

The Answer to Anxiety
Philippians 4:6-8
July 24, 2022
Larry Jordan, Elder

Good morning. My name is Larry Jordan, and I am an Elder here at Cornerstone Community Church. If this is your first time here today, I want to welcome you. It is our practice to tell our new visitors three things. First, we are grateful that you have chosen to be with us here today. We consider you to be God's gift to us and we want to thank you for joining us in worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Second, we want you to know that you are in a place where the ground is level; this means no one is any higher, better, or more significant than anyone else. Truly, the ground at the foot of the cross is level ground and we are all sinners in need of a Savior. We want you to know that Jesus is that wonderful Savior; He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Also, while your salvation may be a personal matter, God never designed it to be a private matter. His desire is for us to live as brothers and sisters in the family of God and that is why we gather here today to celebrate and worship Him. This leads us to the third thing we want you to know; we love you enough to speak the truth to you and that is truth with a capital T. The truth from God's Word, about Jesus, His person, His works, and His words and how He can change your life from the inside out. Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the Cornerstone of our faith.

We are in the countdown to Pastor John Marc Wiemann's return on August 7th. If you were here for last week's sermon and you came back this week to hear me again, I first want to say thank you. Second, I want to do a quick review from our study in Philippians last week.

1. We can have joy in spite of circumstances by having a single mind (Philippians 1:21, "For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.")
2. We can have joy in spite of people by having a submissive mind (Philippians 2:3-5), "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was in Christ Jesus."
3. We can have joy in spite of things by having a spiritual mind (Philippians 3:20-21), "For our citizenship is in heaven from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."
4. We can have joy in spite of worry by having a secure mind (Philippians 4:6-7), "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

There was a recent article with a headline that said we are living in the "United States of Anxiety". According to this article:

- Anxiety is now an epidemic in the United States
- More Americans suffer from anxiety on a per capita basis than any other country in the world.
- Anxiety disorders affect 40-50 million Americans.
- Three of the top ten bestselling drugs sold in America are for mental illness.
- \$42 billion a year is spent on anxiety related disorders.

Few of us are strangers to anxiety or excessive worry. The world may refer to it as being stressed out or having a panic attack, but it is anxiety all the same. Anxiety creeps into our lives to turn little things into big things; things that preoccupy our minds and gnaw away at our insides and evoke feelings of despair, depression and dread. Someone graphically described anxiety as “a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.”

I read a cute story about this man who came home from a doctor’s appointment looking very anxious. His wife said, “What’s the problem?” He replied, “The doctor told me that I have to take a pill every day for the rest of my life.” The wife replied, “So what? Lots of people have to take a pill every day their whole lives.” He said, “I know, but he only gave me four pills!” Sometimes, circumstances like this come upon us very unexpectedly in life and our first reaction may be to despair, worry, be anxious or all stressed out. But that is not what God wants for our lives nor is it that which He has promised. In John 14:27, Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

From the spiritual perspective, worry (anxiety) is wrong thinking (the mind) and wrong feeling (the heart) about circumstances, people, and things. Worry (anxiety) is perhaps the greatest thief of joy. The answer for worry is the secure mind that we will be studying this morning in Philippians 4:6-8. Let’s read those verses once again, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.”

1. The first thing we are going to look at today is **the Prohibition—Believers should put-off the problem of anxiety**. Look again at the first part of verse six, “Be anxious for nothing”. This is not a suggestion that Paul is making to the Philippians; it is a present imperative or command which means we should make it a habit to put off anxiety continually, whenever it creeps into the believer’s life. Anxiety (worry) can be translated “to distract, to divide, or to draw in different directions. Isn’t that exactly what anxiety does to us? In our Scripture reading earlier from Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus commands His disciples three times with these same words “Do not be anxious” (verses 25, 31 and 34). Jesus made it clear that anxiety stems from a lack of faith and from a wrong focus on the things of the world. He concludes in Matthew 6:33-34 by saying, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” As I mentioned last week, the tipping point for me committing my life to Jesus Christ was the joy I saw in the lives of Christians around me. They had something that I knew I lacked, and I sought with my whole heart to know Jesus as my Savior and Lord so I would have that inner peace that was expressed in a joyful attitude toward the trials and troubles of life. I can almost guarantee that if a non-Christian sees you as a believer weighed down with anxiety and worry, he isn’t going to be asking how he can have what you have. Anxiety and joy are mutually exclusive. So, for the sake of our testimony of Jesus Christ, it is imperative that we learn to trust in the Lord, Who is our strength, especially in the face of trials. This joy over anxiety will never be found if our motives are not pure and you are living to please yourself. In Mark 8:35, Jesus said “For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s shall save it.” This thought is repeated in Matthew 16:24-26 with a little more amplification, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it;

but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? The joy and peace that Christ offers is the reward that we receive for enthroning Christ as Lord and living for His kingdom.

Before we leave this point, let me clarify that Paul is not encouraging a careless, irresponsible attitude toward people or problems we face. We are not being asked to suppress our emotions or feelings. Apathy or inaction is not a proper response to this command. In 1 Corinthians 12:25, we are told, “that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same **care** for one another.” Again, in 2 Corinthians Paul says, “Apart from such external things there is daily pressure upon me of **concern** for all the churches.” Also, in Philippians 2:20, Paul commends Timothy, “For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be **concerned** for your welfare.” The words translated “care” or “concern” in these passages is the same Greek word that is used here in Philippians 4:6 and translated “anxious”. Clearly, in these other verses it is not sinful anxiety but proper concern that is being conveyed. It is proper to be concerned about things in our life; however, when proper concern turns to sinful anxiety it is because we have lost sight of God’s Sovereignty and Lordship over our life and have put self and not the kingdom of God and His righteousness at the center of our life as we read earlier in Matthew 6:33.

I did a lot of research on the Biblical Counseling Coalition website on worry and anxiety because, and this may come as a surprise to many of you, I am just not a very touchy, feely kind of guy. The website has over 60 articles dealing with the topic of anxiety or worry, even one entitled, “Toward a Theology of Emotion” that was over 22 pages long. My conclusion is that emotions and feelings are real and a biblical view of emotions and feelings must reckon with the fall and the pervasive effects of sin upon the whole man, body and soul. Our emotions, intended to function alongside our other faculties for the glory of God, fall short because of sin. Curtis Solomon gave me a book when he was here entitled, “Knowing God’s Peace” which is a 31-day devotional on the topic of anxiety, and I would recommend it to anyone who experiences times of anxiety in their life. One quote from Day 10 of the devotional struck me, “Emotions are not neutral or amoral. They are either godly or ungodly; self-centered or God-centered. Physical or medical considerations notwithstanding, there is always something going on in our hearts in relation to God when we experience anxiety. We are never fully passive, but our hearts (our control centers) are always active, always choosing between the lesser and the greater.” You may think that I have gotten you totally confused about all this but I want you to know that you are mistaken because Jesse sent me a text this week that said that on Sunday, Larry, “You’ll be clear as a bell.” He may have been alluding to the improved acoustics due to the installation of the sound panels but I will take his words to mean that my sermon will be thoughtful and easy to understand.

So, the first thing we must do in order to have a **secure mind** is to heed the **Prohibition** to **put off** the **problem** of anxiety.

2. Second, we need to consider the **Prescription** which is that believers should **pray** with thankfulness as the **perfect** response to every concern. It is one thing for Paul to command us not to be anxious because he knows that such a heart attitude which is then expressed through our feelings or emotions is sin. The million-dollar question (or should I say trillion dollar in light of the runaway inflation we are seeing today); anyway the question is how are we to keep from experiencing such a debilitating sin? Let’s look at verse 6 again, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” The problem is that we do not trust God when we encounter difficult circumstances, people or things and we take responsibility for what should be

God's responsibility and we don't put these burdens where they belong. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast your burden (anxieties) upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken." John Marc has mentioned many times the importance of Matthew 11:28-30 in his life, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My load is light." Is your stomach tied in a knot from worry or anxious thoughts, causing you irritability and nervous frustration? Then cast them on the Lord. How is that accomplished? By taking EVERYTHING to God in prayer. The translation for this word Everything is EVERYTHING, without exception. Now, I know that in biblical counseling the counselor doesn't allow the counselees to use absolutes in their statements like, "my wife never..." or "my husband always..." but when we talk about God, the use of absolutes is the only proper way to describe He who is absolute truth, with a capital "T". In Barclay's Commentary on Philippians this is beautifully explained: "There is nothing too great for God's power; and nothing too small for his fatherly care." As an example, a child may take anything, great or small, to a parent, sure that whatever happens to him is of interest there, his little triumphs and disappointments, his passing cuts and bruises; literally, everything. We may in exactly the same way take everything to God, sure of his interest and concern. I used to think it was "cute" when our kids were little and Lorraine was rushing to get them to school on time and she would pray with the kids that all the lights would be green; or, if the car was low on gas, she would pray they would get to where they needed to be without running out of gas. My solution would have been to think ahead, leave sooner or don't let the tank get below ¼ full. Prayer would not have been my first thought. I just didn't get it; but Lorraine did. I don't know if the kids learned anything by her example to pray for EVERYTHING but I sure did.

Here, in verse 6, Paul mentions four words regarding prayer which overlap in meaning yet will be helpful for us draw a distinction between each word. So, let's look at each word.

- A. Prayer. This is a general word for prayer, always used with reference to God with the nuance of reverence. I believe Hebrews 4:16 gives a good definition of prayer even though the word is not mentioned in that verse Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need." In prayer, we literally come face-to-face with God in His very throne room. Notice here that the believer is told to come directly to God in prayer. Christ is the only Mediator, our High Priest, between us and God the Father and the Holy Spirit who dwells in every believer moves us as we pray so our thoughts and desires come into alignment with God's perfect plan for us. Thus, when we pray, we are drawing near to the Triune God and, in doing so, our mind is secure, and our heart will be filled with an attitude of joy. That's why we are commanded in Colossians 4:2 also to "Devote yourselves to prayer and keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving."
- B. Supplication. This word means to make known one's personal and specific needs and conveying a sense of urgent request to meet that need. At times I am sure some of you have thought, "Why pray since God already knows what I need? John Calvin has several observations on prayer in his "Institutes of the Christian Religion". First, whatever we need or lack can be found in God and God alone. Second, it is through prayer that we reach those riches which are laid up for us with the Heavenly Father and, third, prayer is not so much for God's sake as for our sake. It shows us our total need for God Himself and not just for certain temporal benefits. It casts us in dependence on Him so that we become accustomed in every need to flee to Him as to a sacred anchor. This means that our supplications must be in line with God's will and His purpose. So, to be relieved from worry or anxiety, we need to move in our prayer from the general to the more

specific. That is the antidote to anxiety or worry: take a specific need to God, acknowledge that it is His responsibility and allow God to provide not what is your predetermined answer, but His perfect answer for this need. This will work with EVERY need.

- C. Thanksgiving. This word means literally to grant or give freely and is the expression of thanks or gratitude for favor and mercy shown. The absence of thankfulness to God is one of the chief characteristics of an unregenerate person. Romans 1:21 specifically identifies this person, “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” According to this verse, every person who was ever born has known about God so everyone is without excuse. Those who believe what they know are saved and honor God and those who choose not to believe what they know receive the just condemnation for their foolish, darkened hearts. But for believers, thanksgiving is still not automatic or spontaneous. You have to do it intentionally by faith. Thanksgiving in prayer is a time to reflect on three things, 1.) Remembering God’s supply in our past. When you reflect on God’s faithfulness to you to this point in your life hopefully you will see numerous times when His grace and His mercy have sustained you, and you will be thankful. 2.) Submitting to God’s sovereignty in the present. To throw off anxiety and submit to God’s sovereignty in the midst of your current crisis or trial is an exercise of trust that will create endurance and stability for future trials and temptations. We are again commanded in 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, “Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” When we trust in God’s sovereignty in current trials, we can be thankful that He will be faithful. 3.) Trust in God’s sufficiency for the future. A thankful heart rests upon the all-sufficient God, knowing that even though we don’t see how He is going to do it, He will meet our every need as we cast all our burdens on Him. Remember how Jeremiah trusted in God’s sufficiency for the future. Jeremiah was in prison in Jerusalem during Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of the city and God told him to buy his uncle’s field. Who would do that? Why would you buy land in a country about to be taken by a foreign tyrant? I don’t know what my response would have been (or your response) but God’s Word tells us in Jeremiah 32:17 how Jeremiah responded, “Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You.” Jeremiah was trusting in God’s sufficiency for the future, and he was thankful, not for the circumstance but for the One who controls all circumstances.
- D. Requests. This word overlaps with supplications and means petitions from one who is in a lesser position than the one to whom the petition is made and refers to the specific details of supplication. So often are prayers so generic and impersonal that it would be impossible for us to remember what we prayed for the next day or to even know if God had answered them or not. This is the same word that is translated “Ask” in Matthew 7:7, “Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you.” Sometimes we fail to ask specifically because something may seem too trivial or too small but if it is big enough to throw us into an anxious state of sin it is certainly big enough to ask God about. A woman once asked C. Campbell Morgan, “do you think we should pray about the little things in our lives, or just the big things?” He replied to her, “Madam, can you think of anything in your life that is big to God?” That’s having proper perspective concerning who God is and who we are. So, whenever you’re anxious come to God in reverent humble, specific and thankful prayer.
3. Point 3 on our outline is The **Promise**—Believers will receive the product of prayer which is God’s incomparable peace. Let’s look at Philippians 4:7, “And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Peace is the result of proper

prayer. In James 5:15 we are told, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” And the most important thing that we can accomplish through our prayer is receiving the peace of God. Peace here means the joining or binding together of something that is broken. The peace of God which replaces the anxiety within the prayerful believer is impossible to experience unless one is already at peace with God through faith in Christ (Romans 5:1, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”) Peace is another fruit of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23. The peace of God is not the absence of problems but the presence of the Father with divine sufficiency in the midst of our problems. Remember, God is never subject to anxiety because He is the Sovereign, Omnipotent Creator and Lord of ALL that exists. Nothing takes Him by surprise or causes Him to bite His nails, wondering how a situation in our lives will turn out. Because of that truth we can confidently claim the promise of Romans 8:28, “And we know that ALL things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” How many things work out? ALL things. According to whose purpose? His purpose. John Calvin writes, “It is on good ground that he calls it the peace of God, inasmuch as it does not depend on the present aspect of things and does not bend itself to the various shiftings of the world but is founded on the firm and immutable Word of God.” This peace of God does not come, as modern psychiatrists, Christians or not, believe, through developing coping skills or from taking prescription medications or some other quick fix; it is a promise from God that comes as the product of the effective prayer of a righteous man. That’s why in verse 7 Paul continues by saying “which surpasses ALL comprehension...” Surpasses here means to transcend man’s ability to comprehend and speaks to that which is superior to or of surpassing and exceptional value. Comprehension describes the God given faculty of perceiving and understanding and is the channel through which truth reaches our heart. Ray Stedman has this to say about this peace which surpasses ALL comprehension, “The peace of God is a peace no one can understand or explain, a peace that comes to us despite our circumstances, and which does not arise out of emotions or events. It is "supernatural in origin and nature. Can there be anything more relevant to the trouble and anxiety of this world than the peace of God?” Notice too, here in verse 7 that this peace of God not only is God’s promise to those who faithfully pray, it is purposeful, “...shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Guard as used here is a military term meaning to stand at attention with weapon in hand as a sentinel or watchman to guard or protect something or someone of value. John MacArthur describes what Paul is saying, “If you know your God and you know your God is near and you confidently trust your God in the midst of any trial, knowing that it is effecting His purpose, and then being thankful in the midst of that for the purpose of God even in the difficulty, you are granted the peace of God, and that peace will guard you and protect you from anxiety, difficulty, distress, dissatisfaction, and despair.”

So, we have looked at **The Prohibition** which is to **put off** the **problem** of anxiety, which is sin; we have seen that **The Prescription** is to **pray** with thankfulness as the **perfect** response to every concern; we have seen **The Promise** that believers will receive the **product** of prayer which is the **peace** of God. Now we come to the fourth point on our outline today which is:

4. **The Protection**—Believers should think **properly** in order to **praise** God in all things. If you have done the homework I gave you from last week, recite with me Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.” Mark Twain wrote, “What a wee little part of a person’s life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head and is known to none but himself (and to God, of course). All day long, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his thoughts, not his words or his actions, are his history.” Jonathan Edwards put it

this way, “The ideas and images in men’s minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them.” Thus, it is crucial for each of us to bring our thought life into submission to Jesus Christ by learning to think biblically about every aspect of life because all sin begins in our thoughts, which the Bible often calls “the heart”. In Mark 7:20-23, Jesus said, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these things proceed from within and defile the man.” No one commits these outward sins without first having committed them in his mind. If we want to grow in godliness, we must win the battle over sin on the thought level. Practicing verse 8 is essential if we want to develop a Christ centered thought life which is foundation to a life of joy that experiences the peace of God in all situations. Since our thoughts form the basis of our behavior, a godly thought life is also essential for the obedience to which Paul exhorts us here in verse 8. Let’s take a quick look at each of these things which Paul exhorts us to have our minds dwell on.

- A. Whatever is true. True means that which conforms to reality. In the final analysis whatever God says on any given subject is true. It speaks of what is valid, reliable, and honest. The unchanging God and His unchanging Holy Word is the final test for ALL truth. Accordingly, we should know the Scripture so well that we automatically run everything through the grid of God’s Word. Everything must be tested by The Truth, with a capital T. John MacArthur says this, “People no longer ask, ‘Is it **true?**’ but ‘**Does it work?**’ and ‘**How will it make me feel?**’” Those latter two questions serve as a working definition of truth in our society that rejects the concept of absolute divine truth. Truth is whatever works and produces positive emotions. Sadly, such pragmatism and emotionalism has crept even into theology. The church is often more concerned about whether something will be divisive or offensive than whether it is biblically true... Too many people go to church not to think or reason about the truths of Scripture, but to get their weekly spiritual high; to feel that God is still with them. Such people are spiritually unstable because they base their lives on feeling rather than on thinking... Salvation involves the transformation of the mind.” That is why we are commanded in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world , but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good, and acceptable, and perfect.”
- B. Whatever is honorable. The word means that which inspires reverence or awe; dignified, worthy of respect. This means that Christians are to take life seriously because we live in light of eternity, keeping in mind the uncertainty of this short life and the reality of heaven and hell for all eternity. Believers are not to dwell on what is trivial, temporal, mundane, common, and earthly, but rather let their minds dwell on what is heavenly because our citizenship is in heaven and so, worthy of awe, adoration, and praise (Sound familiar; see Phil 3:20).
- C. Whatever is right. This refers to that which conforms to the perfect standard of God’s righteousness. It describes whatever is in perfect harmony with God’s eternal, unchanging standards, as revealed in Scripture. Is our mind focused on that which is righteous in God’s sight or the things of the world which is desirable in our own sight? John says very pointedly in 1 John 3:7-8, “Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil.”
- D. Whatever is pure. This word means that which is holy, morally clean and undefiled; free from defilement, uncontaminated and unstained. Paul warns in Ephesians 5:3-5, “But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man,

who is an idolator, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” As Christians we must say no to our sexually impure culture and focus on moral purity according to God’s standard.

- E. Whatever is lovely. This word means lovable, endearing, amiable, gracious, charming, pleasing, winsome. It is conduct which is pleasing in its motive and actions towards others. Lovely has the idea of that which is admirable or agreeable to behold or consider. Who is the most lovely One who ever lived? Jesus of course. It should follow then that we should think often of what He has done for us, is doing for us right now at the right hand of the Father, and what He will do for us in the future.
- F. Whatever is of good repute. This comes from a compound word meaning to speak well of something. It refers to something that deservedly enjoys a good reputation. It refers to that which is praiseworthy, laudable, highly regarded or well thought of. No person can afford to waste “mind power” on thoughts that tear him down or on that which would tear down others if those thoughts were shared. Let’s set our minds on the high and noble thoughts of God’s Word and not on the base and sinful thoughts of this corrupt world.
- G. If there is any excellence. This means moral virtue and preeminence. This was a common word in Greek literature, but this is the only time Paul uses the word in his writings. Peter uses this word in 2 Peter 1:5-8 as the first quality of God we are to add to our faith, “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- H. If anything worthy of praise. Wayne Deztler comments that “this phrase is used sparingly in Scriptures and that the basic meaning of the word is applause. It speaks of expressed approval or public recognition as in commending God for who He is, His qualities, and His works.” So, what is the opposite of anything worthy of praise? Probably being hyper-critical, or a person with a critical spirit. Paul is saying that the way to counter critical thoughts is to focus on praiseworthy thoughts. Of course, every attribute of God is praiseworthy so, daily, we should consider how great God is and what marvelous works He has done in creation, throughout the history of man, and throughout our own individual lives. Paul concludes with another command in Philippians 4:8, “Let your mind dwell on these things.” Ray Pritchard really brought this into perspective for me, “The average person has 10,000 separate thoughts each day. That is 3.65 million thoughts a year. If you live to be 75, that would be over 273,750,000 different thoughts. The principle is this: sin always begins in the mind and so does holiness. In this phrase, “Let your mind dwell on these things” the command is in the present tense, literally, telling us to keep on thinking about these things continually. So, for our **Protection**—Believers should think **properly** in order to **praise** God in all things. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”

In conclusion, here are three things we need to get straight if we are to put off the **problem** of sin, **pray** with thankfulness as the **perfect** response to every concern, receive the **product** of **prayer** which is God’s incomparable **peace**, and think **properly** in order to **praise** God in all things:

1. We need to have the mind of God which can be received only through faith in Jesus Christ. Before a person knows Christ, he is dead in his trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1) and his mind is depraved (Rom 1:28). Paul says in Romans 8:7-9, “the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot

please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” If you do not know God but would like to talk about how you can have a personal relation with Christ and be free from the anxiety and worry of this world, please talk to me after the service.

2. We need to clean out our minds and our lives of all that prevents us from having pure thoughts and holy actions. This is done by controlling what goes into our minds from the world: TV, movies, music, books, social media. If something is polluting you or tempting you, get rid of it and make plans to avoid it in the future!
3. Take in God’s Word from every source possible. Read God’s Word daily or listen to it on tape. Kent Hughes states very plainly, “You cannot be profoundly influenced by that which you do not know.” I encourage you to get into God’s Word, read and meditate on it and memorize verses that relate to the problems you experience. You don’t need to read the daily newspaper, you don’t need to watch Jeopardy every night, you don’t need to spend hours on social media each day, but you desperately need to be in God’s Word. Look at what Jesus says He desires for His church in Ephesians 5:25-26 “...just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with **the Word.**”

An old Indian, who was a Christian, was explaining to a missionary that the battle inside him was like a black dog fighting a white dog. “Which dog wins?” the missionary asked. “The one I feed the most,” replied the old Indian. Paul says, feed your mind on the full truth of God’s Word and your mind will be secure and your joy will be made full.

Let’s pray.