

Anxiety

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Preacher: Alasdair MacAulay

[0 : 0 0] well can we turn back to that chapter then philippians chapter 4 philippians chapter 4 if i can draw your attention to verses 6 and 7 we can read these again at verse 6 do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to god and the peace of god which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in christ jesus do not be anxious about anything are you anxious tonight you know it's very likely that some of you are anxious in fact it's possible that many of us are worried about something there's certainly no lack of situations that could cause us to be anxious you could be worrying about your own health you could be worrying about the health of someone close to you you could be concerned about your employment situation or or maybe a business that you're running you could also be worried of course about the prospect of continuing to have to homeschool for longer than was originally intended maybe your parents or grandparents that you're concerned about and you're unable to support them you're unable to visit them all these things can can burden us can cause us to lose sleep there can be any number of things that contribute to our anxiety you know anxiety was was rife in our country prior to covid but the levels of it now are off the scale the office of national statistics tell us that in its most recent research that half the population of the uk are suffering from anxiety and one third of the population would describe that as high level anxiety and yet anxiety is not a new problem here it is spoken about in the bible in fact there's several references to it in the word of god jesus spoke about it when he preached his famous sermon the sermon on the mount he said do not worry about tomorrow now granted when jesus said that he was maybe focusing in on on specifics he had told them not to worry about what they'll eat or what they will drink or what they will wear it was with regard to that that he said do not worry but here in our passage tonight paul broadens that a lot because he tells us do not be anxious about anything you might think is that even possible that's that that's a tall order was paul some kind of super apostle who never got anxious no he wasn't in fact there's only a couple of chapters since he has confessed confessed his own anxiety if you have a bible you can turn back to philippians chapter 2 and verse 28 verse 28 paul says therefore i am all the more eager to send him that's epaphroditus i'm all the more eager to send him so that when you see him again you may be glad and i may have less anxiety paul was anxious he was anxious because epaphroditus who had come from the church of philippi with some gifts for paul had not as yet been able to return and he knew that he was a useful person to the church in philippi and he was worried about how they were coping without epaphroditus and he tells us there that he was getting anxious and he wanted to take some action to lessen his own anxiety now you read that and then you read what he tells us about not to be anxious but anything and you might want to say well you should practice what you preach how can you tell us not to be anxious about anything when you're

admitting and confessing that you get anxious yourself well there's no way paul had forgotten that he had confessed anxiety to chapter 6 so there must be more to this than meets the eye and that's what i want to try and unpack with you tonight what exactly is paul saying to us here is it actually wrong to be anxious and if we get anxious what should we do about it now let's be clear this is not some kind of self-help session and neither am i going to begin to make distinctions between a high level anxiety or chronic anxiety and and lesser anxiety the passage doesn't make a distinction so i'm not going to be there but what we are going to do tonight is to look at what the bible says on the subject of anxiety particularly what the apostle paul had to advise us with regards to it three simple headings we will look at the problem we will look at the prescription and then we'll look at the promise that is here in verse seven so the problem the prescription and the promise the problem first of all so paul he's addressing his comments here to the church in philippine now that's a church that had plenty reason to be anxious there were issues in the church you see that in this very

chapter we didn't read from the beginning but there in verse two there's christians who are falling out and that concerns him and he says to those who are falling out sort it out sort it out this shouldn't be in the church of christ so that's in chapter four if you go back into chapter three paul tells us that he weeps over the opposition that there is to the church and to christ verse 18 of chapter three but as i has often told you before and now say again even with tears many live as enemies of the cross of christ so this church has fallouts this church has enemies if you go back into chapter two we're going back the way rather forward but if you go back into chapter two he's having to deal there with selfish ambition it's that well-known passage where he where he where he where he sets christ up as our example the one who was equal with god yet made himself nothing but he's teaching that because he's addressing selfish ambition so there's that issue in the church in philippine as well and then go back again into chapter one and that's where he tells him that he's imprisoned that he is in chains so you realize this church has its problems it's got its issues their founder paul is in jail there's various kinds of trouble facing the church and so it's probably inevitable that there will be anxiety within it yet paul writes to them and he says to them do not be anxious about anything so is that double standards on paul's part when he himself has confessed to being anxious well philippines 2 is not the only place where paul tells us that he gets anxious if you know that passage uh in second corinthians where he tells us about all the scrapes that he ever got into since he became a missionary for jesus he he lists lots of things second corinthians 11 he talks about beatings and floggings and being stoned and almost drowning and so on and then at the end of the list he says and on top of all of that i face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches concern concern but the word he actually uses is the word for anxiety it's the same root word that is used here in philippines 4 and that's how if you have an esv bible you can look it up that's how it translates that version second corinthians 11 he talks about the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches so as we consider here first of all and tonight the problem the problem it may it may bring some measure of comfort to those who who wrestle with anxiety to know that the great apostle paul struggled with it as well there were times it got to the better of but that doesn't change the fact that it's a problem it's a problem and it's a problem because well it weighs you down it cripples you in fact it it paralyzes some people they're just unable to function and and and it doesn't help in any way it doesn't change a thing that was the point that jesus made in the sermon on the mount remember he said which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life you can't it's not going to make things any better it's not going to change a thing someone once said worry is is like a rocking chair it gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere it doesn't get you anywhere no that's not entirely true it doesn't get you any further forward but it does hold us back it is detrimental to us it is harmful to us john blanchard said this he said anxiety never strengthens you for tomorrow but it weakens you for today it weakens you for today coming back to paul paul then he's confessed that he himself gets anxious but he tells us here not to be anxious about anything so how can we explain that apparent contradiction is the apostle being insincere well no because even an apostle cannot prevent a wave of anxiety sweeping over him from time to time what paul is saying to us here is don't remain anxious don't stay in that situation of anxiety you don't have to you don't have to and while anxiety is not something to be ashamed of it's not something that we should be accepting of either we shouldn't be prepared to put up with it you can do something about it and we're going to come to that shortly and we're going to look at what paul tells us that we should do when we get anxious but let me just point this out before we move on to that paul here is addressing christians okay we know he's talking to christians from the way he writes this epistle the opening words of the epistle he tells us who he's going to be addressing he says to all the saints in christ jesus at philippi he's talking to believers it's to believers that he says you need to be anxious about anything and the same was true with jesus in the sermon on the mount when he said do not worry about tomorrow he too was addressing believers he was preaching to his followers to his disciples at that point never never does the bible say to the unsaved to the unconverted do not worry in fact if you're not a christian tonight you should be worried you should be anxious because whatever happens to you here there's worse to follow there's worse to follow the bible says it is the believer the person who has put their trust in christ who is told in the bible repeatedly all the way from beginning to end of the bible we have this repeatedly given to the christian don't worry don't be afraid don't be anxious these are reassurances for those who are in christ and if you are a christian and you do get anxious well you need to listen to what paul has to say about how to deal with it what we ought to do with it so that brings us to our second point so that was first of all

the problem the problem i want to look secondly though at the prescription the prescription so thankfully paul doesn't just say don't worry because what's the use of that never in the history of worry has anyone stopped worrying because someone told them don't worry you need to be given a reason and paul gives us a reason and here's the reason he's saying rather than get anxious which we've seen doesn't change anything bring it to the one who can change everything bring it to the one who is in control of all things that's what verse 6 is saying let's read it again do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to god the hymn what a friend we have with jesus pretty much echoes that same advice that that paul gives us it says are we weak and heavy laden cumbered with a load of care precious saviour still a refuge take it to the lord in prayer that's what paul is telling us here but but but he doesn't just simply say pray about it he mentions as he tells us to bring a request to god he mentions three ways in which we're to approach god he says by prayer and petition with thanksgiving is that important should we take note of that well there are no wasted words in the bible there's no extra words there's no unnecessary words and so therefore this must be important so i'd like just for a moment to unpack that a little these three aspects that he mentions as we bring our requests to god so first of all he says by prayer by prayer now we know as christians that we shouldn't just rush into god's presence and start to rattle off a wish list you know i i want this and this and this and the next thing and i want them as soon as possible that's not appropriate for us jesus taught us how to pray when he taught his disciples how to pray and it was to come with with with with praise and adoration of god our father in heaven hallowed be your name a reminder that god is holy but amazingly a reminder that god is our father the one who sits enthroned suffering over the entirety of the universe you can call him father that's a wow moment that should before you get any further should begin to alleviate your anxiety the one who's in charge of all things is your father but then

we remember as well hallowed be your name may your name be holy we remember that we are we're sinners coming to a holy god and so it's appropriate as we approach it that we confess that we're sinners that we confess our feelings that we confess our anxiety c.s. lewis said this he said anxiety is not just a pain that we ask god to alleviate but a weakness that we must ask god to pardon to pardon so as we bring in a request to god there's this first element to it prayer and prayer in the right sense of the word including the worship of god and the confession of our sin and only then are you ready to rattle off your needs that brings us to the second point by prayer and petition petition so this is where you share your worries where you pour out your heart to god now if you get anxious why don't you write down a list of everything that causes you to get anxious write them down and once you've done so that becomes your prayer list you go through that with god you share that with god tell him tell him what it is that causes you to get anxious be specific be specific i was reading this week about a woman a christian woman she was stuck at a bus stop pouring rain loads of shopping desperately wanted to get home and so she prayed quickly to god she says lord send a bus and you know in no time a bus appeared and she was delighted until she saw that it wasn't her bus and then she began in her heart to remonstrate with god until she realized well god did what i asked him he sent a bus i should have been more specific we should be specific in our prayers as well tell god everything that's going on now we know that he knows god knows what's on our heart before we even ask but every father loves to hear his children pour their heart out to him and our heavenly father is no different so you come come earnestly pleading with him sharing with him telling him all your petitions all that is on your heart all that weighs you down john newton said this there were coming to a king large petitions with thee bring for his grace and power are such you can never ask too much so come paul says you present your request to god come by prayer and petition and then thirdly with thanksgiving with thanksgiving you know if a father loves to hear his children come and pour their heart out to him a father also loves to hear his child say thank you we bring up our children we teach them to say thank you and yet it's it's so nice when they do show that appreciation and when they say thanks thanksgiving and we and you know when we do in prayer when we come to god and we start to give thanks and we start to think about the things we have to be thankful for even just doing that can help to put into perspective the things that we've been getting anxious about so be sure your prayer includes thanksgiving william

[20 : 16] hendrickson a writer a commentator he said this he said prayer without thanksgiving is like a bird without wings like a bird without wings it's it's going nowhere it's not going to get very far there ought to be a thanksgiving element to our prayer as we thank god for all the good things we have as we thank him even for the ability to pour out our hearts to him so there should be these

three elements paul says as we come and present our requests to god there must be prayer prayer of worship adoration confession then then present your petitions and be sure to include thanksgiving and that friends is his prescription for anxiety the prescription so we've looked at the problem we've looked at the prescription thirdly and finally i want to consider the promise that is accompanying it the promise and we have that in verse 7 let's read verse 7 and the peace of god which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in christ jesus the peace of god which transcends or which surpasses all understanding you know that's that's an amazing statement because it's basically saying to us you will obtain a peace that is beyond comprehension beyond comprehension so so so this is telling us about a peace that you can experience but you cannot explain and you've probably seen that in the lives of some people who are going through trying circumstances and yet they have this sense of calm it's what enables a christian to be calm in the middle of a crisis this peace that transcends understanding paul describes it as the peace of god the peace of god now that's more than just a peace that god dishes out it is the peace of knowing god of knowing god and of remembering that he is in control of all things and he's a good god and he's a faithful god that brings peace to your soul look at how god is described at the end of verse 9 is described as the god of peace the god of peace and when you know this god personally and when you've cast all your anxiety on him then you can share in his peace a peace which paul tells us here it will guard your hearts and your minds peace now these two the heart and the mind that's the seat of all your emotions all your anxiety arises from there and he's saying here this peace of god it overrides all that emotion notice the promise is not god will give you everything you ask for it's not even god will completely remove the things that cause you to be anxious no it's that his peace will reign in your heart and over your emotions so version psalm 94 that says this when anxiety was great within me your comfort brought joy to my soul it's hard to imagine being joyful when you've got something

that that is weighing you down and yet that's what the peace of god can do for the people of god but let me go back to where we started we began with a question are you anxious tonight well if you are you need to do something about it you need to do something about it you need to act for two reasons first of all we've touched on this anxiety is harmful to us it gets you nowhere but it does hold you back it's harmful it can be harmful to our health even but then there's this other reason and that is that an anxious christian is not a good witness not a good witness because anxiety betrays a distrust in the goodness of god so we shouldn't put up with it we shouldn't be willing to accept it bishop taylor smith he was a preacher he was an army chaplain around about a hundred years ago and he used to often counsel soldiers to put their trust in god and stop worrying and he and he often warned them against worry and he had a habit of writing this little rhyme for worried soldiers it's hummus but it has a serious point and it goes like this the worried cow would have lived till now if she had saved her breath but she feared her hay wouldn't last all day and so she moved herself to death the point being worry is harmful more harmful than the things that we worry about worry does plenty damage but it does no good the apostle

Paul who has told us that he had times of anxiety in his life he tells us the same thing in the word of god tonight he says don't be anxious about anything instead pray about everything pray about everything and just as we finish let's come back to the promise because there's a wee bit in the end we didn't touch on verse 7 and the peace of god which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in christ jesus notice these three final words in christ jesus this friends is a promise for the christian for the person who is in christ and if you're not in christ tonight then you ought to be anxious because the bible contains no such promise for you not in life and not in death if you're not a christian tonight and you seek the lord seek the lord because there is a promise for you if you do that whoever seeks shall find whoever seeks shall find seek the lord while he may be found the bible says call on him while he is near amen let's pray lord lord we thank you for the many promises that the word of god contains for us most of them are promises for your people but yet there are also promises for those who seek you and we pray lord tonight that we would seek you anew seek you afresh we would desire a closer walk with you that we wouldn't be struggling on with the same old burdens that we would resolve lord to bring them all to you trusting that you care for us and may we know that peace that transcends understanding peace that can be experienced but not explained lord help us to know it in our own lives we pray these things we ask in jesus name amen