Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Rd.

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

770.469.9069

A Walk Through Philippians

Part 4: The Promise of Pandemic Peace

Text: Philippians 4:6-7

Don’t be anxious. That sounds like a command, an imperative, rather than a suggestion. There is no room, in this text, for the comment, “I’m a worrier. My mother was too. My Dad was too. It’s what we do.”

No, Paul says, “Be anxious for nothing.” A better rendering: Don't let *anything* make you anxious.

It is said that

*Worry is the interest paid on trouble before it falls due.*

*Worry* *pulls tomorrow's cloud over today's sunshine.*

*Worry gives a small thing a big shadow*.

You and I can probably agree that merely telling a person not to worry without giving that person an alternative, is not helpful.

Paul not only tells the Philippians not to worry. he also gives them an alternative.

**Soak your circumstances in prayer.**

If you are going to make your requests known and your anxieties public, make them known to *God.*

In 1916, Methodist pastor Charles Albert Tindley wrote:

1. If the world from you withhold of its silver and its gold,

And you have to get along with meager fare,

Just remember, in his Word, how he feeds the little bird -

Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.

Refrain:

Leave it there, leave it there,

Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there;

If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out.

Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.

2 If your body suffers pain and your health you can’t regain,

And your soul is almost sinking in despair,

Jesus knows the pain you feel, he can save, and he can heal --

Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. [Refrain]

3 When your enemies assail and your heart begins to fail,

Don’t forget that God in heaven answers prayer;

He will make a way for you and will lead you safely through -

Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. [Refrain]

4 When your youthful days are gone and old age is stealing on,

And your body bends beneath the weight of care,

He will never leave you then, he’ll go with you to the end -

Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. [Refrain]

Source: [Lead Me, Guide Me (2nd ed.) #593](https://hymnary.org/hymn/LMGM2012/593)0

Paul tells the Philippians that they should take all their anxiety to God and... leave it there!

Paul issues a **command** (don’t be anxious), an **alternative** (take everything to God in prayer) and a **promise**; the peace of God will guard you. Greek word for *guard* is **phroureo** (froo-reh’ o). It means *to protect, to preserve, to detain, to post a sentinel, put spies at the gate.*

Look at what God will do for the person that leaves her/his anxiety at the foot of the cross. God will replace our anxiety with a 24-hour security detail and God will post a sentinel around our hearts and minds*.* The peace of God garrisons us. This sounds so unachievable, especially coming from a man in chains, under house arrest. In his little commentary on Philippians, A. M. Hunter writes, *True prayer and anxious care cannot coexist: the way to be anxious about* ***nothing*** *is to be prayerful about* ***everything****.* (The Layman’s Bible Commentary. Volume 22. p.106)

You know that memory verse in Isaiah 26:3, don’t you?

*You will keep him in perfect peace,*

*Whose mind is stayed on You,*

*Because he trusts in you.*

This peace which God is of a different quality than the peace our culture offers us. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, promised that the peace he would give us would be different from the world’s offer of peace. Didn't He say so?

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.*

What is there about God’s peace that makes it different from that which is offered by the world in which we live?

1. It has a different source.

It is the peace *of, from* God! That is, it comes from One in whom all power resides.

2. It has a different makeup. It is not as tangible as the world’s peace. It is *hyperecho* (hoop-er-ekh’-o). It is *better than, superior to, has power over,* that which the world offers.

[SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND](http://www.sfcg.org/)

WHAT An international NGO that implements on the ground conflict resolution techniques through creative and collaborative problem solving.

HOW  The well-established organization, founded in 1982,  uses a variety of [means](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/) to bring about peaceful resolution including: media production (radio, TV, film and print),

sports, drama, music, community organizing and more. Search for Common Ground works with local partners to develop culturally appropriate methods that will put an end

to conflict.

WHERE The NGO has 50 offices in 30 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and North

America.

INSPIRATION FROM THE WEBSITE There is no conflict that cannot be resolved.  
Violent conflict is created and sustained by human beings, and it can be ended by  
human beings. - Senator George Mitchell

As well-thought out as this is, there will be no ultimate end to conflict until the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Son of God, is invited to the table.

[PEACETUBE](http://thepeacetube.com/)

WHAT A Facebook chat app (still in progress) that intends to connect people from

opposite sides of the political and global spectrum.

HOW  PeaceTube users log into the app and the system randomly and anonymously

introduces the user to another person from a different country. The two can get to know each via chat, form a connection, find common ground, and even take the next

step - reveal their Facebook identities, and if they choose, become full-fledged Facebook friends.

WHERE Worldwide

INSPIRATION FROM THE WEBSITE If we peek over the borders that separate us, we are sure to find more in common than in contrast.

Both of these organizations and websites sound good. It’s a start at a problem that has been with us since time began.

The peace of which Paul speaks has not only a different source (from God) and a different makeup (it is *not* as the world gives).

3. It also has a different conduit.

Look at our text again. The guard that is posted around our hearts and minds is *through* Christ Jesus. That preposition suggests union and instrumentality. That is, Christ is the One *through* whom and *by* whom we arrive at this state of non-anxious living. During a pandemic it is sooooo easy to get nervous. Is the person standing behind me at Kroger COVID-free? Is the mask he’s wearing, a good mask? Since I can’t find disinfectant anywhere, how will I keep my surfaces clean? Suppose the test I took turns out positive? Suppose the test I took gives me a false negative? What if I have to quarantine myself? When will we get back to normal? Will my small start-up company be able to get its customers back? Will I be able to hang on, possibly 6-12 more months, with my reduced income?

The answer is Christ. A relationship with Christ that is vibrant, growing and taken seriously will keep us during a pandemic... and beyond.

I call this same Paul to the witness stand. Paul, tell us how this works in your future as you consider the disappointment that inevitably comes our way.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18:

**16**Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. **17**For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, **18**while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

For Paul, peace is not so much an absence of conflict. Peace is the presence of One greater than the conflict. This peace is beyond our ability to even comprehend it.

**Closing**

J. A. Bengel wrote:

*Anxiety and prayer are more opposed to each other than fire and water.* (*New Testament Word Studies,*Volume 2, p. 447)

The peace of God both suffices and surpasses.

It comforts and keeps

It promotes and protects

It guards and guides

It strengthens and sustains

It tempers us and transports us

**Illus.**

Overheard In An Orchard

“Said the Robin to the Sparrow:

“I should really like to know

Why these anxious human beings

Rush about and worry so.”

Said the Sparrow to the Robin:

“Friend, I think that it must be

That they have no heavenly Father

Such as cares for you and me.”

– Elizabeth Cheney, 1859

Alan Carr closes one of his sermons with a story of the early days of aviation. In the pioneer days of aviation, a pilot was making a flight around the world. After he had been gone for some two hours from his last landing field, he heard a noise in his plane, which he recognized as the gnawing of a rat. He realized that while his plane had been on the ground a rat had gotten in. For all he knew the rat could be gnawing through a vital cable or control of the plane. It was a very serious situation. He was both concerned and anxious. At first he did not know what to do. It was two hours back to the landing field from which he had taken off and more than two hours to the next field ahead. Then he remembered that the rat is a rodent. It is not made for the heights; it is made to live on the ground and under the ground. Therefore, the pilot began to climb. He went up a thousand feet, and then another thousand and another until he was more than twenty thousand feet up. The gnawing ceased. The rat was dead. He could not survive in the atmosphere of those heights. More than two hours later the pilot brought the plane safely to the next landing field and found the dead rat.

   Then Alan Carr reminds us that worry is like a rat in your heart and in your mind. If left alone, it will gnaw at you until it destroys your life and until it steals away all your joy, power and energy.  But, the rodent of worry cannot live in the secret place of the Most High. It cannot breathe in an atmosphere that is steeped in prayer and influenced by the Word of God.  Worry dies when we ascend to the Lord through prayer and His Word.

Amen