

The Peace of God that Surpasses Understanding

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Now may I urge you to turn with me to that portion of the Word of God that was read in your hearing, Philippians 4. And the very familiar words of verses 6 and 7 will be the focus of our meditation this evening.

"In nothing [and I like to break up the word 'nothing' in to two words: 'in no thing'] be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

Let's pray for the help of the Spirit of God that we may understand and receive with meekness and joy His Word to us.

Our Father, we have already sought Your face as your servant has been our mouthpiece at the throne of grace. But we come again, not as a matter of ritual or formal approach to you, but because we have some sense of felt need. Lord, I need Your grace that I may be enabled to open Your Word accurately, that I may be able to open up Your Word in such a way that Your people will grasp its truth, that sinners will be made jealous to know the blessings held forth in Your truth. Come to us, we pray, with Your blessing. Open every mind and every heart and visit it with Yourself, we pray. In Jesus name, amen.

I believe I am right in assuming that most of you know that almost all of the letters of the Apostle Paul that have been providentially preserved and now form a large part of our Bibles were letters precipitated by some urgent pastoral concerns either in a church or churches or in the life of an individual. However, the letter to the Philippians is an exception to this general pattern. In fact, we might call the letter to the Philippians basically an expanded newsletter and thank you letter to the Philippian church.

In this letter, Paul is laying to rest some of the anxieties of the Philippians who loved him, who communicated frequently with him by telling them about his own circumstances and then by thanking them for that gift that was sent by the hand of Epaphroditus of which we read in verse 18 of chapter 4. The formal thank you part of the letter is chapter 4, verses 10 through 20. But because he's an apostle and a shepherd to all of the churches there in the first century, he has become aware of certain pastoral concerns in the church at Philippi. And he addresses those in his extended newsletter and thank you letter. He takes this opportunity to give a very strident warning about the insidious influence of the Judaizers. And then he speaks to a couple of ladies who must have had red necks and red faces when one of the elders or appointed readers in the church at Philippi stood and read this letter, and

their names are mentioned. And Paul is telling them to bury the hatchet and to be at peace one with another. Well, as he's drawing this letter to its high point of thanks for the gift that the Philippians gave to him, in chapters 4, verses 10 to 20, he gives a concise series of directives to the Philippians as to how they are to live out their lives as the children of God in the presence of an on-looking and unbelieving world. And in chapter 4, verses 4 to 11, you have this trilogy of imperatives to the people of God bunched together. Verse 4 is a call to constant rejoicing. "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice." Here is the call to a life of constant rejoicing. Then in verse 5: a call to a life of constant gentleness or forbearance or reasonableness. The various Bible translations indicate the difficulty of nailing down this particular word to a precise meaning. But most likely, he is calling them to a life of gentleness and forbearance in the face of the opposition that many are facing because they are Christians. For remember, at the end of chapter 1, Paul says, "It has been given to you not only to believe on Christ, but to suffer for Him." And then in verses 6 and 7, he gives this call to a life of non-anxiety. And it is third call in this trilogy of calls to which I direct your attention this evening. And I have decided to preach on this text for three basic reasons.

Number one: the circumstances of the world around us as the people of God demand, I believe, a fresh consideration of this directive. Unless you can somehow be buried your basement or you just got back from being shipped to the moon, you know that our nation is in a serious economic crisis. And not only our nation, but in our global village as it called, the repercussions of this are shaking the economic fabric of one nation after another. Some of us have had a very vivid reminder when the quarterly statement of our IRA or our 401K came to us, and in a matter of weeks, thousands of dollars have gone down the tube. And you see the little plus and minus marks, and there it is: a loss of money, hard earned in many cases, not earned on stocks and bonds but the reward of our own labors. We have invested and poof--it's gone--a very serious anxiety-causing reality.

Many of us think of the implications of this crisis in terms of the stability of our churches. We've committed ourselves to ministries and to servants of God laboring in other places, and we wonder if we are going to be able to sustain those ministries. And then, of course, the political crisis, a national election coming up in about three weeks. And the situation is such that it's nail biting, hand wringing if we don't take heed to the passage that is before us. When you have two candidates who present themselves as though they have messianic powers and kingly positions and a bottomless pit of money to give to anyone and everyone who will elect them. And they will line their pockets with the fruit of your willingness to cast a vote for them. For any thoughtful person, this can provoke tremendous anxiety: "What has happened to our national life?" And then in our churches. We heard in the reports last night some distressing news: churches where there are major exoduses from people who at one time paid a price and seemed to love the things that we love and the implications of the truths we embrace. And now they want something a little less demanding, something a little easier in terms of the expectation of them as church members. They want something that makes them a little more comfortable. And this can be distressing. Again, churches have committed themselves to building programs assuming, We have X number of families to responsibly take on a certain amount of indebtedness, and now all of that is coming apart at the seams.

And then there's a third reason why I want to address this text, and it grows out of the experience that my dear wife and I have had in recent months in relocating from

Northern Jersey to Western Michigan. And Bunyan, you remember, said, "I did preach that which I did feel, that which I did smartingly feel." And in these recent months, this is a text that Dorothy and I have felt, we have smartingly felt as we have faced again and again situations that could cause much anxiety. And we have brought this text before God times without number as we have prayed together. And we have seen its truth. We have known the reality of its promise being fulfilled in us. So I hope I've touched at least most of you at some point in trying to persuade you we do well to come afresh to this text. The great crisis in our national life politically, economically; the crises in not a few of our churches, and then from a personal standpoint, this text has been nothing less than a roadmap and a constant companion to us in recent days. So in this context of the implosion of a housing market, the bottom dropping out of the stock market, the escalating crisis in Afghanistan, the context of the bleak political scenario before us, and in the midst of many unspoken pressures that could quickly and easily provoke anxiety, let us come to this word from the living God through the pen or the voice and the pen of Paul's amanuensis: "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

First of all, then, consider with me the word of prohibition: "Be anxious for nothing." Now you don't need to know a word of Greek or any other language but plain old English to know this is a flat out, clear, unqualified prohibition. This prohibition is as clear as the prohibitions of the Decalogue: "You shall commit no murder [no exceptions]. You shall not commit adultery [no exceptions]. You shall not bear false witness [no exceptions]." And I trust that there is none here tonight who would willfully or even carelessly violate those prohibitions of the Decalogue and then with indifference chalk it up to, "Well, it's common human frailty." Would you do that? If you murdered someone, if you committed adultery, if you bore false witness, would you just chalk it up and say, "Well, to err is human, and nobody's perfect." I hope there is no one sitting here who would take the prohibitions of the Decalogue, violate them and then treat that violation with indifference. Dear people of God, this prohibition is just as clear and unrelenting as any of those in the Decalogue. "Be anxious for nothing." And to break that prohibition, to violate it is nothing short of sin. What is sin? Sin is any lack of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. This is part of the law of God, the revelation of the moral standard of God for us His people. Those whom Paul addresses in his opening words of the letter who are at Philippi but are in Christ Jesus, he sets this clear prohibition before these who are in Christ: "Be anxious for nothing."

Now when the Apostle wrote these words, he was not prohibiting the engagement of our hearts with those concerns that are part of our God-given stewardship of responsibility. If he was condemning any kind of heart engagement in a given concern, then he was condemning himself. For in 2 Corinthians 11:28, he takes the noun form of this word anxious and he says, "Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." Paul was anxious for something: the state of the churches. And he lived with it, he went to sleep with it, he woke up with it, he bore it throughout the day. So when he sits down and writes or dictates, "Be anxious for nothing," we must not understand it as prohibiting that engagement of heart, that spirit of solicitous concern for someone or something. In fact, in this very letter, in chapter 2, he commends Timothy for being an anxious man. Look at verse 20: "For I have no man likeminded, who will [be

genuinely anxious] for your state." It's exactly the same word. So when Paul says, "Be anxious for nothing," he is not prohibiting that engagement of heart and concern for persons or things that are part and parcel of our God-given stewardship.

Rather, Paul is prohibiting indulgence in that anxious care that Jesus addresses in Matthew 6:25-34. Six times in that passage we find our verb and Jesus saying, "Do not be anxious." It's that anxiety that produces the language of: "What shall we do about clothing? And what shall we do about drink? And what shall we do about my IRA? And what shall we do about my mortgage payment?" It's the anxiety that produces the fretful "What shall I do?" that he is addressing. It's the anxiety that our Lord graciously rebukes in our sister Martha. In Luke 10:41, Jesus says, "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things" There's our word. And the parallel word "troubled" is a very vigorous word. It's the word found in Acts 17:5 when the Jews cited an uproar in the city. He says, "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled.... [Your soul is like a turbulent sea, and waves crashing one upon another.]" In the three Synoptics in the passages concerning the parable of the sower and the soils, we have "the cares of this life that choke the Word." There's our noun form. It is the anxieties of life that choke the Word. So I think we can begin to get a feel to lay hold of what Paul is saying when he writes, "Be anxious for nothing." The prohibition has to do with that kind of carking, disruptive anxiety that agitates the soul. It clouds the face of God, unfits us for present duties, and weakens us for future duties. It produces, as I've indicated, the "What shall we do?" fretful language of Matthew 6 . This sinful anxiety is the nail-biting, frown-producing, ulcer-creating, sleep-depriving anxiety. And if we are to any extent indulging it, we're sinning. "Be anxious for nothing." That's the word of prohibition.

And then by moving into what I'm calling the word of direction, the Apostle uses one of those strong conjunctions, a strong adversative ("but"), and we could translate it "but rather." In direct contrast to yielding to this sinful anxiety, here is the word of direction: "but rather." And then what does he say? Well, let's consider first of all what he doesn't say. He doesn't say, "Be anxious for nothing, but just flop yourself in the lap of divine sovereignty, for what will be, will be." That's Islamic theology, not Christian theology. That's a pagan notion, not a Scriptural notion. Nor does he say, "Do not be anxious, but get up and do something." Because doesn't God say He helps those who help themselves. I read recently a survey was taken, and the majority of the people when asked whether that was a saying out of the Bible affirmed, "O yes, that's in the Bible somewhere." That's the theology of Obama and McCain. "We're Americans. We can do it." That's not what Paul says. "Be an American and do something. Don't be anxious. Deal with the situation that's causing your anxiety." No, that's not the word of direction.

Here's the word of direction: "[but rather] in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." The way to be anxious for nothing, to state it in summary form, is to engage continually in Scriptural prayer concerning every single thing that would trigger and foster my anxiety. That's it in a nutshell. What is the divine antidote to sinful anxiety? It is the continual engagement of Scriptural prayer concerning everything and anything that would trigger sinful anxiety. "In everything"--and notice the words that he heaps together: "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." All of those words put together are a description of Scriptural prayer. And there are four components to Scriptural prayer in this passage. Note first of all its object. Its object is God Himself. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving

let your requests be made known [towards] God." This is truly God-oriented prayer. It is not prayer conceived of in terms of its internal subjective exercises, but its objective reality in which I the potentially or presently anxious saint am engaging that being who in the trinity and glory of His grace has brought me out of darkness and into marvelous light. And I am to come to this God as the object of my prayers. And when we take this passage and bring under the light of Matthew 6, it is coming to God particularly remembering that He is our heavenly Father. Jesus said the antidote to anxiety is remembering your heavenly Father knows your need. "Shall not your heavenly Father...?" It is basking in the reality and the glory of what it is to be His adopted son.

A may I pause with a little aside because we've got a lot of preachers here. I found when I brought series on adoption (one of the last series I brought here at Trinity), I was frustrated by the fact that there's only one passage in the New Testament that says "sons and daughters." And I tried to get rid of the thinking in any of our ladies that somehow they're not full-class citizens because they're not sons of God but daughters of God. Then after I preached the series, I came across a book on adoption that I found tremendously helpful. And the author pointed this out: "Because of the Biblical taproots of the concept of adoption and the unique place of the firstborn son, God makes all His children, male and female, His sons. He gives them the position of the firstborn. They are brought into His family as full-grown sons, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." So my dear sisters, you're sons with us. That's just a little aside for you preachers to pursue in subsequent preaching on adoption.

But when we come towards God in our determination not to yield to sinful anxiety, we must think of Him particularly as our heavenly Father. And though the Scripture says in Matthew 6:8 "Your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him," Paul has the temerity to write, "Let your requests be made known unto God." Why do I need to tell God anything? Because He tells me I should. Do I need any further reason than that? My heavenly Father comes to me as His child and says, "My son, tell Me about everything that's making you anxious." And we are engaging this One with whom nothing is too difficult. He is the Lord, the God of all flesh with whom nothing is impossible. And so we are to engage in Scriptural prayer that has as its object God Himself.

And then notice secondly from the text its nature. Its nature is bound up in the various words that are used: "by prayer," the most general word for prayer found in the New Testament. Someone has defined it this way, and I find it helpful: "the devotional, filial approach to God as our Father." "When you pray, say" Jesus said, "our Father who is in the heavens." There's intimacy: our Father, transcendence in the heavens. And though He's my Father, He's the sovereign of the universe. I come to Him in my prayers. But then Paul says, "by prayer and supplication." And now the issue is narrowed a bit. This is the word for specific petitions or requests. The verbal form is often translated in the New Testament "to beseech, to entreat." And the thing that's seeking to trigger your sinful anxiety, that specific thing is to become the issue that you bring to God in prayer, whatever it is. There's nothing silly when you come to your heavenly Father saying "Father, this thing is getting under my skin. It's going to make me a Martha, and I'm going to have an anxious and a troubled soul. You told me, 'by prayer and supplication.' And the fruit of that is a request. I bring it to you." And never need fear that God's going to say, "Now My son, that's an awfully piddling, little, silly thing." If God were to say that to me, I say back to Him, "Yes God, but You said, 'in everything.' It's a thing that's getting me anxious. So though it may be a

piddling, little thing in Your estimation, God, You already told me to bring it back to You, so I'm going to bring it to You." I'm not going to be wiser than God. I'm not going to be sophisticated. I'm going to feel the liberty of son in the presence of his heavenly Father.

"By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving [we'll hold off a minute on that] let your requests be made known unto God." The verbal form of that noun is the standard word "to ask." The things that I ask about and for are my requests. So by prayer, in its most general sense, and supplication, I let my requests be made known unto God. Now that's not all that is involved in Scriptural prayer. We've said nothing about adoration, confession of sin. But in terms of dealing with that which would cause anxiety, this is the kind of prayer in which we are to engage. Its object is God; its nature is prayer, supplication, request. Now what is to be its attendant? Thanksgiving--"with thanksgiving." Prayer, supplication, and request stripped of thanksgiving are not Scriptural prayer. "With Thanksgiving"--thanksgiving for the privilege of coming towards God, thanksgiving for the past interventions of God in quieting our troubled hearts. Looking at our Ebenezers that we've raised along the way, and thanking God that in other circumstances where seemed we would have been buried with our anxiety, we came and did what the passage says. And we found the promise true. We thank Him, we praise Him, we worship Him. We thank Him for privilege in coming for past interventions, past answers. And then we bless Him that as we do this, He is going to fulfill His promise.

We've seen the object is God, the nature: prayer, supplication, request; the attendant: with thanksgiving. And what's to be its extent? "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...." Every single thing that would cause anxiety is to become the stuff of our prayers in coming towards God. Remember 1 Peter 5:7--and here you have a noun form: "Casting all your anxiety upon Him." Casting how many of them? All of them--the piddling, little ones, the big, giant ones and everything in between. And it's a wonderful word Peter uses. It's the same verb that's used when it says they took their coats and they cast them upon the mules on which Jesus was to ride. Once they cast them upon the mules, they weren't in their hands or on their backs anymore. There was distance between their cloaks and their bodies and their hands. They cast them--they got rid of them. "Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He careth for you."

The word of prohibition: be anxious for nothing. The word of direction: engage in Scriptural prayer. And now the word of promise. As we do by God's grace what He's told us to do, this is what God has promised to do. Let's ask four questions of the text.

First of all, it says, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." Question number one: what is the peace of God in this context? I think the simplest way to answer that is to say it is the opposite of that turbulent, disruptive, sinful anxiety. It's the troubled waters of the soul hearing the voice of Christ saying, "Peace be still," and there was a great calm. The peace of God, that peace that is the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...." The peace of God that comes from the One that Paul calls later on in this chapter the God of peace. He brings His own peace into our breasts. It is the exact opposite of that turbulent, disruptive, carking, gnawing, crippling anxiety of the soul.

Second question: what's the characteristic of this peace? Paul describes it in this way: "And the peace of God, which passeth [exceeds, goes beyond, rises above, and is superior to] all understanding...." Paul used this word in chapter 2 and verse 3: "doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better [beyond, higher] than himself." Here is the outstanding characteristic of this peace. It rises above, is superior to all understanding. In all our ability to put it in a strict, logical category to describe it out for anyone to see, there is, dear brothers, in our Bibles, a clear teaching of legitimate Christian mysticism, experiences of God and His grace, that we cannot put in nice, neat, little categories. That's why Paul can pray for the Ephesians, that they'll know the love of Christ that passes knowledge. "What kind of nonsense!" If you sent off something to an editor or to a publishing company, and in there you talked about people understanding that which surpasses understanding, they'd shoot it back to you saying, "What in the world are you talking about?" Here is a peace that surpasses, goes beyond, is superior to all understanding.

Third question: what will this peace do, or how will it act in us? Well, Paul tells us: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts...." And when he uses the word "to guard," it was a military term. Remember, Philippi was a Roman colony. There were many Roman soldiers, and no doubt many of the Philippians had seen and walked by and perhaps had even become friendly with some local soldiers. And Paul uses this term that speaks of the peace of God acting like a garrison of soldiers around our hearts and around our thoughts. Some suggest that this speaks of a guard that would be inside the city gates protecting what goes out. But most suggest it would be a garrison guarding the external parameter of the city, keeping unwanted people out. But whether it's in or out, the concept is that the peace of God, this gentle, gracious fruit of the Spirit becomes armed with tremendously frightening power to resist things that are alien to our peace. And here he says that peace will guard the heart and our thoughts. And he doesn't say, "simply guard your hearts and thoughts," but "will guard your hearts and your thoughts."

One commentator has suggested what Paul is saying is this: "It will act like a sentinel on our hearts, keeping out unholy desires, attitudes, and affections and will guard our minds, keeping out rebellious, restless, and distracting thoughts. It's in the area of the hearts, the seat of our being, and in the cogitations and windings of our thoughts where anxiety does its horrible work? Anxiety is not something you can put in a test tube, but it's sure real when it's there in the heart, making the heart turbulent, restless, unsettled, and the mind filled with that which produces the questions, "What shall we do? What shall we wear? What shall we eat? And how shall we live in retirement? How shall we support our missionaries? And how, how, how?" In the area of the heart and the mind, in precisely those areas, God's peace will act like a garrison of soldiers to keep us, to guard us, to protect us from those things that by anxious thoughts would unsettle us.

And then the fourth question I want to ask of the text is, what's the ultimate source of that peace? Look at the text: "shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus [that precious little phrase that gives us the heart of Pauline New Testament theology]. " In the writings of Paul, it and similar phrases, "in Him," "in whom," "in Christ" are used approximately 150 times. Paul introduces it to the Philippians in his opening words: "Paul and Timothy, [bondslaves] of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy

people in Christ Jesus at Philippi...." Their essential identity is, while at Philippi, they are in vital saving union with Jesus Christ.

And in this past year, I've tried to think what it meant for this man who was out to kill everyone that called upon that name. For Paul to say Messiah Jesus--and when I read my New Testament, I try to read it that way. Instead of just saying Christ Jesus--it's lost its vigor--I say Messiah Jesus. Paul, out to obliterate any concept of this Messiah Jesus, now glories in that name. And so he says to the Philippians the ultimate source of this peace is in Messiah Jesus. It is one of the benefits of your union with Him. Remember what John says: "Of His fulness we all received, and grace for grace." God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. And what is the location of it? In Christ Jesus.

And Paul wants these people to know that this promise is not some little psychological gimmick by which we can get relieved of anxieties. The bookshelves in Borders and Barnes & Noble are full of books that give you psychological patterns and techniques to get rid of your hang-ups and anxieties. This is thoroughly Christian. This is the thorough-going Gospel way of being delivered from our sinful anxiety. Paul is telling these believers that the ultimate source of this peace is Christ Jesus Himself, the One who has become your peace through whom you have been reconciled to God so that you are now at peace with God who is the God of peace. You may now know the peace of God flowing out of Christ in whom the fullness of all of God's grace dwells. And it comes down into your hearts right there in Philippi. And you will know that peace as a wonderful fruit of your union with Christ guarding your hearts and your thoughts in Him.

And I must pause to say a word to men and women, boys and girls here tonight who are not in Christ. Perhaps the very term seems strange to you. You thought a Christian is someone who goes to a "Christian church" and becomes a member and does certain rituals and goes through certain external performances of religious deeds. No my friend, to be a Christian means that you and Christ have become one. You are in Him, and wonder of wonders, He is in you. And the only way to become a Christian is to get into Christ. And you don't get into Christ by some ritual of baptism. You don't get into Christ by praying some little prayer that someone puts in your mouth. You get into Christ when you stack arms and stop playing God. You weren't made to be your own little independent god. But that's what you are if you are out of Christ and in Adam. You're running your own life; you're living unto yourself.

And to get into Christ means you say, "I wasn't made to live unto myself by my own rules, to my own ends, by my own standards--no--I was made for God. But that God has a controversy with me because I've been living like I was God. And yet, wonder of wonders, that God sent His Son into the world to take upon Himself the guilt of our sin, having punished Him in the cross, having raised Him from the dead to validate that everything Christ did is accepted by the Father. He took Him back to His own right hand. And now in the Gospel, He comes to you and says, "Be reconciled to this God." He has in Christ punished our sins. On that basis, God invites you to come and partake of that forgiveness. Stack arms; stop playing God. Embrace Christ for who He is: the Way, the Truth, the only One through whom we can come to God. And as you come in what the Bible calls repentance and faith, you'll be united to Christ. God will give you His Holy Spirit that will become, as it were, the bond that knits you to Christ. And you will then, in Christ, be able to claim a promise like this and say, "Yes,

I am in Christ. And in Christ, I have all the blessings that God has promised to needy sinners."

And to you God's people I haven't told you anything new tonight. I think you would agree with me, there's enough around us in the world, in our churches, in our own little hectic lives to cause all kinds of anxieties. Let me ask you, has your conscience been persuaded that to indulge anxiety, you need to add an adjective. It is sinful anxiety. God prohibits you to be anxious. "Be anxious for nothing." But then He's given you a wonderful direction: "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Prayer, supplication, request mingled with thanksgiving. And God says His peace will then be given. The promise is set before us based upon the assumption of compliance with the prohibition and the directive.

And why was Paul concerned about this? Well, I'm sure there were many reasons, but not the least he already hinted at in chapter 2--and this is why it's so critical, dear fellow believer. Verses 12-16a:

"So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and questionings: that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life...."

Paul identifies two things that must not mark God's people: grouching and complaining. But what's the great end in view? He is conscious that they are luminaries in the darkness of the pagan society at Philippi. And he wants them to shine as lights, brilliant twinkling stars against the backdrop of that pagan society. That's his passion, and surely he would incorporate this as well. People around us are wringing their hands, biting their nails, fretting, running to the banks, sticking money under mattresses. And you can in that situation show a calm, a peace that surpasses understanding. You talk about being a witness. You talk about having the opportunity that Peter anticipates: sanctifying Christ as Lord in your hearts, ready always to give an answer to him who asks a reason of the hope that is in you. I'm concerned when I hear believers caught up in the anxiety of this present political crisis. "O, what are we going to do?" What are you doing different than the world? How are you different? That's worldliness. God calls us to be other-worldly, to manifest in this very practical area that God's Word is true.

I wrote a little note at the end of my message on page 5 of my notes with a question mark: should I or should I not give this personal testimony? I believe I should. I shall never forget the day when I had a firm diagnosis of prostate cancer. The doctor had called me, and I had to have a second biopsy. Then was about time for the biopsy to come back and I had a call again from the doctor's office from his nurse who said, "Mr. Martin, Dr. Slyker would like to see you this morning." It was a beautiful spring morning in March of 1998. I said to my wife, "He doesn't want to call me in and talk about the weather. I've got cancer." And sure enough, I went in and he told me the bad news. And we had a good talk with him and sought to give testimony to our confidence of God's sovereignty and God's grace. And then we came home--and I'll never forget it--we got on our knees, and I said to my wife, "Now dear, we're going to

do what God tells us to do in Philippians 4, and then we're going to watch God do what He says He'll do." And at that point, was I anxious? What do you think? When you've got something that might take you to your grave like it took your vigorous father, strong as an ox at age 82 until that wretched disease took him to his grave in three years. And I knew enough from my reading to know that the type of prostate cancer you have (the score on the Gleason score) is commensurate with your genetic predisposition. Sure I was anxious, but I said, "Dear, we're going to get on our knees and we're going to do what this says." And we opened up the Word of God--I believe I actually opened up the passage--and said, "Now my Father, here we are, and You said, 'Be anxious for nothing.' Lord, I settle in my heart, I am not going to let anxiety rule me in this issue. It's sin! Lord, I don't want to sin." "Be anxious for nothing." And then I laid out to my heavenly Father with thanksgiving my request. And when I did all of that, then I said, "Now Lord, the rest is up to You. I can't do what You said You can do, that your peace will guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus." And some of you remember, it was that very evening we had a prayer meeting, and I was privileged to stand in that multipurpose room and say to my people, "God means what He says."

Dear people, I beg you, some of you who are a bundle of knotted, tied-up anxiety about everything--stop it! God tells you to stop it, but not like Obama and McCain are telling us to stop our national nonsense by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. Go to your heavenly Father through Christ your Savior. Bring to Him your prayer, your request, mingle them with thanksgiving. Anything that causes anxiety becomes the thing that you bring to Him in prayer and supplication. And then tell God you expect Him to fulfill His promise. You who are fathers, what it did to you as a parent when your child had the loving temerity to hold you: "Daddy, you promised me this, and you're my father." We're you ever insulted, turned off? No, you felt ten feet tall. God loves it when we hold Him to His Word. So in the midst of all these pressures, may God grant that we as a people will be living monuments that God is true. And His peace shall guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.

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