

HOW TO STOP WORRYING

"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philipians 4:6-7.

Worry is the fear that something unfortunate is going to happen. It is the tendency to be over-anxious about things that are unlikely to happen. It is a disquieting solicitude about the material things of life. It is certainly a very bad habit. It is one of the most prevalent and pernicious sins of modern life. It is probably the worst and the most fatal malady that afflicts the human race today.

Our subject is one of vital importance and universal interest. It is a very practical question, and yet, it is seldom that anyone has the courage and kindness to speak to another on it.

God's Word recognizes the tendency of people to worry. Jesus Christ gave considerable attention to the subject of anxiety, which proves that worry was very common in His day. In his letter to the Philipians, Paul wrote, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Thus, worry is definitely forbidden. In the light of our subject and text, let us consider: —

I. The Certainty Of Worry.

One does not need to travel very far along the highway of life before he discovers that one of the greatest foes of the human heart is worry. The terrible havoc which it is working is written on the faces of people everywhere. To look into the faces of people today is to see many evidences of worried minds.

Only a stupid and inane optimism would declare "there is nothing to worry about." There are real problems in every life. All of us have our troubles. And each one thinks that his troubles and worries are the greatest.

Worry is not confined to any people or land, but troubled hearts are to be found everywhere. Worry is not even peculiar to any class, calling or profession. Every individual has annoyances, perplexities and anxieties. Worry is to be found among the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the sick and the well, the proud and the humble, the saints and the sinners. And they worry about various things — how to get money, how to keep it, how to spend it, what they have said, what they have failed to say, what they have done, and what they have failed to do. Some worry because they have poor health. Many worry about their families — some because they are not married, and some because they are. Such worries prevent multitudes of people from living happily and victoriously.

II. The Character of Worry.

1. Worry is enfeebling.

Worry injures digestion, disturbs intestinal action, upsets the nervous system, causes the glands to function irregularly, ruffles the temper, prevents sound sleep, distracts the mind, saddens the heart, hinders the discharge of daily duties, impedes the largest service, kills the aspiration and ability to be and to do in life, prohibits success, destroys energy, whitens the hair, shatters health, causes happiness to flee, and sends multitudes to untimely graves. Worry has killed many persons, but it never made a single one great or strong. It is always deadly to vigor and usefulness. It divides our attention, subtracts from our strength, adds to our burdens, and multiplies our difficulties.

2. Worry is useless.

According to the teachings of Christ, worry is useless. He asks, "Which of you by

taking thought (or worrying) can add one cubit unto his stature?" Matthew 6:27. Worry never enables one to grow taller. It never adds anything to our stature, possessions, or success. It never does the slightest good. It never helps any man to preach a better sermon, teach a better lesson, write a better editorial, pen a nobler poem, sing a sweeter song, live a better life, sell more merchandise, plow a straighter furrow, or achieve more heroic exploits. It never dries a single tear, nor lifts a single burden, nor solves a single problem.

Has your worrying helped you? Has it relieved any of your troubles? Has it lightened your burdens? Has it brought you peace of mind? Most assuredly, it has not. It is utterly useless to worry, either about the things we can help or about the things we cannot help. Nothing is more worthless than worry.

3. Worry is sinful.

David wrote, "Fret not thyself." Jesus said, "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow." Paul said, "In nothing be anxious." Thus, worry is forbidden. It is sinful to worry. Worry never does anything but harm. It creates problems and increases burdens. It produces and perpetuates a long series of evil consequences to the spirit, soul and body. The extent of the havoc and wreckage wrought in human lives by worry is inconceivable. It is positively wrong.

III. The Causes of Worry.

As a capable physician strives to get at the root of a disease in his effort to apply an efficacious remedy, so shall we examine some of the causes of the worries which rob our lives of peace and happiness. The causes of worry are manifold, but we shall consider only five of them.

1. A natural tendency.

Some are constitutionally disposed to worry. It seems to be the most natural thing for them to worry. They are just chronic worriers. They are never pleased or satisfied. They are blinded by the light, chilled by the breeze, annoyed by the rain, tormented by the heat, or bored by the world. They are never so happy as when they are absolutely miserable.

2. A morbid imagination.

Frequently, worry is caused by too much introspection. Some worry about imaginary slights and insults, and about what others think of them. As a matter of fact, most people are thinking about themselves and not about others. It is usually conceit that makes one think others are slighting or criticising him. The most serious obstacle to the happiness and usefulness of many is the tendency to brood over imaginary worries and to become the prey of thoughts that depress.

As a rule, worry is more frequently produced by what is feared than by what is actually experienced; by what the imagination borrows from the future rather than by what is endured in the present. People suffer most from anticipated troubles that never come. It is said that ninety-nine and forty-four hundredths percent of the things that people worry about never happen. When actual troubles come, there will be a cure for them, but what cure can there be for troubles that never happen?

"There is many a sorrow and pain, I know
As we tread the path of life;
There is many a grief of lasting woe,
And the way is toil and strife;
But the hardest load we have to bear,
Is the labour and strength that's lost
In building a bridge, with toilsome care,
O'er the stream that is never crossed."

You should remember that your troubles will never be so bad when they come to you as they appear to be in your imagination. Therefore, as the poet said,

"Press on with courage toward the goal,
With Truth your shield emboss;
Be strong, look up, and just ignore
The bridge you'll never cross."

3. A cultivated habit.

Some simply cultivate the habit of looking for the worst instead of the best. Consequently, they worry about mere trifles. But, worry is so difficult to check when it has become a personal habit that has been cultivated through the years.

It is said that a teacher of advertising showed his class a large piece of white cardboard with a black dot in the middle of it. He said to the members of that class, "What do you see?" They answered unanimously, "A black dot." He laughed at them, and asked, "Don't you see the white space?" Well, that is the way with most people. They pick out the black dots and overlook the white spaces in life. However, many of their troubles would vanish if they would only count their blessings.

4. The cares of life.

(1) Physical health.

Sickness and disease come upon us and upon those whom we love. In many homes there is some one who is ill. Many of the problems of health are still unsolved.

(2) Family affairs.

Members of our own families often cause us considerable anxiety.

(3) Money matters.

Many are facing difficult tasks with limited resources. The task of making a living, providing for a family, and maintaining a decent standard of living is not at all easy today. A yearning for the things that are not essential is a great source of worry. It is usually the things that we think we ought to have above and beyond the necessities of life that cause worry. Thackeray said, "When I was a boy, I wanted taffy; it cost a shilling and I didn't have one. Now I am a man; I have the shilling, but I don't want the taffy."

(4) Social relationships.

How to be a good citizen, how to deal with people, how to make friends, and how to fit into the modern and complicated social pattern are questions that tend to produce worry in many lives.

5. A lack of faith.

Worry indicates a lack of faith in God. For us to keep on worrying indicates that we have distrusted God, ignored His love, and forgotten His power. It is displeasing to Him because "worry is living with God left out."

Distrust of God, distrust of others, and distrust of self always produce worry. All forms of worry are the result of imperfect trust and faith. When troubled about food, raiment and shelter, we are to remember the birds and flowers. It is impossible to be free from worry unless we believe in and trust God.

Martin Luther worried excessively. His wife tried her best to help him overcome that weakness. After trying various methods to achieve the desired goal, she arose rather early one morning and dressed in mourning. When he came in for breakfast, he looked surprised and said, "Who is dead?" Very quietly she answered "God!" "Foolish woman," he thundered, "God cannot die." "Well," she continued, "I thought He must be by the way you have been worrying about things." Luther grasped the idea and broke himself of his bad habit.

For one to keep on worrying is to indicate a deep distrust of God. It just isn't Christlike to do it.

IV. The Curse of Worry.

Worry is never a blessing, but always a bane. It is never a comfort, but always a curse. It is an awful sin.

1. Worry is a sin against the worrier.

Worry never improves one's circumstances in the least. It never helps one to fulfill his responsibilities or to solve the problems of life. It is destructive of all true happiness and hinders spiritual growth. It chokes the life of faith. It unfits for the responsibilities of life. Few forms of dissipation do more damage, physically, mentally, and spiritually, than worry. It soon turns one's face toward the cemetery. Thousands have shortened their lives by it.

2. Worry is a sin against others.

Worry depresses others. Those who worry not only make themselves miserable, but they also rob others of joy. The ruin of many homes has been brought about through some nerve-racked person who was a victim of worry.

3. Worry is a sin against God.

When any Christian worries, God is dishonored. When people worry, they thereby assert that God is not willing and able to do what He has promised to do. Worry declares that His grace is not sufficient for our needs. In fact, it is His delight to help us at all times and under all circumstances. It sorely grieves Him to know that, although He is omnipotent and beneficent, His people persist in worrying about material things and trivial matters.

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.

V. The Cure for Worry.

"Don't worry" is an easy thing to say, but a very difficult thing to practice. Nevertheless, freedom from the malady and menace of worry ought to be the experience of all Christians. God has made ample provision for it to be that way. Deliverance from worry and the possession and enjoyment of peace are possible for all.

However, simply to say, "Don't worry," will not stop you from worrying. You cannot cure worry by a mere determination to end it, or by getting into an ideal situation, or by laughing it off, or by debating it into oblivion. Our text prescribes the remedy for worry. How then can we be cured of this bad habit?

1. Concentrate on the present.

We must learn to live one day at a time, and live that well. That will stop us from worrying about tomorrow. Worry often comes by importing the future into the present. It is squeezing troubles into the present that belong to the future. To worry about the future is to borrow trouble. "Worry is the interest we pay on tomorrow's troubles." Things that may happen in the future have not happened yet.

2. Have faith in God.

Jesus gives the cure for worry as faith in God, faith in His love, His mercy, and His goodness. Simple trust in God is the only effectual cure for worry. He procures our

peace, appeases our heart-hunger, satiates our soul-thirst, bears our burdens, banishes our fears, dispells our disappointments, and changes our sighs into songs. Place your hand in His and let Him lead where He wills. He knows what is best. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28.

3. Talk to God about everything.

You can talk to Him about anything and everything that burdens your soul and concerns your life. He is the Lord of life and death. It is a wonderful privilege to take all your cares and anxieties to Him, and to take Him into your confidence about everything. Prayer is ever the way of triumph over worry.

(1) Prayer sets things in their true perspective.

(2) Prayer brings the will into conformity with God's will.

(3) Prayer secures power for victorious living.

"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Why worry when you can pray?

4. Commit the future to Him.

Unreservedly, yield your all to Christ. Look your worries straight in the face with the realization that, even if the worse should happen, God will be with you through it all. Whatever comes, you need not be afraid of it. You can stand anything when it comes, and you can stand it much better then than you can stand it before it comes. The strain will bring the necessary strength. Sufficient resources will be available when the need arises. The same power that has brought you thus far on your way will not fail tomorrow. Philippians 4:19 covers every item in the life of every believer in Christ. It says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Just turn your case over to Him and He will supply your needs. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5. If you will commit the future to God and trust Him, you will not be disappointed.

Be not dismayed, whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.

Thro' days of toil, when heart doth fail,
God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail,
God will take care of you.

All you may need He will provide,
God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied,
God will take care of you.

No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon His breast,
God will take care of you.

God will take care of you,
Thro' ev'ry day, O'er all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.

-- C. D. Martin