



TASTE AND SEE

KEVIN FAWCETT

From Worry To Worship

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."
(Phil. 4:6)*

Do you ever find yourself worrying?

Ever worry about the amount that you worry?

Let's face it - there are lots of things we can worry about: family drama, financial uncertainty, health issues, and more! The problem, though, is that worry chokes the life out of us. In fact, the word derives from the Old High German word "*wurgen*" which means "to strangle, constrict, choke." And that's what worry feels like - it strangles our joy, saps our energy, and keeps us awake at night.

Often, for no good reason! Many of the things we worry about are beyond our control, while others never come to be. Winston Churchill once said, "When I look back on all those worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened."

The apostle Paul has some advice for those of us who worry. More than advice - it's a command:

"Do not be anxious about anything . . ."

This seems like good counsel, given the toll that worry takes on us. But it can also sound naive or patronizing, can't it? You might want to protest, "But Paul, you don't know what I'm carrying. You don't understand my situation . . . my stress."

It would be a mistake to dismiss Paul as naive or untouched by trouble, though. After all, he's writing these words from prison, and he knows there's a good chance he won't be getting out (1:20-21). Beyond that, the church he is writing to is enduring suffering from those outside (1:29) and bickering from those inside (4:2). There is plenty that could keep Paul up at night. Yet, somehow, he is able to live above the crushing weight of worry. How?

We glimpse the answer in the advice he gives the Philippians:

"In everything . . . present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (4:6-7).

We're not told to ignore our problems or to bear the weight of them on our own. We take them to God. When we are weary and heavily burdened, we hear Jesus say "Come to me" and we find rest for our souls (Mt. 11:28-30). He is with us, and he is enough.

Turning to God in this way releases us from the weight of worry - the peace of God guards our hearts and our minds, Paul says. No longer strangled by *wurgen*, we can breathe again.

But notice, Paul doesn't promise that making our requests known to God takes all of our problems away. We may expect that, or at least wish that was what he was saying: "Make your requests known to God, and the thing that is making you anxious will disappear! Your annoying neighbor will move! The lump will vanish! Your prodigal child will return from the pigpen!"

But he doesn't say that. The promise is not that our problems will all go away. The promise is peace.

"...and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (v. 7).

This is a peace that is not dependent on our circumstances or contingent on us getting what we want or think we need. It transcends all of that because the God who gives it is good beyond our comprehension or understanding. We can trust him and rest in him, no matter what pressure we are facing.

This peace will guard our hearts and our minds. That's what we need, isn't it? When anxiety attacks, it aims at these two targets: our hearts pound as they get carried away by emotion, and our minds race as they spin out of control with worst-case scenarios.

No need. God's peace will guard your heart and your mind. With him scanning the horizon for threats, you don't need to.

That's good news in these days of uncertainty and instability. Opportunities for worry will continue and probably increase. But so will God's mercies, which are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23).

Turn to him and breathe deep.

Further Reading:

Philippians 4:4-9

Key Verse:

"And the God of peace will be with you." (v. 9)

Calibrating Prayer:

Almighty God, Lord of the storm and of the calm, of day and night, of life and death; grant to me so to have my heart stayed upon your faithfulness, your unchangingness and love, that whatsoever betides me, I may look upon you with untroubled eye. I ask it for thy mercy's sake. Amen. (George Dawson)