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**Transforming Worry**  
Philippians 4:6-9

I have an acquaintance near San Jose California who had a very difficult family background coupled and this background was coupled to a very different sort of personality. Attitudes that we found peculiar in his younger years drifted into an obsessive worry, paranoia in his 30's. He wanted to become a police officer, but he was unable to complete the training because of his fear of contracting aids from those he would be called on to apprehend. He could quote all the latest statistics on needle punctures and blood wounds on police officers. He read everything he could to feed his fear. This worry bled irrational when at his wedding he began to suspect the invited guests of aids and choose to wear white gloves over rubber gloves in the reception line. Marriage did not ease his paranoia as it began to spill into other areas of his life. Worried his wife would unfaithful, he requires her to wait in their car, in the parking lot, while he works the night shift at a computer firm.

Most of us do not allow our worry to drift into a paranoia, but there are so many temptations around us to worry. We are a nation addicted to worry. Insurance companies feed off our fears and worry. Commercials paint graphic pictures of what could happen so we "need to be safe" We need to prepare for the worst happening. We get worried about our closest friend dying when they go on a trip to the store. We get worried about our kids when they go off to school Monday morning and out with friends Friday night. We worry about the security of our employment. We worry about security in retirement. We worry about health. We worry about finances. There are an incredible number of opportunities in our culture to worry.

How can we stop? We could try to ignore it. We could wait and hope our worry will just go away. That works until the next worrisome thing comes along. When people tell us to "quit worrying" we could try and muster up a mental discipline to just block it out of our minds. We could work hard to manipulate the situation that worries us, constantly asking ourselves "What can I do?" How could I stop this from happening?

Would that thinking stop us from worry? No. You could dump your load of worry on a friend. That may help us feel OK temporarily...but that relief won't last. It's a sedative to lower your stress but it doesn't get at the root of worry. How can we stop this emotionally consuming worriness?

Now some of you are thinking. Worry? Don't rap on worry..that's what I do best. I am assuming, correctly that worry is bad. Sin creates unrest in the soul. Worry creates an unrest in the soul. Worry is sin. The Bible calls worry sin. What is the anatomy of anxiety? How is that different than concern. We know that concern is very Biblical. Paul in Phil. 2:20 was concerned for the people at Philippi. We are not calling people to a carefree, happy go lucky throw all caution to the wind existence. One who has absolutely no concerns is the guy they lock up in prison. Anxiety is defined by Webster as a painful suspense over possible future ills. It is one who is painfully restless. The Greek word for anxiety means to pull in different directions. With fears pulling us one way and hopes pulling us another we end up getting pulled apart. The word for worry is derived from the meaning "to strangle".

So how do we know when worry is beginning to strangle us? Ask yourself if you've ever struggled with any of these.

- 1) I find myself worrying about a future which I cannot control.
- 2) I find myself worrying about pleasing the wrong people.
- 3) I find myself overly concerned with my personal performance.
- 4) I find myself pressed into a hasty decision needing to "do something quick!"
- 5) I find myself lying awake at night. My jaw is sore in the morning from clenching my teeth. Are we not a people prone to consuming large amounts of emotional and mental energy in worry? How can we begin to move toward mental health, peace and rest? How can we begin to quiet the worrisome churning that boils within?

Turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians the 4th chapter. This passage really needs no commentary. It needs no sermon. It will preach by itself. This morning allow the Scripture to speak directly to you..I will lead our study in hopes that I do not get in the way. Philippians 4 in practical. It addresses worry and points us in the way of help. It is Paul's desire that God's people transform their worries. How do we change

something that comes so easily for us? How can we transform our worry? Remember that worry comes from the mind. It is an inside job. It is one of the greatest thieves known to steal our joy. How can we keep the worry robber out of our life? Read with me Philippians 4:6-9. (READ)

Verse 6 Be anxious for NO thing. nothing. Stop being anxious. Paul would not have wrote those words if it was not a problem. Paul did not say that there was nothing worthy of worry, but much of what we do worry about is not legitimate. Dr. Walter Cavert reported that only 8% of the things people spend time worrying about our of legitimate concern. 92% were either imaginary, never happened, or involved in matters totally out of the persons control. Satan wants you to worry. He wants you to believe the lie.

Being anxious for nothing does not mean we are indifferent to circumstances. It does not mean we have no concerns, but it means being concerned about God's desire in the midst of our circumstances. We tend to hold on to control. We tend to only go to God when we've expended all our resources. We tend to view God like an ejection seat pull to grab when our plane is all shot up and heading down. We are to be anxious for nothing. How to we do that?

Point #1 Transform your worry to worship. How? By Real praying. Paul continues in verse 6. Stop being anxious BUT, in everything by prayer, supplication with thanksgiving. Tell God your requests. The word for prayer here refers to a general prayer of devotion, of reverence to God. It carries the idea of adoration, worship where we clearly see the majesty of Almighty God. Real praying begins with worship. A focus off of myself and onto God.

Supplication refers to specific prayer dealing with the personal needs of life. There is a spiritual intensity. This word for supplication was used to describe Jesus prayer in the garden.

These prayers are to be given. Verse 6 "with thanksgiving" Our worship, our requests are to be bathed in thanksgiving. This worship and thanksgiving is irregardless of circumstances that would be worthy of thanks. We are called to worship and give thanks not because things are going great all around us but because of the Almighty and unchanging God who saved us and is working in us for His good pleasure. We are not to be thankful only when we get the stuff we want. Do you see the

directional flow? The transformation of worry is a move off of ourselves and onto God. The more I see of Him and the less I see of myself and my circumstances. The better I am able to offer thanksgiving, the better I have an eternal perspective. How I would love to have an eternal perspective in midst of tough times.

Samuel Scull settled on a farm in the Arizona desert with his wife and children. One night a fierce storm with high winds, rain and hail ripped through his home. Just as the sun began to rise the next morning, Samuel went out to assess the damage. The hail had beaten the garden and fields into the ground. His home had lost most of the shingles and the henhouse had blown away leaving dead chicken scattered about. He stood dazed at the devastation when he heard a stirring under the remains of the henhouse. A rooster climbed up through the debris and didn't stop until he reached the highest board on the pile. The old rooster was dripping wet and missing most of his feathers, but as the sun came up over the horizon, he flapped his bony wings and proudly crowed.

Just like that rooster, our world may be falling apart. We may have lost much, but if we are able to focus on the light. The light of the goodness of Almighty God, we can sing praises of thanksgiving to the Lord. No matter the circumstances. Paul was in the middle of a Roman jail when he wrote this book. He was waiting for the outcome of a trial that could easily end in his execution. He had plenty of time and opportunity for worry. What did Paul choose to focus on. Transform your worry to worship. By real praying. Worshipping and adoring the God who created you.

Look at verse 7. A thankful heart sets peace to guard the heart and mind. If we direct our cares to God, instead of elsewhere. If we are thankful to God focused. We are guaranteed to be protected by His peace. A restful peace that will blow your mind away. God's peace stands guard against our hearts, our feelings and emotions. It stands guard against our minds. Our decisions, the actions of the will that issue from the heart. This term standing guard is a military term of control. Of protection. Peace is going to come not to those whose circumstances on the outside are all calm. Peace comes from the inside. It comes to one whose mind is right. The one who has given the worries to God. The one

who does the real praying. The one who is transforming their worries to worship.

Who are you going to set in place to guard your mind this next week? Are you going to place worry at the door or God focused thanksgiving. Now worry is going to let some interesting things come into your mind. It will welcome in frustration. It will open the door to criticism and nit-picking. It allows negativism and discouragement, agitation, depression and pride. But if you choose to allow thanksgiving to guard your mind...peace will stand there right next to him. There is nothing like peace to guard your heart and mind. It will let in confidence and encouragement. It gives a big hug to patience and faith. Joy and love get a wide open door when Thanksgiving and peace are guarding your mind. Are you prone to worry? What are you going to choose?

If you struggle with worry. If you feel it boiling up in your stomach this week, make a list of everything you are worried about. Write it down. Then each one list up to God. Consciously offer each one up to God. If there's nothing you can do about it. If it is totally out of your control, make these requests known to God. Take it to the One who is able. God wants us to. He is not bothered by us. Thank Him for the good things. You may think your life is only half full. Train yourself to thank him for the part that IS filled. Be thankful not only for the big things but for all the little stuff. Train yourself to be thankful even when your issues are not resolved and your circumstances seem impossible to thank Him. We always can give thanks "in the Lord" Life events may vary but God never changes.

I think because God never changes we have a difficult time taking Him for granted. Several weeks ago, Hale-bop comet flew into our sight. I was amazed. What an astronomical delight. The brightest comet of the century. I called all my friends and we praised it's amazement. This week coming home one of the kids pointed out Hale-bop and I replied, yep there it is. We get so accustomed to taking things for granted. We forget to give thanks to God. Thanksgiving has an eye that is always looking for God to do something. Develop an eye of thanksgiving this week and it will be a much less worrisome much more peaceful week. Paul guarantees it. Do you want to worry less? Then transform your worries to worship.

Those of you prone to worship ought to become the greatest prayer's of this church. The first move toward less worry is real prayer.

Point #2 The second move toward less worry is Right Thinking. Feed your mind with the good stuff. Look at verse 8. Dwell on these things. Right thinking begins with filling our minds with the good stuff. Have you ever stopped to analyze your thoughts? A majority of what we think about is pretty shallow. The content may surprise you. Much of it is filled with self thinking, money thinking, pleasure thinking, bitterness, jealousy, scandal, hatred, lust, focusing on what I don't have and want. Should we then be surprised at all by the end product of our thoughts...our actions? A person will become what he thinks about, whatever he choose to fill his mind with. What do we feed our minds with? The 6 o'clock news, Sally Jesse, Orphrah Windfrey, Jerry Lake, steamy novels? skin-filled magazines? It's no wonder we are a people so prone to anxiety. We fill our minds with garbage and think it has no affect on us. We somehow think we are going to feel better by leering at lives more messed up then our own. Folks if we want to stop worrying we don't need to feel better about our own life. We need to start feeling better about God. We need to transform our thoughts off the garbage of this world and onto the things that are God-like. We need to retool for right thinking.

Look at this list. You must tape a copy to your mirror. What a great list of characters to put on in the morning. Instead of being painfully consumed by worry, allow thoughts of these to consume your mental energy. Whatever is true; real verses phony, correct verses unreliable or dishonest. Focus on the good stuff. Be Thankful for it. Search for ways you can be more true, more real, more reliable. Whatever is honorable meditate on those things that deserve respect..not those frivolous time wasters we spend hours thinking about. Dwell on those things that are right. the things that meet God's standard for excellence not those who run to what is expedient for the moment. We don't need to dwell on those tumbleweed folks who get blown back and forth changing their values by every wind of circumstance. Whatever is pure; morally clean verses dirty..not mixed up with uncleanness. Whatever is lovely; think on that which is attractive, promoting peace verses that which is disruptive and hostile. Whatever is of good repute; positive, constructive,

encouraging verses negative, cynical, harshly critical. These are excellent things to think about. They are worthy of praise. Worthy of recommending to others. Evaluate your activities. Would I recommend what I'm doing to another? would I recommend what I'm watching to another? If not then why are you doing it? If you want to wean yourself from worry, then fill your minds with the excellent things. Begin to do some right thinking.

You might ask yourself what is the difference between this and the power of positive thinking. Notice that the list includes more than just that which is positive but also those characteristics that are rights and pure. A positive thought has no power inherent in itself. It is God that does the work..not a positive thought. I cannot do it..But God can.

Application: I want you to look down that list and pick one. Pick one that is applicable to you. If you struggle with lust, then pick purity. For ten minutes a day next week. On the way to work. In a quiet morning moment...dwell on purity. Think of pure things. Times that you've done it right. Dwell on the purity and holiness of God. Think of ways you can keep yourself pure during the day. If you struggle with criticism, Pick Lovely. Think for 10 minutes a day how you can present a more winsome spirit toward those around you. Think of encouraging things to say to those you are tempted to be harsh with. What we put in our minds is what will begin to come out. One who begins to think generous thoughts will become generous in his actions. One who thinks loving thoughts will produce loving actions.

Paul is calling us to cancel out the garbage in our minds, not to stop at throwing it out, but to then fill it with the good stuff. It's kind of like those antinoise headphones recently developed to bring quiet to a noisy workplace. They use them now at airport and high decible level environments. The way it works is simple. Noise is a pressure wave traveling through the air. Anti-noise is a simply a mirror image totally opposite of the noise wave. The antinoise headphone have special electronics that can sample the noise coming in to the ear and then broadcast countertones in an 180 degree opposite but equal vibration canceling the offensive sounds in a midair collision of destructive interference. The result: restful peaceful, silence. In the same way we can

cancel worries, fears, anxieties with the antinote of God's truth by dwelling on the excellent things of God.

Will it work? You bet, Isaiah 26:3 says Thou will keep him in perfect peace who's mind is focused on Thee, because He trust in Thee.

We can begin to transform our worry by real praying and right thinking, but it takes work, it takes practice. It takes remodeled living. Look at verse 9 Paul calls us to the third point. Train yourself to do right. He calls us to remodeled living. These characteristics in verse 8 must invade our behavior. James 1:22 Tells us to be doers of the word and not hearers only. That doesn't come naturally..it takes practice. That implies a process of work. It like learning to do something for the first time. playing the piano or dribbling with your left hand. Practicing these Godly behaviors don't come naturally they come only supernaturally with all of us and all of God. If one works at practicing these things on a regular basis, they will exhibit them under times of crisis.

We are called to remodeled living. There are some character qualities in your life that are worn out. They need to be thrown out, yet they have become so comfortable we just go ahead and live with them anyway. Do you have a sofa or chair in your home that is threadbare and really needs to be thrown out? Let that piece of furniture be a reminder to you to practice working on remodeling your minds with the fruit of Godly living. We need to restock our minds with the good stuff. We need to retool our minds with Godly virtue. If you aren't sure where to start, or how to begin remodeling your mind, look for someone who has qualities you admire and get close to them. Paul here encouraged the readers to follow his example. It's encouraging to know that this rest can be infectiously caught from others. It is something that can be learned and modeled. Paul has affirmed he's not in the chapter before that he has not yet arrived, but he is heading in the right direction. None of us have arrived either but their are those pursuing God, and that is encouraging. We are not looking to follow a false veneer Godliness. Be real and genuine, transparent. Let others see how Christ is working and continues to work in your life. Do you find yourself churning with worry? Than transform your worry to worship. Do some real praying. Some right thinking and some remodeled living.