return in our generation, this has a tremendous effect on our judgment in matters that are spiritual. With the possibility of the near or soon coming of Christ, worldly things that seem so important become unimportant. We get our eyes on eternal things rather than temporal things. It is undue concern about temporal things which causes worry.

#### V. CONCLUSION

- A. Saved. Christians, we must not let anything or anyone rob us of our joy in Christ. What Paul said to the Thessalonians is essentially what he said to the Philippians:

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:16-18). When we allow anything to rob us of our joy, we are like the man who had been pardoned from the death sentence, who was given five million dollars, who was healed of cancer, but then puts 50¢ in the coke machine and when the coke doesn’t come out, he gets robbed of his joy. We who have been so richly blessed in Christ, must not let any external circumstance rob us of our joy.

## B. Unsaved

1. We began this message this morning by saying that two great problems facing men today are guilt and fear (worry). Perhaps you have tremendous guilt in your life because of sins you have committed. No matter how great or how many your sins, Christ will forgive you if you will but trust in Him as your Savior and Lord. Christ will remove the burden and guilt of your life and give you a new life.
2. Perhaps worry is a major problem for you. After one is a Christian, he learns to lean more and more on Christ, and the Lord progressively, step by step, takes away man’s bent to worry.
3. Christ said HE would remove your guilt and worry if you will trust Him. I dare you to put Christ to the test. Trust Him and you will find that He cannot lie. He will be faithful to His Word.

## C. Christ and Christ alone can bring you joy.

Joy is not found in unbelief. Voltaire was an infidel and he wrote: “I wish I had never been born.”

Joy is not found in pleasure. Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure as much as any man. He wrote: “The worry, the canker, and grief are mine alone.”

Joy is not found in money. Jay Gould, the American multi-millionaire had plenty of money. He Wrote: “I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth.”

Joy is not found in position and fame. Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed both. He wrote: “Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret.”

Joy is not in military glory. Alexander the Great conquered the known world of his day. He wept in his tent and wrote, “There are no more worlds to conquer.”

Where then is joy found? -- the answer is simple, in Christ alone.

