

# Marks of a Believer

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Date: 05 August 2018

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Philippians chapter 4 verses 4 through 9.

! Will you please honor the reading of God's Word with me and stand. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, 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 understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, 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.

[ 1 : 12 ] What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace be with you. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated?

Over the history of Christianity, Christians have used a number of different symbols to mark their identities as believers of Jesus Christ.

One of those markings is the Cairo. Cairo. And the Cairo is a P, it looks like a P and an X, with the Alpha and Omega, and those are all Greek letters.

The Cai is the X, and that is the first letter in Christ's name in Greek. The P is actually the R, it makes an R symbol, and that's the second letter. And then the A, the Alpha and the Omega, stands for the beginning and the end.

Another marking that Christians used to identify themselves in history was the ictus, or the ictus, which is the fish.

[ 2 : 21 ] A lot of people think that that symbol was used because of Jesus calling the disciples to be fishers of men. And the miracles where he performed the feeding of the thousands, well, that's not actually the case.

Again, it's symbolic of what each letter in the word ictus for fish means. The Greek spelling for ictus is iota chi theta epsilon sigma.

In the English translation, as we see, it looks like I-X-O-Y-E. And the five Greek letters stand for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

Christians have also, throughout the centuries, used animals as symbols for their faith in Christ. The lamb, obviously, is pretty self-explanatory.

Jesus being the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The dove, symbolic, usually, of the Holy Spirit, his descending upon Jesus at his baptism, like a dove.

[ 3 : 24 ] Now, understand that the Holy Spirit is not a dove, but a symbol that has been often used of him that Christians have used for themselves. One that I thought was really interesting that I learned this week was a pelican.

Christians have used the pelican as a symbol, as a marking that they belong to Christ over the centuries as well. And the reason being that the pelican is known to, if its babies are starving, to pierce its breast so that they can drink its blood for nourishment.

And obviously, you see the symbolism there of Christ being pierced for our transgressions. And that we are forgiven and saved by the blood that he shed on the cross for our sins.

And then, obviously, the cross. The cross is the greatest and the most well-known symbol of Christians that we use to mark ourselves as believers of Christ.

And obviously, the cross was the instrument of death upon which our Lord was killed, upon which his blood was shed. And he died as propitiation for our sins to atone for his people that they might

have everlasting life.

[ 4 : 39 ] In more recent years, Christians have marked their identity with Christ via bumper stickers, posters, t-shirts, decorated Bibles, jackets, bracelets, earrings, necklaces, hats, you name it.

And in no way am I saying or arguing that those symbols should not be used by Christians. As a matter of fact, I have this ring that I wear right here, has a cross on it.

So in no way am I saying that these symbols are things that we should not mark ourselves with. But what I am meaning to say is that these are simply just markings.

I wear this ring, but anybody could wear this ring. It doesn't transfer salvation over to them. You understand what I'm saying? Just because you wear Christian symbols, Christian markings, it does not mean that you are, in fact, a Christian.

As great as all of those outward symbols can be, what is most important for Christians is that they bear the internal, spiritual markings of one who has truly received the gospel, who has truly believed it, who has been sealed with the Holy Spirit of God and is a follower of Jesus Christ.

[ 6 : 03 ] And so here, the Apostle Paul has, as we remember last week, he's dealt with a conflict that was in the church. He addressed that church's need to identify and resolve that conflict immediately.

Because Satan was using that conflict to create division in that church that threatened to split that congregation. A church that suffers with consistent conflict, as we saw last week, is easily deterred from its mission, which is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And when our churches are split over conflicts that are petty, like the one, whatever it was, that was plaguing the church in Philippi, the world will look at that and they see no difference between them and those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ.

They say they're hypocrites. They don't practice what they preach. They don't really, truly believe what they claim. And so in this passage, the Apostle Paul reveals four marks of a true believer, of a true follower of Jesus Christ.

And every believer, everyone who says they follow Jesus Christ, should bear these marks. As we recall last week, Iodia and Syntyche were true believers.

[ 7 : 26 ] But their conflict did not testify to the fact that they had truly been marked by Jesus Christ. Their sin nature was getting the best of them and they needed a reformation of sorts.

So Paul reminds them, he reminds also the rest of the believers in Philippi, of the internal spiritual markings here that identify believers with the Lord.

And that these markings, there are powerful testimonies to the rest of the world that believers have received a new nature by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit at the time of their salvation.

And that our testimony, when they see us living a different life, because we've been transformed by our salvation, by the indwelling of the Spirit, they see that as a testimony that what we believe is true.

That Jesus Christ is, in fact, the way and the truth and the life. So here's the main idea for this morning's sermon.

[ 8 : 30 ] Followers of Jesus Christ are not to be marked by worldliness, but godliness. These markings are internal and spiritual in nature, and they testify to the world that the message of the gospel is true.

And I want to make a note before we continue on, that the words that the Apostle Paul gives to the Philippian believers and to us, that we should bear these marks, they're not merely suggestions for Christians.

He's not saying, hey, you should try this out. I think it would work. No, these are commandments that are expected to be obeyed by all followers of Jesus Christ.

If you call yourself a Christian, then these markings should be markings that people see in your life, that you truly are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the first marking we see comes in chapter, or verse 4. Christians are to be marked by their joyful character. Christians are to be marked by their joyful character.

[ 9 : 44 ] Verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. And if you didn't hear me, again, I will say it, rejoice.

So Paul knows these people, and he knows this church. He understands that they have gone through a really hard time. Let's review.

If you remember, Epaphroditus, their beloved brother who they sent to Paul, took ill when he was in Rome, and he nearly died. Then they have this other issue.

With Iodia and Syntyche and their church, this conflict that threatened to split them. Not to mention the persecution that they were experiencing in their own city from their own neighbors.

And so Paul knew for these people that they had gone through a really difficult time. There wasn't much kumbaya-ing taking place in Philippi over the campfire, if you know what I mean.

[ 10 : 45 ] They were stressed. They were frustrated. Worried. And they were lacking joy.

And so we learn here also that mature believers, like those that were in Philippi, can and do struggle to bear these marks.

that followers of Jesus Christ, at times, will struggle to be joyful. Some of the great giants of the Christian faith have battled with dry seasons in life.

They've despaired. They've been discouraged. So I don't want you to think that you're any different because you've gone through times of dryness. But as we'll see, we're still commanded to rejoice. Paul's repeated call to joy presupposes the reality that it can be difficult for Christians to feel joyful. In this world, we face trials.

[ 11 : 54 ] We face difficulties. We face the loss of loved ones. We face illnesses. We face relational difficulties.

We get the mail, and it's nothing but bills. And numerous other problems that we encounter on a day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month, year-to-year basis that threaten to take all joy that we could muster away.

However, again, this is a call to rejoice. It's karate in the Greek is a present imperative, and that means that it is a command, not a suggestion.

Paul is commanding. God is commanding believers through this word to be continually and habitually in the practice of rejoicing. No matter the circumstances that you are facing, you are called to rejoice.

And so the question comes, how? You've been there. I've been there. You might be there right now. And you hear that, and you think, how can I rejoice considering what I am going through, what I have faced, or what I have just gone through?

[ 13 : 12 ] How can we rejoice? Well, notice what Paul says about rejoicing. Look back again at verse 4. And there he provides the answer. He says, rejoice in the Lord.

That's the answer. Rejoice in the Lord. And so what we understand from that is that joy comes from our relationship with Jesus, not our circumstances.

Joy comes from our relationship with Jesus, not our circumstances. Because here's the thing. Other people can give you joy at times, but they are not a reliable source of consistent joy.

Many of you guys know that I'm a baseball fan. And my two favorite teams are the Kansas City Royals and the Baltimore Orioles. And if you know anything about baseball, since I've been born in 1982, those have been two of the worst teams in professional sports.

So for most of my life, as a baseball fan, I have had constant disappointment in the Royals and the Orioles. Because people are not a good source of joy, especially if you're cursed to follow those two teams, right?

[ 14 : 32 ] Why couldn't the Lord make me a Yankees fan? No, we don't. We don't talk about them in church, right? The devil wears pinstripes. Amen? Amen. Okay, let's continue on. There's no Yankees fans in Oklahoma.

Come on, what's all that? Okay. So other people will let us down. They will. It's just a matter of fact. Your spouse, your children, your friends, your family.

Eventually, ultimately, because they have the sin nature like you, they will let you down. You will also let people down because other people are not capable of giving us the kind of joy that we need.

The only sure, the only reliable, the only unwavering and unchanging source of joy that there is, is God and God himself. That's why Paul issues this command to believers because only God can give to us the kind of unceasing joy that we need, that we desire, as we live in this fallen, sinful world.

This joy is more than a feeling. It's joy that comes from confidence in knowing that God is always in control of everything, always working for the good of those who know him, of those who are believers, and he does so for his own glory.

[ 15 : 58 ] Let's look at Romans 8, verses 28 through 30. And there it says, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for the good. For those who are called according to his

purpose, for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined, he also called, and those whom he called, he also justified, and those whom he justified, he also glorified. So here's the thing from this verse that we understand. As a believer in Jesus Christ, since that day, when you received the gospel and believed it, however you perceived your circumstances in life, whether you thought they were good, whether you thought they were bad, that every circumstance, no matter how you perceived it, God has used it for the good.

For your good, for his good, ultimately. The greatest thing that any of us have in this life is our salvation.

And according to that passage of Scripture that we just read, that can never be taken away from us. The greatest thing we have in this life is Jesus Christ and our knowledge of him as Lord and Savior. [17:20] That we are a child of God and that we will never lose our salvation. Praise the Lord. The greatest thing, if you remember, Paul is commanding here believers to be marked by their joyful character.

And what's interesting here is that here's a man calling other Christians in a difficult time to be joyful and you think, well that's easy, but you've got to remember where he's at when he writes this. You remember where he's at?

He's in prison. The most joyful man in Rome is a prisoner in Rome. And he's calling others to be joyful.

He's not on some beach relaxing with an iced tea with an umbrella in it kicking back, right? Watching the ocean. Paul was joyful even though he himself was in a difficult circumstance because he had joy in the Lord.

And as we'll see as we go through Philippians towards the end, we see that no matter his circumstances, because he was in the Lord, he was joyful and we can be too.

[18:29] Real joy comes when you realize what you actually deserve from God, which is judgment. But when you realize what you've received from him instead, which is salvation, man, that's enough to be joyful always.

I had a good friend in college and he was the dirty, the dirty kid at school. He was a roommate and he, he rarely took showers.

Let's just say that he rarely also ever washed his clothes and you could tell and we gave him a hard time for it, but he didn't care. He wasn't trying to impress anybody. Then one day, a girl, for whatever reason, started taking notice of him and they started dating and all of a sudden, my dirty, filthy friend was taking more showers.

He wasn't wearing his hat so much, he was combing his hair, he actually ran a comb through his hair. He was wearing clean clothes, tucking in his shirt, putting on cologne, he had undergone a transformation.

What could cause somebody to change in such a way? Well, for him, he was responding to the fact that now somebody loved him in a way that he had not felt loved before.

[19:58] Doesn't that sound a lot like the gospel to you? We're responding to this amazing love with which God has loved us through his son, Jesus Christ.

And so when we as sinners are seized and changed by the love of Christ, it should make us joyful always. Because we realize we didn't deserve this salvation, we didn't deserve to be saved, but God chose to save us anyways.

Romans 5, 8-10. There it says, but God chose his love for us in that while we were still sinners, sinners. Christ died for us.

Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

So the question that I ask you is what would happen in our church if all of us were marked by this joyful character?

[21:12] Think of all the sins that would be overcome in our church through a heart that rejoices in the Lord always. Because you've been forgiven so much, you're willing to forgive so much.

Because you've been loved so much, you're willing to love so much. There would be less conflict. There would be less enviousness. Less selfishness. Less stinginess.

And as a result of that, a whole lot less complaining. And people would look at the church and say that's a different place and those are different people.

And they'd realize that the result of that, the reason for that, is Jesus Christ. Because we have a gracious Lord who has been gracious to us through his son.

And as a result of that, we should be marked by our joy. The second marking. Christians are to be marked by their conduct.

[ 22 : 17 ] Verse 5. Again there it says, let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. Reasonableness, that word there in the Greek, is hard to translate.

And so if you have the Holman Christian Standard Bible, you'll see that word has been translated as graciousness. If you have the King James Version, it's been translated as moderation. If you have the New King James Version or the NIV, it says gentleness.

The NASB says gentle spirit and the NLT says considerate. So what is the point? What is the meaning of this word? Well, in order I think to best understand it, you got to understand what it isn't. And what it isn't is it's not being contentious. It's not seeking things primarily for yourself. Instead, it's being gracious to all.

I remember in college I worked as a waiter. And I learned myself and from many of my co-workers that the shift that you wanted most to avoid was Sunday afternoon.

[ 23 : 27 ] Do you know that? I'm for real. We would fight to not have to work on Sunday afternoon. Do you know why? Church people.

Man, church people can be rude. Church people were the worst tippers. And what a terrible testimony to send to unbelievers of what it means to be a Christian.

Because many of those people that I worked with, they'd never stepped foot in the church. All they knew of Christians was how they interacted with them Sunday afternoon after they had just come from worshiping the Lord to come to a restaurant to be waited on by somebody else and then treat them rudely and inhospitably and ungenerously.

And so we've got to be reminded that our conduct as Christians is incredibly important. You know, we are living in times in the United States of America where there is increased hostility towards Christians.

Christians. And we disagree quite clearly with what much of the world says, with what the world says about human sexuality, with what the world says about gender identity, with what the world says about pro-choice.

[ 24 : 45 ] Right? That's just to name a few things that we disagree with what the world says. We must confront these issues.

But we must do so graciously. Is your graciousness evidence to your friends, to your family, to your neighbors, to your fellow church members?

Do people see you as somebody who is reasonable and gracious, loving, and forgiving? We must conduct ourselves this way, the apostle says, because the Lord is near.

Now that could mean one of two things. He could be talking about the fact that the Lord is coming back soon. And so we must act accordingly because that day where He returns could be at hand.

Or it could mean that the Lord is near in the sense that He is present with us now, close to all believers. And so whatever the case is there, we understand that we should be marked by our gracious and reasonable conduct in the Lord, in the world.

[ 26 : 00 ] Does it mean that we're doormats and we let people walk all over us? Absolutely not. It doesn't mean that we avoid having these difficult, awkward conversations. It means that we seek them out, but when we do so, we're gracious as we speak to those who disagree with us because our hope is not to win an argument, but to win a soul to Jesus Christ.

Amen? Our goal is to be used by our Lord to spread truth. And if we're red-faced and hot and yelling and screaming, they're going to tune us out right away. We've got to be gracious in how we speak to the world and to each other.

The third mark, Christians are marked by their confidence in the Lord. We're marked by our confidence in the Lord. This is the big one, verses 6 through 7.

We all know this one very well. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

And so here we see that confidence produces certainty while doubt produces anxiety. If we're confident in the Lord, then we'll feel certain about our lives, about our current situation in life. [ 27 : 18 ] But if we don't, then we will be filled with anxiety. And Proverbs 12, 15 says, anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down.

You've felt that way before, I'm sure. You feel like you have so much to be stressed over, worried about. You're filled with anxiety, and it feels like you're carrying a heavy weight on your back wherever you go.

And you just want to be free of its burden. It's all you can think about. It's all that your mind will allow you to think about.

And all you want is for it to be over. over. You just want rest. When you are anxious, it feels like you're being crushed to the point of death.

And again, I think this is something that we say that we've all experienced before. And you could be experiencing it right now. Some of you fight anxiety on a daily basis.

[ 28 : 32 ] You wake up with it in the morning, you carry it with you all throughout the day. You may not be able to sleep because you feel it so heavily pressing upon you.

Talking about anxiety gives you anxiety. And so when we come to these verses, it's very clearly stating there that there is relief for anxiety.

And that that relief comes through prayer. Could it be any more clear? If you're feeling anxious, pray.

Pray. But we doubt that prayer can actually relieve the anxiety that we feel, don't we? Can it really be that simple?

We doubt God's promise there that if we pray and give our anxiety over to Him, that in return we will experience His peace. We think it can't be that simple.

[ 29 : 35 ] It can't be that easy. But isn't the Bible God's word? Isn't the Bible the holy, inerrant, infallible word of God to us?

And that God says to us very clearly there that we can experience this kind of peace that relieves us of our anxious feelings and it does so through prayer.

But perhaps you're still skeptical. Well let me ask you, what is anxiety? What is it? Anxiety is worry. Particularly anxiety is worry about the future. John Piper says, anxiety seems to be an intense desire for something accompanied by a fear of the consequence of not receiving it.

We typically worry about things that we place high value on, don't we? You're probably most anxious about things that deal with your career, that deal with your finances, your relationships, with your spouse, with your children.

[ 30 : 46 ] And then when we feel anxious about losing any of those things or we feel like any of those things might be threatened, this is what we do often. We play worst case scenario. And so in our minds we create a future of our own making where everything that could go bad has gone bad.

The Bible says that we shouldn't do that. That that's a waste of time. That that doubt leads to nothing good for you or for those around you or for anybody.

The Bible does say that there is a good kind of anxiety, I will say that. In 2 Corinthians 11, 28, Paul mentions that he has anxiety for all the churches. And so he means that he has great care and he has great concerns for other believers.

He has great concerns for the church and he feels burdened by their spiritual well-being. So there is a good kind of anxiety that causes you to care about the right things.

You know, I think about the fact that on a few occasions I've woke up early Monday morning to the sound of the garbage truck. And I remember that I forgot to put the garbage can out and so I feel anxious in that moment, right?

[ 32 : 09 ] I've got to throw on some clothes in case anybody else is up at that time and go take that out just in time for the garbage truck to be able to get it so we're not left with last week's stinky garbage and this week's stinky garbage.

So there are instances where it's good to be worried about things, but this passage is not dealing with that kind of anxiety. This is a negative anxiety.

This is the kind of anxiety that the Bible calls sin. Why? Well, this form of anxiety could be called functional atheism because you're living as though God doesn't exist, as if He's not the sovereign ruler over all things.

As a Christian, when you live your life anxiously in this way, full of doubt and worry, what you are testifying to the rest of the world is that you don't really believe in God. You don't really believe in His plan, you don't really trust in His sovereignty, and so you're functioning as an atheist when that's the case.

Since the children did not go to children's church this morning, I'm going to tell you a story about a friend of mine and his son who is terrified of storms.

[ 33 : 31 ] They don't know why, right? Maybe that's because they've moved to a state where there seems to be more tornadoes, but they came from a state where there was also a lot of tornadoes, but every time the clouds roll into town and it gets a little dark and there's lightning and thunder, he's terrified, though he himself has never been in any kind of tornado.

And so you think, where did he get these, my friend thinks, where did he get these notions? And so what my friend and his wife will tell him is, hey, listen, if we get worried, if you see mommy and daddy afraid and we're running for cover, then you know it's time to be worried and afraid.

But if you see mommy and daddy and we're fine and we see the thunder and the lightning, we hear the warnings come on the radio or the TV and we're not in a panic, then you shouldn't be panicked either. I don't like flying in airplanes and on a couple of instances I've unfortunately had to fly through turbulence.

And so what I do in those situations is I look to the people who have been through it a lot, the stewardesses, and I look at them and I have my face focused on their faces. Are they worried? Are they concerned? And if they are, then I'm worried and I'm concerned because I know this isn't normal. And so I bring all this up to you because we serve a God who is never worried.

[ 35 : 07 ] Do you understand that? God is not up in some kind of cockpit watching the world and seeing things happening and he's worried that his plan isn't going to come to fruition.

Oh, now I've got to change that. I've got to do this over here so that everything gets back on course. God is never worried. He is sovereign always.

What you need to do when you're tempted to doubt God's sovereignty is to listen to another sermon. not the doubts that you have in your mind. Martin Luther, the great reformer, once described his favorite preacher who was a bird.

And this is what he said. I have one preacher that I love better than any other. I put his crumbs upon my windowsill, especially at night.

He hops onto that sill when he wants supply and he takes as much as he desires to satisfy his need. From there he always hops to the little tree close by and lifts up his voice to God and sings a carol of praise and gratitude.

[ 36 : 23 ] Then he tucks his little head under his wing and he goes fast to sleep, to leave tomorrow to look after itself. He is the best preacher I have on earth.

Where did he get that from? Our Lord. Matthew 6, 28, 25, through 34. Is this not what he told us? 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 your life more than food and the body more than clothing? 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 more valuable than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his lifespan?

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.

[ 37 : 31 ] 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?

Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, what will we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things that you worry and stress about will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own troubles. And so there Jesus tells us five things about worry. First of all, he says if God provides for birds and flowers, he will certainly provide for you.

Secondly, he says worrying is pointless. You can't do anything. You can't accomplish any good through your worries. Thirdly, he says worrying is a pagan thing.

[ 38 : 44 ] He says the Gentiles seek after all these things. But we are to seek first his kingdom. Fourthly, we see that God knows our needs better than we know our needs.

And fifthly, that God will provide everything we need when we seek his kingdom and his righteousness. Jesus never promised any of his believers a drama-free life.

And we see in that scripture that he doesn't say, hey, if you're anxious, just pray about it and all those things will go away. That promise isn't given. The promise that is given is that you will feel peace as you go through that difficult situation because you know that God has a purpose, that God is always in control, and that God will see you through it.

The cost of following Jesus in this world is great, but the outcome is always certain. We can be generous with our possessions because we know that in doing so we are storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

And so here Paul gives us three ways that we can deal with our anxiety. First of all, from verse 6, understand that God wants you to trust him.

[ 40 : 07 ] He wants you to trust him. God wants you to trust him with everything. Do not be anxious about anything. God wants to be trusted and he wants you to trust him.

The next thing we see is that when we are anxious, we should pray. Again, Martin Luther said, pray and let God do the worrying. D.A. Carson said, I have yet to meet a chronic worrier who enjoyed an excellent prayer life.

In the Bible, Jesus instructs us to ask and to keep on asking because our father loves to give good gifts to his children. Take all your anxious thoughts to God and leave them with him.

But you know what we do often instead? I know it's about to be football season and if you have those terrible baseball teams that you watch, you're ready for football season, right?

And the kicker, the field goal kicker, and a lot of times his teammates too, once he kicks the ball and it's up in the air, if you see his body language sometime and it's close and it's headed toward one of the posts, he'll lean one way or the other.

[ 41 : 19 ] You see this with bowlers whenever they bowl, right? They use their body to try to coerce the ball to go in the direction that it wants to. I remember as a pitcher whenever a guy crushed one and you knew it was going out and you would do one of these things just trying to wave the ball foul.

Oftentimes that's what we do with our anxieties when it comes to praying and giving them over to God is we pray about it and we know that God's heard it but we still try to do this thing where we try to still control it, you know?

But we're not to do that. We're to give it all completely over to God and leave him to deal with it.

And then three, the third thing Paul tells us here about our anxiety is fight anxiety with faith in God's promises. Fight anxiety with faith in God's promises.

Paul doesn't say that prayer will prevent us from having problems but that when we pray and give our burdens over to God we have peace in the midst of those problems.

[ 42 : 25 ] So take God at his word. He says he loves you. He says he works all things together for the good. He says that he will discipline also his children because he loves them.

He's going to teach you to trust him. He said that he has saved you and that your life is hidden with him forever. He said that he's prepared a place for you and that he will one day receive you to himself.

Trust in these promises. And then I ask you this. For those of you who are feeling this way, how much have you actually prayed about it?

How much time have you actually spent in your knees in prayer to the Lord giving these burdens over to him? How many of you have actually attempted to handle your anxiety God's way instead of your own way?

So the next time or this time as you're going through it, handle it God's way. Go to him. Release those burdens to him. Doesn't mean necessarily that those problems are going to go away.

[ 43 : 29 ] But what it will mean, the promise is you will have peace as you go through it. And let me tell you, when your relatives, when your co-workers, when your neighbors see you as a Christian going through a difficult time, and yet your faith in God is unwavering, that's a powerful testimony to them and to the world that what you believe in is true.

And so you can see your difficult circumstances, those things that cause you to have anxiety, as opportunities to give bold testimony to those who are near you.

And then fourthly, the fourth mark of a Christian is that Christians are marked by their contemplations. Verses 8 and 9.

We are marked by the things that we think about, that we meditate upon. Jesus prayed for us in John 17, 17.

He said, Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. David prayed for God to examine his thoughts, and he said, Search me, God, and know my heart.

[ 44 : 38 ] Test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me. Lead me in the everlasting way. David understood that real change involved a change in his thoughts.

What we think matters, and it matters more than we think. We need God's word to saturate our minds that we may be renewed and kept from offensive ways.

And so here Paul highlights the need that we have to think about what is true, not false. Think about what is honorable, not dishonorable.

Think about what is just, not unjust. Think about what is pure, not impure. Think about what is lovely, not repulsive. Think about what is commendable, not wrong.

Think about what is morally excellent, not filthy. Think about what is admirable, not shameful.

Follow godly examples. Learn and watch them.

[ 45 : 43 ] Jesus never broke these commands, and he solved all of these problems for us ultimately. His gift of salvation gives us cause to rejoice always.

Because he, for us, removed our greatest fear, and he relieves for us our deepest anxiety through his victorious death and resurrection.

He paid the penalty for our sins. And he grants his people a new mind in return as part of their salvation.

So look to him. Look to the Savior for his righteousness. Look to him every day for daily renewal.

And then imitate him in the way that you live your life. And I promise you, as God's word says to us, if you do that, the peace of God will be with you always.

[ 46 : 52 ] Until that day when you enter into that eternal peace. Take care. Thank you.