

## **"In Nothing Be Anxious ..."**

*"... but in everything by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:1).*

No ill likely affects the human family more than anxiety. Jesus, in His sermon on the mount, repeatedly addressed the problem. Six times He repeats the word with His warning against it. *"Be not anxious for your life ..."* (Mt. 6:25). *"... which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life"* (Mt. 6:27) *"Why are you anxious concerning raiment"* (Mt. 6:28)? *"Be not therefore anxious, saying, what shall we eat ..."* (Mt. 6:31). *"Be not anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself ..."* (Mt. 6:34). When, in Matthew 6:25, Jesus urged us not to be anxious for our life -- for food, drink, clothing; He reminds us that the life is more important than the food -- that birds neither sow, reap nor gather into barns, yet God feeds them. He then asks this rather disquieting question: *"Are ye of not more value than they?"* Surely we are! In another similar parallel, He reminded His hearers of the worthlessness of the sparrow, but of which bird God never loses sight of. Surely, if *"His eye is on the sparrow,"* His caring eye is on you and on me.

Jesus discussed the futility of anxiety in Matthew 6:27 when He asked, *"And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his life?"* Feasibly we might shorten our lifespan by anxiety but there is little possibility we will lengthen it with worry! One variant reading of this passage reads, *"And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his height?"* We should never forget that the size of a man is not measured by his height; that the fullness of life comes not in how long he lives but what he fills each day with while he lives.

Then Jesus discussed clothing. *"Why are you anxious concerning ...?"* He called attention to the beauties of nature, reminded us that the soft hues of color so resplendent in the Spring is far more glorious than the splendor of Solomon's wardrobe. Yet, the lilies, the spring flowers, are both destined to fade and die, cast into the oven. Surely man, whose eternal spirit never dies, will also be clothed by God who knows its true worth!

Jesus tells us that the Gentiles scurry here and there in anxiety for the cares of this life. They have no faith in a heavenly father for providing their needs. Let us not be people of doubt, but men of faith.

Yet when all is said and done; try as hard as we may, the frail creature we are never fully eliminates anxiety from our lives for not even Paul who wrote

the words, "*In nothing be anxious,*" was not totally free of care. His anxiety over the fate of the Thessalonian brethren was evident from the way he addressed them in his first letter to them. His care for the Corinthian brethren caused him to press on across the sea from Troas to Philippi, although there was an open door for the word there (2 Cor. 2:12f). When he wrote the Corinthians of his cares he used the word anxiety to describe himself: "*Besides these things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches*" (2 Cor. 11:28).

Let me "borrow" another phrase from Paul. "*Are we excusing ourselves*" by calling attention to the fact that not even Paul developed a life totally free from anxiety? By no means. Paul's anxiety was basically for others and their well being; seldom for his own self. And perhaps in the years between the Corinthian letter and the Philippian letter (likely six or seven years), he also had grown in faith and maturity for he does say in that letter that "*I have learned in whatever state I am in, therein to be content*" (Phil. 4:11). He had to learn contentment and peace -- the opposites of anxiousness. And so must we!

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