

## **GREATER THAN: Jesus is Greater Than Worry and Anxiety** **Philippians 4:4-9<sup>i</sup>**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you this morning. For those of you that are guests, we want to say a special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited to have you with us today. And on behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we welcome you here today.

We would love the opportunity to connect with you and you can do that in a couple ways. You can text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, a reply text will be sent with a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you.

Or you can stop by the information center in the lobby area as we have a gift there for you. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with you.

### **EASTER CELEBRATION:**

Last weekend was an incredible weekend in the life of our church! Easter! I wanted to celebrate with you that we had 961 people join us for worship last weekend. That's 961 people that heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want to say thank you, Church family. We asked you to attend one and serve one and your served so very well. We say around here the phrase, "Trinity serves," and you proved that to be the case this past weekend.

I want to also say thank you to our staff. They worked tirelessly to plan and execute incredible programming from preschool to kids ministry to worship. I believe The Lord was exalted in this place and is drawing people to Himself. Can we just take a moment to celebrate The Lord's faithfulness?!

### **SERIES OVERVIEW:**

Last week, on Easter, we launched a new teaching series that we have entitled, "Greater Than." We are taking the next several weeks to zoom in on circumstances that are common to our lives and going to take a look at the fact that Jesus is greater than whatever we face. It is my prayer that this series would be helpful to you as it continues to prove to be to me.

Last week we look at the fact that Jesus is greater than the grave. Today's message is entitled, "Greater Than My Worry and Anxiety." Have you ever worried? Have you ever been anxious? I know I have. But it has been my experience that worry, and anxiety is a thief that steals our thoughts, steals our peace, and our joy. I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to Philippians 4 as we seek what God has to say about our worry and anxiety.

### **OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Anxiety Research**

I learned this week that anxiety is the most common mental health problem in the United States affecting about 40 million Americans.<sup>ii</sup> That means about 18% of adults in America battle anxiety.

According to an article on WebMD, anxiety is the result of our brain reacting to stress.<sup>iii</sup> Another article I read reported that the State of Texas ranks 9<sup>th</sup> on a list of the most stressed states in the United States.<sup>iv</sup> That's according to data released this year! That is a list that is not good to be in the top 10 on. Some of you are going, "It all makes sense to me now." Want to know the number 1 stressed state in the U.S.? Louisiana. I don't know about you, but here in Northeast Texas, we are way too close to Louisiana. I know I've offended some of you Louisianians. I'm sorry. Not really.

Because stress is a part of the human experience, it means that we all experience anxiety. In fact, the article on WebMD said, "Everyone feels anxious now and then. For example, you may worry when faced with a problem at work, before taking a test, or before making an important decision." Worry and anxiety are just things that we all face, and the Bible speaks a lot about it. In the New Testament alone, the word "anxiety" is mentioned 26 times and is alluded to another 22 times.<sup>v</sup>

Unfortunately, there are pastors and preachers that would say that all worry and all anxiety are the result of a lack of faith. That true believers in Jesus are somehow immune to difficulties and circumstances of life. That if you would just pray hard enough, give enough, or read your Bible enough, the stress, worry and anxiety would not affect you. I don't know about you, but that is not my experience.

Now, in some circumstances, our worry and anxiety may very well be a lack of faith. But it is also my experience that sometimes life gets overwhelming and

worry and anxiety tries to paralyze us. I do not think we, as believers in Jesus, are immune to worry and anxiety.

However, I think it is very important, as we approach this topic this morning, to point out the difference between seasonal anxiety and anxiety disorders. There are times when a spiritual solution is the answer to what is causing us worry and anxiety. But there are other times when what we are experiencing is a medical and physical problem requiring medical and physical solutions. If you are experiencing the effects of an anxiety disorder, I want to encourage you to seek the opinion of a medical professional. Press into the spiritual as well. But we as Christians are not immune to the circumstances and situations of life that produce stress, worry and anxiety.<sup>vi</sup>

So, in our time this morning, I want to examine the biblical understanding of worry and anxiety and then I want to give us 3 ways to overcome worry and anxiety. That will serve as our outline this morning. Philippians, chapter 4, speaks to these very things. Look there with me as we learn that Jesus is greater than my worry and anxiety.

### **MESSAGE:**

Verse 6 of chapter 4 is where we begin. **do not be anxious about anything.** As we seek to allow Jesus to be greater than our worry and anxiety, the first thing that is important is to...

#### **1) Understand Anxiety and Worry.**

Paul urges us, in verse 6, not to be anxious. The word translated as “anxious,” carries the meaning of taking extreme care, worry, trouble and pulled in different directions.<sup>vii</sup> It is comprised of two Greek words that when put together literally means to tear apart the mind.<sup>viii</sup> I’d say that’s a pretty accurate depiction of anxiety, wouldn’t you?

What’s more is that it is written in the present tense and it is active. That means that this state of anxiety, Paul is speaking of, is an ongoing fear and a troubled spirit.<sup>ix</sup>

Now, it is important to know what Paul is NOT saying. He is NOT saying we should be careless, happy go lucky, don’t worry, be happy all the time. What Paul IS saying is that in the cares and concerns of life, don’t allow them to paralyze you with fear, worry, and anxiety. When we face these times, it should

allow us the opportunity to see God at work in our lives. We will all have moments and seasons of worry and anxiety, but we do not have to dwell there.

Another important thing here is that this is a command. Why would God command us not to worry? Well, I believe it is because God desires what’s best for us. He is saying, “There is one way to handle stress and anxiety is one of them. But there is a better way and it is in fact better for you.”

### **ILLUSTRATION: NIH Article**

According to an article published by the National Institutes of Health, prolonged and unchecked stress and anxiety can, quote, **“affect your health. You could experience problems with sleeping, or with your immune, digestive, cardiovascular, and reproductive systems.”**<sup>x</sup> Now, because God knows the toll on your health, His admonition is to not be anxious.

Jesus said the exact same thing. In Matthew 6:25, He commands, ***25“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life.”*** The exact same word Paul uses in Philippians 4. There is a reason, and it is for your benefit and mine. And what I love about Paul, here, is that he doesn’t just say do not be anxious. Instead, he offers us tools in overcoming worry and anxiety. So, I want to examine those and point out what I believe to be...

#### **2) Three ways to overcome anxiety and worry in your life.**

The first way to overcome anxiety is to...

##### **A) Take it to The Lord.**

Take your worry, your anxiety, your concern to The Lord. Listen, God is bigger than your worry, your anxiety. Look at the remainder of Philippians 4:6. ***6 do not be anxious about anything, but [instead] in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*** God invites us to take matters directly to Him. We enter Philippians 4 in anxiety, and, we will see, we exit it in peace. And between anxiety and peace is prayer.

I want to show you perhaps the most powerful verse highlighting this invitation. 1 Peter 5:6-7. ***6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*** I want to leave those verses on the screen as we talk about them.

First, know who it is that invites you to come to Him. The description we have here is the mighty hand of God. The creator of the universe, the one that is timeless, the one that holds all things in the palm of His hand, the one that is sovereign and above all. That is who is inviting us in.

Secondly, that word translated as “casting,” literally means to hurl, to sling. God wants you to take it off of you and place it on Him, the mighty One. Sling it! Get rid of it! Launch it!

Finally, notice why He wants you to do that. Last part of verse 7. Because He cares for you. Literally translated it means, “what is going on in your life is important to God.” Do you hear that?! The way you can overcome worry and anxiety in your life is to take it to The Lord because He wants you to, and because He is greater than anything you face, and because it matters to Him. Let me give you a **measurement question**. And the answer to this question determines if you are holding onto anxiety or casting it upon God.

When you find yourself in a stressful and anxious state, what question do you ask? **Do you say, “What am I going to do about this?” Or do you ask, “God, what are You going to do about this?”**<sup>xi</sup> The first question is rooted in seeking your own resources and abilities. The second question is rooted in seeking God’s resources and abilities. Beloved, there are situations that you face, or will face, that is way above your pay grade. The resources you have in and of yourself are inadequate. But the resources available to God are infinite and your stress, worry, and anxiety can’t even touch them.

In fact, Jesus, in Matthew 6, said to consider God’s resources. <sup>25</sup> *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”*<sup>26</sup> *Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?* <sup>27</sup> *And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?* <sup>28</sup> *And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.* <sup>30</sup> *But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?* <sup>31</sup> *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we*

*drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’* <sup>32</sup> *For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.* <sup>33</sup> *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* So, when you feel anxious or are overcome by worry, we should take that to The Lord. He provides. Paul says to pray, to bring your request to God.

Let me give you a **practical exercise** in doing this very thing. Get out in nature. When we walk around the park, or take in the night sky, it reminds us of The One that created those things. We consider the flowers of the field and the birds of the air, and we are reminded that the same God that provides for each of these things is the same God making Himself available to you and me.

Cast ALL your anxiety on Him, take it to The Lord. Secondly, ...

## B) Guard Your Heart and Mind.

Look at verse 7 of Philippians 4. <sup>7</sup> *And **the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds** in Christ Jesus.*

The peace that surpasses all understanding. Whose peace is that? It’s God’s peace. You find that kind of peace only in The Lord. And when it says that it is a peace that surpasses all understanding, that means that you have peace when you shouldn’t. When all of the circumstances of your life say you should not be at peace, but you are. I don’t understand it, it doesn’t make sense. Beloved, that’s the kind of peace God offers. We can trade anxious thoughts for God’s peace.

Let me also give you a **measurement question** to gauge how you are doing here. **Do I assume the worst, or do I assume God’s best?** When you face stressful situation, do you automatically go to the worst-case scenario or is your tendency to trust God’s best? This is how we guard our heart and mind.

I read in an article this week about what are called ANTS, automatic negative thoughts. The average person has about 70,000 thoughts per day. This article pointed out that, “The majority of these thoughts are negative and seem to pop out of the blue.”<sup>xii</sup> These are what are known as automatic negative thoughts.

## ILLUSTRATION: Walmart

Let me give you an illustration that might help you wrap your mind around Automatic Negative Thoughts. Let’s say you go to Walmart, and you see me across the way. You think, there’s Pastor Chris, I’m going to say hey to him and

so you wave at me. But let's say I don't wave back. The automatic negative thought would have you believe, "He saw me, but didn't want to wave back. He must be a jerk face. I'm never going to Trinity again." Extreme, I know. But that is an Automatic Negative Thought and an example of how they affect us. When the reality could be that I was looking at something and it appeared from a distance that I was looking at you when I really didn't see you to wave back at you. You tracking with me on Automatic Negative Thoughts?

This kind of thinking, while normal to some degree, has devastating results. This article I read said, "Negative thoughts cause chronic stress which, in many ways, changes your brain. Every negative thought you have alters your brain chemistry, creating a cascade of negative effects."<sup>xiii</sup> The article lists some of the effects and they include the depletion of dopamine and serotonin, slowing brain function, enlarging the brain's fear center, and accelerating the brain's aging process. Automatic Negative Thoughts become habit and then we get to a point where all we see is the worst-case and we fail to see God's best.

So, how do you manage ANTS? Paul gives us an answer to that. Look at verse 8 of Philippians 4. <sup>8</sup> *Finally, brothers [and sisters], whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

It is in this verse that we see the **practical exercise**. When you have a thought that seems to be negative, ask yourself, "Is this thought true?" Scripture tells us to take every thought captive. When you have a negative thought, ask yourself if it is true or if something else can be true. If your thought turns out to not be true, or could possibly not be true, dismiss the thought. As Paul says, only think about what IS TRUE, not what might be true.

So, back to our Walmart story. If you have the thought, "Pastor Chris didn't wave back at me. He's a jerk." First, take that thought captive! Second, ask, "Is that true?" Could it be that he didn't really see me? Do I know Pastor Chris to be a jerk? No. Last least I hope not. And if I am, I need to apologize.

My point is, instead of letting negative thoughts rule your life, let what is true, what is honorable, what is pure and lovely, and commendable and what is worthy of praise rule your thoughts. Negative thoughts about people or

situations only steal your joy. I don't know about you, but I have enough to think about that I don't need negative thoughts to occupy my brain space. Amen?!

But look what happens in verse 9 of Philippians 4. <sup>9</sup> *What you have learned [What have we learned? The things we need to think on] and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and [what will happen?] the God of peace will be with you.* In other words, you can guard your heart and your mind by exchanging your negative thoughts for the presence of God's peace.

I read another study that pointed out that 85% of the things we worry about never happen or are untrue.<sup>xiv</sup> Of the 15% of the thoughts we have to turn out to be true, 79% of people found they could handle them. So, the conclusion the researcher came to was the 97% of what you worry about is just a fearful mind punishing you with exaggerations and misconceptions. So, How do you overcome worry and anxiety? Take it to The Lord and guard your heart and mind. Thirdly, ...

### C) Maintain a Spirit of Joy.

You know, joy and happiness are two completely different things. Happiness is determined by your happenings, your circumstances. If things are going well, then you are happy. But if things are not going your way, then you are unhappy. God invites us to live above our happenings. He invites us to be people of joy. Joy is independent of our happenings.

Look at verses 4 and 5 of Philippians 4. <sup>4</sup> *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.* <sup>5</sup> *Let your reasonableness [now isn't that something we need in our culture these days] be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;*

Believers are to rejoice in the Lord always. One commentator I read this week said, "Joy is such a vitally important factor in believers' spiritual stability that Paul repeats his command for emphasis: again, I will say, rejoice."<sup>xv</sup> When we find ourselves anxious it presents an instability in our lives. But joy gives us stability when the things swirling around us seek to make us anxious. But maintaining joy is difficult. It's easy to get anxious. That's why Paul repeats it.

Joy is not a feeling. Joy comes from the deep-down confidence that God is in control and working for our good and His glory. That truth is true regardless of the circumstances in our life. When you are anxious, maintain a spirit of joy.

Like we have done with the other two points, let me give you a **measurement question**. **Do you have any joy inside you, or do you only see the bad?** God invites us to a spirit of joy despite what is going on around us.

What is the **practical exercise** here? I think it is written in the middle of verse 6 of Philippians 4. *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with **thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God.* What can you be thankful to God for? In the midst of your worry and concern, how has God proven Himself to you? Write it down.

Why is that important? Well, when we can be reminded of God's faithfulness in the past, we can depend on His faithfulness now and in the future. Since God has come through before, He will come through again. Reminding ourselves of that truth is important when we are in the heat of the battle.

#### **ILLUSTRATION: Count Your Blessings<sup>xvi</sup>**

I can't help but be reminded of the great church hymn, Count Your Blessings. Any of you remember that great hymn?! I want you to consider the lyrics.

First verse: When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost (sounds like worry to me), count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Second verse: Are you ever burdened with a load of care? Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear? Sounds like anxiety to me. Count your many blessings, ev'ry doubt will fly, and you will be singing as the days go by.

Fourth verse: So, amid the conflict, whether great or small, do not be discouraged, God is over all; count your many blessings, angels will attend, help and comfort give you to your journey's end. That sounds a lot like the peace of God that surpasses all understanding to me.

Beloved, you and I are not immune to worry and anxiety. But in Christ, and through Christ, we can rise above our worry and anxiety. We are called to take that stuff to The Lord. We are asked to guard our hearts and minds. And we are urged to maintain a spirit of joy.

Now, I don't for a minute believe that this one sermon will bring you relief. But I pray it gives you hope today. The truth is Jesus is greater than your worry and anxiety. Let Him handle it.

#### **CONCLUSION: Invite the Band to come back up.**

I want to invite the band to come back up and lead us in a time of response. As they come, I want you to consider a couple of things this morning.

First, do you know the God of peace? Did you know it is always God's desire to bring peace? There is the peace of God, but there is also peace with God. And the peace of God does not come before the peace with God.

The bible says that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That sin has profound impact on our lives. Colossians 1:21-22 says, *"And you, who once were alienated **and hostile** in mind, doing evil deeds, **he has now reconciled** [brought to peace. How?] *in his body of flesh by his [Jesus'] death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.*" Are you at peace with God?*

If you have never given your life to Christ, you are not at peace with God. Until you trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, you are alienated from God. But you can have peace with God today. If you have questions about what that looks like, we would love to visit with you today. Overcoming worry and anxiety begins with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In a moment, I am going to pray, we will stand and sing, but most importantly, I want to invite you to respond to Jesus this morning.

Perhaps you are here today, and you are a believer. And there is something that is causing you worry and anxiety. We want you to know that the God of peace is working in your situation. And that the peace of God is available. One of the greatest pieces of evidence that is the case is God's Church. God, in the Church of the Lord Jesus, has provided for us a place where we can be surrounded by people to support us, love us, and pray with and over us.

Whatever it is, and however The Lord leads, I simply want you to respond to Him today. We are here for you. I'm going to pray, we are going to sing, but let's also respond to His lead in our lives. [PRAY]

## ENDNOTES:

<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation of this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Philippians*, Moody Publishing, Chicago, 1991; Frank Theiman, *The NIV Application Commentary: Philippians*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2000; Hansa D. Bhrgava, MD, WebMD article, "Anxiety Disorders," article accessed online: <https://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/guide/anxiety-disorders>; Anxiety and Depression Association of America, "Understand Anxiety and Depression," article accessed online: <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics>; Ann Schmidt, "The Most, Least Stressed US States in 2022: Report," article posted on Fox Business, accessed online: <https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/most-least-stressed-states-wallethub>; Patrick Alban, D.C., "Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTS): How to Break the Habit," article written September 22, 2021, accessed online: <https://bebrainfit.com/automatic-negative-thoughts/>; His Heart Foundation, "How to Stop Automatic Negative Thoughts," article written November 15, 2017, accessed online: <https://hisheartfoundation.org/stop-automatic-negative-thoughts/>; Dr. Jack Graham, "The Antidote to Anxiety," article written August 20, 2021, jackgraham.org; Skip Heitzig, "Overcoming An Anxious Mind," taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, December 10, 2017; Vance Pitman, "Anxious About Everything," sermon preached at Hope Church Las Vegas, April 29, 2018; Vance Pitman, "How Do I Keep From Being Anxious," sermon preached at Hope Church Las Vegas, May 6, 2018.

<sup>ii</sup> Anxiety and Depression Association of America, "Understand Anxiety and Depression," article accessed online: <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics>.

<sup>iii</sup> Hansa D. Bhrgava, MD, WebMD article, "Anxiety Disorders," article accessed online: <https://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/guide/anxiety-disorders>.

<sup>iv</sup> Ann Schmidt, "The Most, Least Stressed US States in 2022: Report," article posted on Fox Business, accessed online: <https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/most-least-stressed-states-wallethub>.

<sup>v</sup> Tim Lane, "How Does the Bible Define Worry?" article written October 3, 2016, accessed online: <https://timlane.org/blog/how-does-the-bible-define-worry>.

<sup>vi</sup> Pointed out by Vance Pitman in his message, "Anxious About Everything," sermon preached at Hope Church Las Vegas, April 29, 2018.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Skip Heitzig, "Overcoming An Anxious Mind," taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, December 10, 2017.

<sup>ix</sup> Pointed out by Vance Pitman.

<sup>x</sup> National Institutes of Health article, "I'm So Stressed Out! Fact Sheet," accessed online: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet>.

<sup>xi</sup> These are questions that Vance Pitman poses in his sermon. I found them to be helpful for me.

<sup>xii</sup> Patrick Alban, D.C., "Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTS): How to Break the Habit," article written September 22, 2021, accessed online: <https://bebrainfit.com/automatic-negative-thoughts/>;

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiv</sup> Dr. Joseph Goewey, study published in the Huffington Post, article published August 25, 2017, accessed online: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/85-of-what-we-worry-about\\_b\\_8028368](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/85-of-what-we-worry-about_b_8028368).

<sup>xv</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Philippians*, Moody Publishing, Chicago, 1991, page 273.

<sup>xvi</sup> Johnson Oatman, written in 1897, hymnary.com.