

What, Me Worry?

Philippians 4:4—13

Part 4 of Putting Life into Perspective

Introduction

John Philip Holland was an Irish engineer who developed the first submarine to be commissioned by the US Navy. In 1869, a cartoon appeared with Holland emerging from a submarine with the caption: “What, me worry?” While that may be the origin of the phrase, I always think of Alfred E. Neuman, the beloved mascot of *Mad* magazine. That gap-toothed, freckled boy with the Dumbo ears didn’t have a care in the world. Maybe it was more like he didn’t have a clue in the world because he never seemed to be aware of what was happening to him. Actually, it’s a great attitude. It reminds me of an old Gospel song. “I believe, I believe, I believe; so, why should I worry or fret?” When we **PUT LIFE INTO PERSPECTIVE**, we can be more like Alfred E. Neuman, “What, me worry?”

Not Oblivious

Of course, we’re not talking about being clueless or oblivious, just not worrying. We want to be aware of our surroundings and aware of threats and dangers, so we can take reasonable precautions. We can do this when we put life into perspective.

The Lord Is at Hand

The first step, as St. Paul tells us in *Philippians 4* is to remember that *the Lord is at hand* (v. 5). This is why he can tell us not to be anxious. What is it that causes us to be anxious or worry in the first place? It’s when we feel like we have no control over the outcome or what may happen to us. Remember who is in control. It is God, who is all-powerful and all-loving. But this is not just an almighty God who loves us from somewhere far away. He is at hand. He is right here, right now. One of the names for the Son of God is *Emmanuel, which means “God with us”* (*Matthew 1:23*). The reality is that we are never in control. The good news is that the God who loves us is in control and He’s right with us in every situation.

Prayer

Since God is right here, the next logical step is to pray. The word translated *prayer* is a general term, meaning oratory or address. This is just about going to God in prayer, opening ourselves up to Him and approaching the throne of grace. This is what Paul is talking about when he says we are to *pray without ceasing* (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*). We are to always be open to God and His presence. This is a good remedy for worry.

Supplication

But not just to be open to God and in communion with Him, we are to bring our *supplications* (v. 6) to Him. These are our needs and requests. But the word “supplication” also shows our lowly status as “supplicants” before God. We are not claiming any rights we have as His children. We are falling on His mercy. “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.” We are now bringing our need, what’s causing anxiety to the Lord.

Thanksgiving

Paul tells us *with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (v. 6)*. We often talk about praying the Psalms. And that's a good thing. The Psalms are exactly that, prayers that were written to be sung in worship. Just as there are many different types of prayers, there are different types of Psalms. One type is the national psalm of lament. The other is the personal psalm of lament. The psalms of lament, like other psalms, have their own unique structure. It may vary slightly, but the basic pattern is Address, Lament, Confession of Trust, Petition, Assurance, Vow of Praise, and Praise. Even though the psalmist or the nation is in serious trouble, the psalm is shot through with assurance, trust, and thanksgiving.

Contentment

Because of following this path, Paul can say that *[he has] learned in whatever situation [he is] to be content (v. 11)*. No matter what's happening, whether he is being blessed or suffering, he has found the secret of facing it all.

Through Christ

The secret is, *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (v. 13)*. The operative word here is *through*. Don't expect to be able to handle worry by yourself. The apostle Paul couldn't. It's only possible through Christ. **PUTTING LIFE INTO PERSPECTIVE** is putting Christ first and trusting in Him. It's living life through Christ. To live through Christ, we must be in Christ. He keeps us in Him through the means of grace, Word, and Sacrament. Receive the body and blood of Christ and remain in Him, so we can put life into perspective and live through Him. Then, we too can say, "What, me worry?"

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
