

Joy Through Peace
October 3, 2021
Allen Power

Philippians 4:1-9

What do a little bird, a couple of chipmunks, and an owl have to do with the problem of worry? Nothing directly, but maybe they can help us remember and DO what Paul prescribes for dealing with worry in life. We'll get back to that.

Have you seen those commercials on TV or the Internet for the Calm app? In the video what kinds of scenes do they use as a picture of calm and tranquility? The videos are pleasant and might bring some temporary relief, but in life we don't get to stay by the pleasant lake or bubbling stream forever. Life has storms!

Here's another picture based on today's text. Picture a small bird that has built its nest in a crevice between some rocks on a cliff (got it?) Now picture a loud, pounding thunderstorm. As the storm rages the little bird is dry and safe in the midst of the storm.

That imaginary scene can help us remember, the truth that should change us: God didn't promise life with no turmoil (John 16:33.) He DID promise, in the midst of life's storms, followers of Christ can access His supernatural peace. Paul gives us the prescription that will allow us to experience joy through peace.

Let's read our text. And we'll focus mainly on verses six through nine.

Philippians 4:1-9 (ESV) — **1** Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. *[If we are saved we are someone's "joy and crown." Who influenced YOU to trust in Christ?]*

2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. **3** Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. *[Many of the "storms" of turmoil in life and in the church comes from disagreements between Christ-followers. When differences come be quick to settle it in a biblical, godly manner and restore harmony.]*

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [*Always full of joy!*]

5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [*Jesus could come back at any time. How will we be acting when He does?*]

6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **8** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **9** What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. [*Know and DO!*]

- Paul said, “Don’t worry about anything.” Really? Is that possible?
- Jesus also said (in Matthew 6:25-31) not to worry (be anxious) about life.
- Is that a smart way to live? Don’t responsible people worry?
- Scripture never says, “don’t be concerned.” What’s the difference?
- Jesus asked, “*Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?*”ⁱ
- Our lesson writer describes worry as “*fretfulness or undue concern.*”ⁱⁱ
- There is much we can’t control (i.e. COVID-19, the economy.) In reality we have NO control, but scripture doesn’t say, “sit and do nothing.” It says, take action on what we can and “*Give all [our] worries and cares to God.*”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Do scary situations take God by surprise or take Him off His throne? NO!
- Paul uses some very definitive words: Rejoice ALWAYS, Don’t be anxious about ANYTHING, pray about EVERYTHING. Satan will whisper in our ears: “*But what about this? What about that?*” There are no exceptions to God’s promises, for example: “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*”^{iv}
- Worry is often about things that are not real, but worry IS a real problem!

- It's not a sin to have an anxious thought. Anxious thoughts cause us to swerve our car or move that knife out of reach of a toddler.
- Worry is really about "rumination" the "obsessive repetition of thoughts or excessively thinking about problems." [The word = "chewing the cud!"]^v
- "*Just stop those thoughts!*" won't work. [Don't think about a pink elephant!]
- Paul didn't just say, "stop worrying!" What if you went to the doctor and he/she just said, "*Don't hurt, don't have a broken arm, stop having cancer.*" No prescription? No therapy? You'd find another doctor.
- Defeating rumination requires replacement of those troubling thoughts.
- Some secular recommendations are to distract yourself and that can help, but Christ-followers have a more powerful weapon against worry.
- Paul's prescription: "*Don't worry about anything, pray about everything.*"
- He is specific about HOW to pray, prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.
- How many learned the little acrostic: A.C.T.S. to guide you in prayer?
- **Adoration** – BEGIN by remembering WHO God is and praising Him.
- Wiersbe: "Too often we rush into His presence and hastily tell Him our needs, when we ought to approach His throne calmly and in deepest reverence. The first step in "right praying" is *adoration.*"^{vi}
- **Confession** – Paul didn't mention it but I know he believed in it. Unconfessed sin will "clog up the connection" between us and the Father!
- **Thanksgiving** – "Counting our blessings" changes our worried mind.
- **Supplication** – These are our petitions/requests. Pouring out our heart without any reservation because He is our Father and He cares!
- We began with rejoicing in Who God is. Why not close out with MORE rejoicing ("again I say, rejoice")? Here's a good verse for

that: **Psalm 6:9 (ESV) — 9** The Lord has heard my plea; the Lord accepts my prayer.

- Now we get to the amazing part: ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. ^{vii}
- Prayer is the prescription (what we do) peace is the PROMISE (of God!)
- Secular psychologists say when you're anxious read a book, see a movie, take a walk, or look at pictures of those you love. There's nothing wrong with those ideas, but Christ-followers can have SUPERNATURAL PEACE.
- When we trust Christ as Savior He makes us at peace WITH God.
- When we "cast all our cares" on Him, He gives the peace OF God.
- It's no surprise Paul used the example of "guarding" our hearts and minds. He was literally chained to a guard! Note: It is both our "hearts and minds."
- It's interesting that rumination (negative repetitive thoughts) and meditation (repetitive thoughts on the right things) work the same way the difference is the focus of what we think about. Paul spoke to that too.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

- The peace of God will guard our hearts (emotions) and minds (thoughts) but we have a choice on what we put INTO our minds.
- Thoughts are powerful. Wrong thinking can lead to wrong living. Jesus said our thoughts themselves can be sin. (Matt. 5:28 lustful thoughts)
- Wrong thinking and wrong living is often the cause of our anxiety.
- Do we feed our minds "junk food" thoughts or a healthy thought diet?

- One commentator summarizes the “healthy thought diet:” *“Paul suggests to his readers a ‘divine programming’ that will ensure their peace. He calls upon them to think about:*
 - ***the true***—things that correspond to the teaching of God’s Word;
 - ***the noble***—those things that have the dignity of moral excellence;
 - ***the just***—those things that conform to God’s standards;
 - ***the pure***—those things that are free from the taint of sin;
 - ***the lovely***—those virtues that make believers attractive and winsome, such as generosity, kindness, compassion and willingness to forgive;
 - ***the things of good report***—those things that give Christians a good reputation and a good name.^{viii}”
- Right thinking leads to right living and helps us avoid some of our anxiety.
- Any thoughts on applying this to our lives? What has worked for you?

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Don’t worry about anything; pray about everything and access God’s supernatural peace. Be careful with what you dwell on in your mind.
- Back to those chipmunks and owls to help us remember these truths.
- When you see chipmunks what are they usually doing?
- When our mind is racing with worrisome thoughts it’s just like those chipmunks racing around. Ruminating is like having “chipmunk thoughts.”
- On our daily walk we not only see chipmunks, we frequently see an owl perched in a tree. How is the owl’s demeanor different than chipmunks?
- Why are owls considered “wise?” What is it about their demeanor?

*“A wise old owl lived in an oak
The more he saw the less he spoke
The less he spoke the more he heard.
Why can’t we all be like that wise old bird?”^{ix}*

- If we just walk by chipmunks they race around like we're chasing them.
- When we walk by the owl he just calmly looks at us. He's not concerned.
- Now, if I fired a shotgun in the air, the owl would fly (he's wise not stupid!) but a couple of humans or a car going by wouldn't upset his day.
- The peace of God allows us to exchange our "chipmunk" thinking for the calm, meditative demeanor of the "wise old owl."

Isaiah 26:3 (ESV) claims this promise from God, — **3** You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

- When the "chipmunk thoughts" start racing around, Paul said we need to take a breath and calmly (as an owl) take our concerns to God in prayer.
- Rejoice in Him; praise Him remembering Who He is; thank Him for His blessings; hand Him our worries, and His supernatural peace will allow us to be as calm as that wise old owl and as protected from the storm as that little bird in the crevice of the rocks because HE IS LORD and HE CARES.
- It's not enough to know this we have to DO IT. Paul gives a call to action:

Philippians 4:9 (ESV) — **9** What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- This week, let's put all this into practice!

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mt 6:27).

ⁱⁱ Explore the Bible Leader's Guide – Lifeway 2021

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (1 Pe 5:7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{iv} [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 13:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^v <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/rumination>

^{vi} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 2, p. 94). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

vii Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Php 4:7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

viii Ellsworth, R. (2004). *Opening up Philipians* (pp. 84–85). Leominster: Day One Publications.

ix <https://allnurseryrhymes.com/a-wise-old-owl/>