

Strong Faith for Hard Times (3)
When Anxiety Overwhelms You
(Phil 4:4–9)

Introduction: Today we come to our third message in this series and we turn to Philippians 4 which teaches us that when anxiety overwhelms us, God offers a peace that surpasses understanding.

I. The presence that produces joy: (Philippians 4:4–5)

A. The command to rejoice – The repetition gives it emphasis.

Although life may be difficult at times, the Lord is always faithful. (Hab. 3:17-18)

B. The condition of rejoicing

1. *The command is not merely “Rejoice.”*
2. *The command is “Rejoice in the Lord.” (Ps. 16:11; Jn. 15:11; Ac. 16:25)*

C. The character of gentleness

1. Anxiety often makes us sharp with people.
2. Paul says that the peace of Christ should produce a gracious spirit that is visible to others.

D. The closeness of the Lord

1. The Lord is near in His presence, and...
2. The Lord's return is near in prospect.
3. He is near enough to hear your prayer today, and He is coming again to make all things right.

The first step out of anxiety is not to focus on your ability to handle the future. It is to remember the presence of the One who already holds the future.

II. The prayer that processes anxiety: (Philippians 4:6)

A. Refuse anxious control

1. Paul is not suggesting we not care about anything.
2. Paul is addressing the kind of consuming anxiety that divides our attention, controls our thinking, and keeps us from resting in God. (Mt. 6:27)

B. Replace worry with prayer

1. Be anxious for nothing, but *in everything pray.*
2. When anxiety begins talking to you, start talking to God. (Ps. 55:22; 1 Pe. 5:7)

C. Request with Specificity

- a. “Prayer” is the broad word for coming into God's presence.
- b. “Supplication” speaks of earnest, specific petition.
- c. “Requests” means that we tell God what is actually troubling us. (Heb. 4:16)

d. Remember with thanksgiving

1. Thanksgiving changes the atmosphere of prayer.
2. Anxiety looks at what might go wrong.

3. Thanksgiving remembers what God has already done (1 Thes. 5:17-18)

David did this in 1 Samuel 17. When facing Goliath, he remembered the lion and the bear. Yesterday's deliverance became fuel for today's confidence.

III. The peace that protects the heart: (Philippians 4:7)

A. Its divine source

1. The peace belongs to God, originates with Him, and is given by Him.
2. Jesus says, “*You can have My peace while you are still walking through the problem.*” (Jn. 14:27)

B. Its Surpassing Superiority

1. This does not mean Christian peace is irrational.
2. It means it is greater than human calculation can explain. (Isa. 26:3)

C. Its standing sentry

1. The peace of God says, “This heart belongs to Christ.”
2. The peace of God does not always prevent the thought from appearing, but it keeps the thought from becoming the ruler. (Ps. 121:4)

Adrian Rogers: *We do not keep God's peace by our strength; God's peace keeps us.*

D. Its saving sphere

1. The promise is not that everybody who thinks pleasant thoughts will receive supernatural peace.
2. The promise belongs to those whose lives are in Christ.

IV. The pattern that preserves the mind: (Philippians 4:8–9)

A. Filter your thoughts

1. We cannot always prevent a thought from knocking at the door.
2. But we do not have to invite it in, feed it supper, give it the guest room, and let it stay for six months! (2 Cor. 10:5)

B. Fill your mind with truth

1. *The Christian life is not merely about removing wrong thoughts.*
2. It is about replacing them with what is true and good. (Rom. 12:2; Ps. 119:165)

C. Follow godly examples

1. Paul did not merely preach the truth. He practiced it. (1 Cor. 11:1)
2. Every Christian should live so faithfully that others can learn something about following Christ by watching us.

D. Faithfully practice the truth

1. Truth must move from the page to the practice.
2. From information to application. (Js. 1:22)

Conclusion: Verse 7 promises the peace of God. Verse 9 promises the God of peace. That is even better! He comes near to His people as the God of peace. The greatest gift is not merely relief from anxiety. The greatest gift is God Himself.