

Dear Philippians, XII

Not to Worry

April 27, 2003

PHILIPPIAN MCDONALD'S

In this ancient Agora (market place) at Philippi, fast-food joints called thermopolia would've been quite common.

- Thermo = hot; Poli = many; thus, a variety of warm foods.

Pompeii was a Roman/Greek community from Paul's day that was frozen in time by volcanic ash from Mt Vesuvius (Aug 24, 79 AD).

- 2/3 of Pompeii has been excavated and 89 thermopolia have been uncovered.

Like Philippian snack bars, each would have specialized in 1-2 bean and/or meat (lamb) dishes and offered bread, cheese, and spiced wine.

Large pots under the marble/stone counters were filled with hot water to heat smaller clay vessels seated into the openings.

- Thermopolia were ancient Philippi's "McDonalds" and "Burger Kings."

Today, Paul sums up the body of this letter, he admonishes two women to stop feuding, and then he adds some P.S.'s.

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

¹ Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! ² I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanks-giving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. — *Philippians 4:1-9 NIV*

P.S. DON'T WORRY

Paul reminds us again how much he likes these guys by capping off this letter with no less than six terms of endearment:

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! – *Philippians 4:1 NIV*

Paul's main purpose for writing this letter is finished. "That is how you should stand firm." But he's got a few P.S.'s to add.

- In Greek antiquity they signed their name after the P.S.'s.

First (vs. 2-3) he pleads with Euodia and Syntyche to "get over it" (whatever "it" is) and he appeals to the others to help these gals reconcile, rather than just choosing up sides.

Maybe this riff, this stress is the impetus behind the teaching in this letter; either way, in vs. 4-5 Paul makes it clear that joy (rejoicing) and gentleness should be their hallmark.

Then Paul ties together four quick stress-relievers:

1. Worry about nothing.
2. Pray about everything.
3. Thank God for all things.
4. Think about right things.

- We'll be examining these four anxiety-reducers.

WORRY ABOUT NOTHING

It's important to remind ourselves that Paul was in prison, awaiting possible execution when he wrote:

Do not be anxious about anything ... - *Philippians 4:6 NIV*

We'll never get rid of all the stress and anxiety from our lives; but in a "worry-survey" conducted by Dr. Walter Cavert:

- Only 8% of his respondents' worries were valid concerns.

The other 92% involved imaginary problems, past problems, insignificant problems, and problems out of our control.¹

¹Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 95

Q: Why do we worry so much about these things?

A: Power! Dominion! Authority!

Worry gives us a false sense of control over the uncontrollable in our lives. We like control. We like sovereignty (supreme rule) which is why we choose to shoulder life's burdens rather than hand them over to God.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. – 1 Peter 5:6-7 NIV

Casting our cares upon God first requires humility, but also:

- We must believe that He's in control (His mighty hand).
- We must trust and rely on His timing.
- We must realize that He cares for us.

Whenever we worry about imaginary problems, past problems, insignificant problems, or uncontrollable problems, we violate one of these injunctions.

- Worry is taking authority God never intended us to have

PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING

The gifts of imagination, creativity, and ingenuity increase our capacity to worry about potentials and possibilities.

- That's why a monkey can't worry about the stock market!

Worry is the misuse of gifts that were intended to promote and inspire joy, gladness, progress, and praise and worship.

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. - Philippians 4:6 NLT

Q: How many of your concerns would you like Him to handle? Just pray about those things; now, if you want Him to handle it all ...

- Through prayer we turn things over for God.
- Anxiety is not expelled by wishes or words.

Prayer incubates, increases, and intensifies our confidence in His control, trust in His timing, and comprehension of His care.

- Worry about nothing, pray about everything, and then thank God for all things.

THANK GOD FOR ALL THINGS

- Thanksgiving (gratefulness) is a vital component of prayer.

... with thanks-giving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds ... - Philippians 4:6-7 NIV

A grateful heart indicates a willingness to accept, trust, and submit to whatever course of action He sees fit.

- Ungrateful people are unhappy people.

There's no promise here that God will answer our requests the way we desire. The emphasis is on the comfort and reassurance that comes from abandoning our burdens to His care. And this is something we'll have to do this over and over; every time worry surfaces in my mind or heart I need to return it to where it belongs.

- Peace isn't the absence of conflict it's the presence of God.

THINK ABOUT RIGHT THINGS

- There's a peace that comes from right relationship.
- And there's a peace that comes from right thinking.

We share the job of guarding our hearts and minds; Paul lists eight filters that should govern our thoughts: true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

- What we think, affects the way we feel.
- The way we feel affects the way we act.

To the degree that we allow to go unfiltered, the exaggerated, vulgar, depraved, impure, polluted, shameful, mediocre or half-hearted, we give anxiety, fear, and worry a stronghold in our lives. We've got to keep up our guard and filter 'em all.

Q: Do you ever drink filtered water? Look at this new slogan: *Pure Mountain Water ... with a relatively small amount of arsenic!* That's no good; you want 'em to filter everything.

When it comes to your role in guarding your heart and mind, what's your level of security: Fort Knox or Iraq Museum? Where do you tend to give anxiety a toe-hold?

We must train ourselves to turn the control over to the one who truly has the power, dominion, and authority.