

# Anxiety, the Silent Killer

by Jim Berg

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*Anxiety is a silent killer that affects everyone, but with the biblical solution of praying right and praying thankfully, we can trust God to use all things for our good.*

**Duration:** 30:05

**Topics:** "Anxiety"

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## Description

In this sermon, Dr. Jim Berg discusses the topic of anxiety and its detrimental effects. He emphasizes the importance of relying on God and finding peace in Him, especially during times of pressure and testing. Dr. Berg encourages listeners to look to the cross of Jesus Christ as a source of strength and surrender their worries to Him. He reminds them that God is in control and that through testing, He purges and strengthens His children.

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## Transcript

It's time now for the chapel hour coming to you from the campus of Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. Our speaker today is Dr. Jim Berg, Dean of Students at BJU. The title of his message is, Anxiety, the Silent Killer.

The text is from Philippians chapter 4, verses 4 through 9. Take your Bibles this morning and turn to Philippians chapter 4, a very familiar passage to us. I want to talk this morning about anxiety, the silent killer. We're entering a time of the year, a very pressured time.

The weather is changing and so we all get colds and tests are coming and papers are coming and the projects are coming and the honeymoon in the dormitory rooms is over and we're starting to find out what our roommates are really like and they're finding out what we're really like and there are a lot of pressures on us at this time. And the Bible gives us hundreds of references to fear and worry and anxiety really are synonymous here. And many of these references actually command us to fear not, which means that we can't just be praying, God take away my fear because he commands us not to fear.

He places a burden on us with certain things we're going to talk about this morning. And he says, be anxious or careful for nothing, which we'll look at this morning, that's a command. And in Matthew, our Lord himself said that we are to take no thought for certain things, we're not to have this unrelenting concern, this anxiety.

And our passage today is one of those commands that very plainly says, be careful or anxious for nothing. But that is easier said than done. And so Paul tells us how it is done.

And we want to look at that in Philippians four, beginning in verse four, he says, rejoice in the Lord all way. And again, I say rejoice, let your moderation or your gentle, considerate spirit be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

He's come. He could come anytime. Be careful or anxious for nothing, 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 from this sin of anxiety through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things and those things which you have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do and the God of peace shall be with you. Dealing with worry is very difficult for several reasons.

It's difficult because it seems so normal and so responsible for us to be thinking about the things that weigh upon us. And in fact, it seems so normal. It seems so much that we are at home with it that we might even just dismiss it as a personality quirk or that's just the way I've always been, or that runs in our family or it's a family trait.

And it's difficult to deal with. It seems so normal to us and it feels so responsible. Worry is difficult to deal with because it is unseen, so it's rarely challenged by other people.

Somebody might challenge us about other sins. We might be challenged about music or Christians might be challenged about music or about immorality or about gambling or cheating or lying or something. But but very few times are we challenged by another believer about our worry.

And at Bob Jones, we don't even give demerits for worry. And we're not going to start, but it is a sin and it's unseen and it's very seldom challenged by other people because of that. It's difficult to deal with because it very quickly becomes a habit, a lifestyle, and it seems to take on a momentum of its own.

And we lay in bed at night and we just can't stop our mind and it just keeps going and going and going and going. And it makes it very difficult to deal with. Worry is difficult to deal with because it isn't often addressed biblically when we do try to deal with it and then we give up.

So we want to see what Paul has to say about it. We have to deal with it. There are scores of commands in the Scripture telling us to fear not and to not be anxious.

But anxiety is an equal opportunity killer. It is very destructive. And in fact, both the English words worry and anxiety come from Anglo-Saxon terms, which mean to strangle.

And it really can do that. It strangles so many things for us. And it is a killer.

It kills peace and quiet in our soul. A warrior's mind is never at rest. There are always loose ends to tie up.

There are always more things to be thinking about before he can feel he's at rest or he can feel safe. It's peace killing is felt when we develop perfectionism or obsessions or compulsions and we just can't ever seem to rest. Then it can torture a person with an overly sensitive conscience because he worries that he

did something wrong before God and maybe God won't forgive him of this thing or that God hasn't forgiven him or that he isn't even saved.

And worry is a peace killer. Worry kills joy. A warrior can't enjoy normal life.

There are too many uncertainties to really be enjoying things as they come. You can't even go to a birthday party of your friend without worrying because you're worried that maybe he won't like or he or she won't like the gift that you bring them or maybe the other people he invited won't like you. And you can't even enjoy a normal celebration because you're worried.

And worry is a joy killer. Worry kills grades. A warrior can't concentrate on the book he is studying.

He can't concentrate on the lecture that he is listening to because his mind is meditating on the possibility that he might not pass this and he might not get it all and maybe he didn't get all the notes down just right and maybe he won't have time to review all of this and it kills all of that. And he has a hard time with pressure situations like unexpected assignments or tests or the computer printer went down or I lost it on my hard disk crashed or something. And he will have a hard time taking tests or giving speeches.

It is a grade killer. Worry kills our health. A warrior can't sleep well, has trouble digesting, can't recover from normal illness as well.

Anxiety is at the root of eating disorders and panic attacks and many endocrine malfunctions and many gastrointestinal disorders and many cardiac difficulties, including heart palpitations and even high blood pressure. And doctors will tell you this is a health killer. Worry is a health killer.

Now there are other causes for some of those things that high blood pressure and palpitations can be other things, but certainly worry aggravates all of those things. It kills relationships. Relationships are built on trust and a worrier can't trust, can't even trust God.

It doesn't feel like he can open up to people or reach out to people and worry then becomes a relationship killer. And lastly, it kills opportunities. And in the more extreme situations, a worrier might avoid being in public or might avoid sitting in the middle of crowds or avoid trying new things or avoid accepting new responsibilities or will not complete present assignments and responsibility or avoids driving many, many other things because there's too much anxiety.

There are just too many things that could go wrong. Worry is an opportunity killer. And there's no doubt that living on a fallen planet, a lot of things can go wrong and the problems are common to man.

And it's interesting even that that it is worry is even the besetting sin of even some of the most sincere Christians we know. Because it's silent and it's inward and all of a sudden they develop what seemed to be just strange and unusual problems and all along they've been worrying a great deal. None of us are exempt.

And that is why God has given us scores of passages to deal with this matter and how to look at the uncertainties of life. And with that, we want to look at Philippians four, four to nine. And the first thing he tells us in verse six that we want to look at is he tells us, number one, pray right and pray.

Thankfully, that's how you pray right. You pray thankfully. Now, there are many profound truths about prayer in this one verse, and we're just going to look at two.

He first of all tells us to pray. And whether we pray or not reveals where our hope lies. A worrier is thinking to himself about problems because he is his hope.

His mind is his solution. I can come up with it. If I can just get a handle on this, I can be at rest.

I've got to go through this one more time. If only this would be true. And if I could get a handle on this, he's looking to himself.

And Paul says, you don't look to yourself here. You need to look to God. I want you letting your requests be made known unto God, he says.

And even, however, with a worry, a lot of praying is just worrying to God. We just kind of go over our worry list in front of God. And we might even say, I give it to God and took it back and give it to God and took it back and give it to God and took it back.

And it's wonderful that our God is so patient. You know, if we treated the bank that way, you know, if we deposited our money and then we went a day later and said, you know, I'm not I'm not sure this is really safe here. I need to take that back.

You know, we keep it for two more days and then go back and take it and deposit it again and say, all right, I'll try it again. And then we turn around later in the afternoon and take the money back. And we might become a frequent flyer there at the bank.

And why? Because we don't trust the bank. We don't trust people we don't know well. And we don't trust God if we don't know him well.

And it's good for us not to trust people we don't know. Well, there's a situation happening now over around the campus and last just over in the bylaw parking lot here a few days ago, where a man in about his 20s is posing a very well dressed, nice, casual clothes posing as a man with car trouble. And he wants you to give him a ride to the bank and where he will give you a check and you deposit in the ATM and take out cash for him out of your account and make this deposit in your account and I'll be happy.

And three people have done that and lost \$100, \$150 each time. And the bank says, don't be so good to people. We shouldn't be trusting people we don't know well.

Somebody like that has trouble offered to call them a wrecker service or the highway patrol or something, but but don't offer to give them your money that way. And they do some real tricky switches on the deposit before they put it in the bank for you and into the ATM machine. And but we're not supposed to trust people we don't know well, and we don't trust God because we don't know him well and understand that this passage about praying with Thanksgiving and letting our requests be made known unto God is in the context of all of this epistle of Philippians, where Paul is rejoicing in prison about the kind of God he has.

And you can't pray right unless you know the kind of God we have. And Paul here says, for example, in one six, he says, I am confident of this very thing that he which has begun a good work and you will perform it in the day of Jesus Christ. He is at work and I know he hasn't given up.

And he says later in 213, it is God which work within you both to will and do of his good pleasure. God is at work in us. He says in 413, I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me.

And in 419, he says, but my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Paul knew some things about God that made it so that he could trust God. And we'll talk about a little bit more about that as we go along.

If Jesus Christ is our hope, our hope for our security, our peace, our quiet today. Then, as he says in verse four, rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice.

We will be rejoicing if we really know what God is like. And we love to sing here Ron Hamilton's song, Rejoice in the Lord, it comes from this verse, verse four. Listen to how central God is in this in this song he has written.

It says God never moves without purpose or plan. When trying his servant and molding a man give thanks to the Lord, though your testing seem long in darkness, he giveth a song. I could not see through the shadows ahead, so I looked at the cross of my Savior instead.

I have a Savior. I have someone who wants to save me from sin, not just the sin of my that results in my eternal damnation, but the sin of worry today. I looked at the cross of my Savior and said I bowed to the will of the Master that day.

And that's an important part of this we'll talk about. Then peace came and fear fled away. Now I can see testing comes from above.

God strengthens his children and purges in love. My Father knows best and I trust in his care. Through purging more fruit I will bear.

Oh rejoice in the Lord. He makes no mistakes. He knoweth the end of each path that I take.

For when I am tried and purified, I shall come forth as gold. You see how central Jesus Christ and his Father must be in our thinking for us to pray right. Our hope can't be in us coming up with a solution in our head.

Uncertain circumstances reveal where our hope is. If our hope is in ourselves, we worry. If it's in our Heavenly Father and his wonderful son, Jesus Christ, we pray.

But he says he doesn't just say pray. He says pray. Thankfully, that tests our goal in times of trouble.

Again, look at Paul's ultimate goal for everything. Remember, he's in prison. They don't give him a menu to choose from of what he gets to eat and what side dishes he gets to have and what hors d'oeuvres or appetizers and what desserts and what blends of coffee he likes for dessert.

I mean, this isn't happening in his life. He doesn't get to pick his roommates either. He doesn't get to, you know, he doesn't have visitors coming and no cell phone for people to visit with him.

I mean, he's in prison. And listen what his goal is. 112, he says, I would you should understand, brethren, that the things which have happened unto me, all of this imprisonment and the beatings and everything has happened under the furtherance of the gospel.

All of this happened, but I am so thankful the gospel is getting out in this in this place. 120 and 21, he says, my desire is that Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by death or by life, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. In 3.8, he says, but what things were gained to me, all of the positions and stuff I

had before those I counted lost for Christ, yea, doubtless, and I count all things but lost for the excellency or the highest goal of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.

And in 3.13 and 14, he says, but this one thing I do for getting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And what is his goal? He prayed for other things, folks. He prayed for daily provisions.

He prayed, we know in this book, for the healing of Epaphroditus. He prayed for the unity of the church. And he heard about some of the problems and a couple of people were having difficulty and he's praying for their unity.

And it's all right to pray for these things. We are to bring it by everything by prayer and supplication. We are to pray for those things.

But the thanksgiving comes when we know what the overarching goal is and that even if I don't get the answer to the request I want, God will still use that hardship and that difficulty to make me more like his son. And that's what Paul wanted. I want to know him better and I want to be like him more.

And that can always happen, and so you can pray thankfully, he says. Jesus Christ is just wise enough to take all of our troubles and all our circumstances and make something out of it for us, for good, our good, our Christ likeness. He's powerful enough to do that.

He's he's skilled enough to do that. He's loving enough to do that for us. I admire the creative types.

I told his daughters, we're in elementary ed and you have to do a lot of creative things in that. And my youngest is an art major and you have to do all the creative things. And I used to tease my youngest daughter when she was little that we had to sneak the trash out of the house before she made something out of it.

I mean, she could she could see little pieces of cardboard and styrofoam and she could see things in those that we never saw. And with the skill can put things together, I am I amazed at that. When I see that in in other people.

You know what our God is like that. He can take everything that's happening in your life now, and he's wise enough and skillful enough to put all of that together so that it teaches you more something about himself and makes you more like himself, more patient and more godly and more loving and more kind and all of these things. And this is the ultimate goal for all of this for us, he says.

And sometimes I hear people say, well, you know, don't just throw Romans 8:28 at people. That's a powerful, wonderful verse. God is working all things together for our good, our Christ likeness and everything, he says, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Let your requests be made known unto God. We are allowed to pray for dates and for grades and for money and for health and time to do important things and reconciliation of relationships and for salvation of others and a thousand other things. But what a tragedy if God would answer those requests and leave us the same.

Oh, he wants to change us. So do we pray and do we pray with thanksgiving? One of the reasons we don't pray with thanksgiving is because we are entertaining its opposite, and that is discontent. Discontent

is complaint giving instead of thanksgiving.

You can't be giving thanks when you're giving complaints to yourself and maybe to other people. Discontent says, I know what I really need and it's not happening. And we get into what we call if only thinking.

I know what I need and if only I had it, if only I had that boyfriend or girlfriend or husband or wife, if only I had better grades or a better mind or better health or a better job or a better spouse. If only I knew whether I had cancer or some serious disease. If only I knew that I wouldn't blow the test on Friday.

If only I had more control of my life. If only I had more freedom. If only I knew what was going on back home with my girlfriend.

If only I knew what was going on back home with mom and dad and their marriage or with that job opportunity for the summer. I have to know. If only I had that truck or that motorcycle or that car or that house or that job.

And if you're a worrier, one of the first things you can do is start making a list of all the if only's. Those are the things that you say, I have to have this to be satisfied. When Paul says, no, you just need God to be satisfied.

And sometimes people say, I don't understand that. Well, if you think about a young couple who just got engaged, they think that way. I remember when I first got engaged, I thought, you know, we'd, I mean, we can live in a little cracker box.

It's all right. We don't need to have furniture. We'll sit on wooden crates.

We'll eat macaroni and cheese ever. And we did for a while. You know, we can eat macaroni and cheese that we don't need anything.

We just have each other. And you know what? There's a part of that that's really right. And then you find out you do need some other things.

You do need insurance and you do need your car to work and you do need some other things. But. But, you know, we know what it is like to say, if I just had that person, I don't need anything else.

And you know what? That's true of God. If I just had God, if I just if I was just knowing him better, I wouldn't need all of this stuff. And that's true.

Paul knew that Thanksgiving has inherent in it a surrender that says, God, in my scheme of things, I think I need control of this area of my life or I need this thing in my life. But obviously, you don't think that I need it. And I give up my demand for that control or for that thing to you.

I'm thankful that you're loving enough to give me what I need when I need it. I'm thankful that you are powerful enough to give me what I need when I need it. I'm thankful that you are wise enough to give me what I need when I need it and give me that thing if you wish.

But most importantly, use this to show me where I'm not like you and how I can become like you. It has to have a surrender in it to pray right, to be thankful. That's what our Lord prayed in the garden.

He said, if it be possible, Father, let this cup pass for me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. It has to have that surrender. And you know what the result is? Verse seven.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds from that sin of worry through Christ Jesus, my Lord. We're screaming, I have to have control. I have to have this thing.

And God is saying, no, you just need me. So the first step in dealing with anxiety is to get our hope in the right place and our goal in the right direction. The goal of Christ likeness.

Well, he tells us another thing of verse eight, he says in this verse, basically think right. Think selectively. Think right.

Think selectively. You know, if you just go around eating anything you pick up off the floor, you're probably going to get sick. Most of us are pretty selective about what we eat.

We may too much or we made the wrong things, but we're pretty selective. We just don't go out and rummage around in the trash cans or go out on the campus, see what we can find in the ground out there. Use candy.

But, you know, somebody left a little bit of a candy bar, a piece of gum. It's not fully chewed, you know, or something. We don't do that.

And we have to think selectively, too. And I don't have time to go through all of these words here. It's a wonderful study, but.

And I would encourage you to memorize the list of just what sort of things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report. If there's virtue and there's praise, think on these things. But I just want to talk about the first one, and that is things that are true.

Because a worrier doesn't spend his time thinking about things that are true. He spends his time thinking about possibilities, things that haven't even happened yet. A worrier gets involved in what we call what if thinking.

What if I don't get that grade? What if she doesn't pay any attention to me? What if mom and dad have trouble? What if the finances don't come through? What if I don't get that position? What if I don't get that boyfriend? What if, what if, what if? All of those are possibilities. Worriers meditate on possibilities instead of uncertainties. And Paul said, if you want to deal with this issue, you have to meditate on the things that are true.

What are the things that are true? The promises of God are always true. And Paul meditates on those in this book. The attributes of God are true.

And instead of laying at night in our bed thinking about all the possibilities of things that are wrong, we need to be filling our minds in the daytime in some meditation about the promises of God and the attributes of God. So we do have something selective to think about at night. You have to reject all of the possibilities, and there are an infinite number, it seems, of possibilities of things that could go wrong.

And just when you think you've got an answer for all of those, you think about three more that you hadn't thought about before. You can't spend your time, if you're going to deal with anxiety, worrying about meditating on possibilities. You have to meditate on certainties.

But the problem is we go to bed and we haven't ever meditated or memorized any of those. We don't have anything to think about except the uncertainties we've memorized. We have to think about the certainties, meditate on the certainties of what our God is like.

If you want to attack anxiety, you have to meditate upon what is true, mostly about our God. He is here. He loves us.

He is wise. He is good. God is always good.

God is always wise. God is always loved. God is always here.

And because of those things, we can pray with thanksgiving. Worriers spend much of their time in their own imagination, reject those imaginations, make a running list of your what ifs like you do your if onlys. And you begin to see how much we meditate on things that aren't even true.

A lot of times we just memorize verses against fear. Fear thou not. And then what does he say? Fear thou not, because I am with thee.

That's what we need to meditate on. Be not dismayed. I am thy God.

I will strengthen thee. I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

That's the part we need to meditate on. But we just memorize verses that say fear thou not or be anxious for nothing. And all that does is just like put it.

And I'm not saying that's wrong. That's like placing speed limit signs out on the highway. It just tells you you're breaking the law.

You're breaking the law. You're breaking the law. It doesn't stop your car.

Get the speed limit signs up so that you know when you're doing wrong, but then you've got to get some breaks. And the breaks are the right things to be thinking, the things that are true and honorable and just and pure and lovely. All of those things, especially about our wonderful God.

And meditating on those who put the breaks on real quick. So it just seems like there's something wrong with my brain. It just keeps coming no matter what I do.

There's nothing wrong with your brain except it's been habituated. It just goes that way all the time. But just like you write your name with your right hand, you can learn to write it with your left hand.

It's awkward and it feels like your brain isn't working when you're right with the other hand. But it will work if you practice that enough. And so will this.

We have to practice rejecting the uncertainties and the possibilities and begin meditating instead upon the certainties. And lastly, he says, do right practice, practice faithfully, do right, practice faithfully. That's verse nine.

Those things which you have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do and the God of peace shall be with you. We learn best by imitation, and Paul says here, watch me. And we could expand that and he would say, watch, watch Daniel, watch Joseph, watch David, those things that you have heard and seen in them and received and learned from them.

Do those things. And that word means it's present active and it means continue to do that. Practice this faithfully and the God of peace shall be with you.

You can't give up on this, just like you can't give up learning to write with the other hand until you're really fluent with it and until the normal practice of our life is to pray thankfully and to think selectively and to continue practicing that faithfully. We have to keep doing anxiety doesn't have to be a killer. There's a cure.

Praying right and thinking right and practicing and doing right. The most crucial component, however, folks in the cure is getting the right view of God in the picture. You can't work on anxiety without getting the view of Paul that Paul had of God in Philippians, the kind of view of God that made him rejoice in the first place.

Remember when you were in kindergarten and the teacher would pass out this sheet and it had at the top of it, what's wrong with this picture? And it might be a farm picture with the pond out by the barn. And there's a cow flying in the air and a plane is in the pond. And you're to take your crayon and circle all of the things that are not supposed to be in this picture.

What's wrong with this picture? What is wrong with the picture of our lives when we're worrying and anxiety? The thing that is wrong is that God is not in our picture or the wrong view of God is in the picture. And I would encourage you take this book of Philippians. Don't just memorize four through nine, but meditate on all the things that teaches us about our great God.

All of the certainties of who he is and what he has promised. And reject the other thoughts. He said you're to be thinking on these things and God will help us.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we come to you confessing that it is so easy for us to depend upon ourselves. It is so natural for us.

And Lord Jesus, in our own pride, it is so natural for us to think that we know what we need and that we have to have the thing that we need to have peace. But you've told us differently. You've told us what is true.

Help us to meditate on these things that are true and to give ourselves wholly to them that our profiting may appear to all. Help us to take heed unto ourselves. And under this doctrine and doing this, you have said that we will not only spare ourselves, but those that hear us.

Lord Jesus, you are so faithful and you are so kind and you are so loving and you are so wise and you are so powerful and you are so great. And we pray that we might learn how to rest in who you are and in your work in us for your glory. has been sponsored by bob jones university

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