

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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MAGNIFYING
CHRIST
VERSUS ANXIETY

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Living Stream Ministry

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The book of Philippians is a book on the experience of Christ. To experience Christ we need to live Him that we may magnify Him ([Phil. 1:20-21](#)). Then we need to take Him as our pattern ([Phil. 2:5-11](#)) and pursue Him as our goal ([Phil. 3:14](#)). In our Christian life we should have the unique mind—the mind to pursue Christ and gain Him ([Phil. 3:15, 12](#)). After covering these aspects of the experience of Christ, Paul, somewhat to our surprise, speaks in [Philippians 4](#) of forbearance and anxiety. On the positive side, we need forbearance; on the negative side, we should not have any anxiety.

Why at the conclusion of such a profound book on the experience of Christ does Paul mention forbearance and anxiety? Apparently there is no connection between the matters covered in [chapters one, two, and three](#) and Paul's word about forbearance and anxiety. Years ago, I did not consider it worthwhile for Paul to speak of anxiety. According to my concept, he should have continued to speak about higher things,

although I was not clear what these higher things should be.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES ASSIGNED BY GOD

In [Ephesians 1:3](#) and [2:6](#) Paul talks about the heavenlies. In your experience day by day are you in the heavenlies or in anxiety? More often than not, we are in anxiety, not in the heavenlies. After the fall of man, human life became a composition of anxiety and worry. If you read [Genesis 3](#) carefully, you will see that anxiety comes from the environment assigned to us by God. For example, we have anxiety with respect to our children. From the moment a child is born, his parents worry about him. Those who do not have children may dream of having a child one day. But they do not realize the worry and anxiety associated with giving birth to a child and raising him. Everything that affects the living of our children gives rise to anxiety. Most parents can testify that as far as their children are concerned, their days are filled more with anxiety than with happiness.

[Genesis 3](#) indicates that fallen man is also anxious about making a living. In [Genesis 3:17](#) the Lord said to the man, “Cursed is the ground

for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” In [verse 19](#) the Lord says, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” Because man must labor to maintain his existence, he is full of anxiety. Every farmer is anxious about his crops. He worries about the weather and also about damage caused by disease and insects. Actually there is not one kind of work which leaves us free from anxiety. Even those who are successful in their profession are anxious about their work.

There is also a good deal of anxiety related to married life. Young people desire to be married. Married life is good, but it involves more worry and anxiety than happiness. I encourage all the young people to get married at the proper time, but they should not expect a married life free from anxiety.

Human life is full of anxiety. Angels, however, are not subject to anxiety because they do not have any circumstances to worry about. They do not marry, and they do not need to be concerned about earning a living or taking care of a family. It is not even necessary for angels to sleep. Some people make the mistake of trying to live as if they were angels. But God has ordained all the circumstances of human life, even though

these circumstances give rise more to anxiety than to happiness. It seems that sorrow always lasts longer than happiness. There may be a short period of happiness and then a much longer time of sorrow, worry, or anxiety.

What is God's purpose in assigning circumstances to us which cause anxiety? According to [Romans 8](#), in addition to redemption and the indwelling Spirit, we need "all things." [Verse 28](#) says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to the purpose." To be sure, included in "all things" are sufferings, anxieties, and worries. In order for God to perfect us, sufferings are necessary. From our experience we know that virtually every matter included in "all things" involves anxiety.

THE TOTALITY OF HUMAN LIFE AND OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

As an elderly person, I have passed through a great many experiences in human life. Under the sovereign hand of the Lord, I have been in a great many different circumstances. I have known poverty, and I have known what it is to have my needs supplied. I can testify that in all the

circumstances of human life anxiety is present. Anxiety is a word that can sum up human life. The totality of human life is anxiety.

Paul speaks of anxiety in [Philippians 4:6](#) because he realizes that it is the totality of man's life. Paul also realized that forbearance is the totality of a proper Christian life. Paul knew that human life is constituted of anxiety and that the Christian life is constituted of forbearance. Thus, to live Christ is to have forbearance without anxiety.

Just as anxiety is the totality of human life, so forbearance is the totality of the Christian life. This is the reason Paul uses the words forbearance and anxiety together in charging the saints. Positively, we should make known our forbearance. All those who come in contact with us should know our forbearance. Negatively, we need to have a life without anxiety.

LIVING CHRIST

In [Galatians 2:20](#) Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Years ago, I began to read books on this verse. However, I could not understand what it meant for Christ to live in me. The explanation of [Galatians 2:20](#) is found not

in Galatians, but in Philippians. In Philippians Paul says not only that Christ lives in us; he goes on to reveal that to live is Christ. To live Christ surpasses simply having Christ live in us. Living Christ means that we have a life full of forbearance but without anxiety.

Any amount of anxiety decreases the measure of Christ in our experience. Even a little anxiety causes the measure of Christ to diminish. The extent to which Christ is present in our daily life is determined by the amount of forbearance and anxiety. If we have forbearance, we have Christ. But if we have anxiety, we are short of Christ.

MAGNIFYING CHRIST

[Philippians 4:4](#) says, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” Paul opens [Philippians 4:10](#) with the words, “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.” Furthermore, in [Philippians 1:18](#) Paul, speaking of his affliction, says, “What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is announced, and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.” Paul’s word about rejoicing is especially significant when we consider his circumstances. He was a prisoner in Rome, and certain of his opposers were doing everything possible to damage his ministry. Nevertheless,

Paul declares, “For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” ([Phil. 1:19](#)). Salvation here means to magnify Christ by living Him. Thus, Paul says, “According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death” ([v. 20](#)). Paul did not expect to be put to shame in anything.

Suppose one of Paul’s co-workers visited him in prison and found him anxious, sorrowful, and full of worry. No doubt the one visiting him would have said, “What a shame to see the very apostle who ministered Christ to us so sorrowful and anxious!” If this had been Paul’s situation, he would have been put to shame. But Paul magnified Christ. No matter how difficult his circumstances were, he did not have any anxiety. Because Paul was not anxious in anything, he was not put to shame in anything. Instead, Christ was magnified in him.

Paul could magnify Christ because he had forbearance. Even during his imprisonment, Paul had a great deal of forbearance. He considered the churches, he had a proper understanding of

the saints, and he had the ability to supply the saints and those around him with love, mercy, kindness, and sympathy. Because he exercised his forbearance in full, there was not a trace of anxiety. Paul could even say that he expected Christ to be magnified in him whether through life or through death. This indicates that Paul was not worried about death.

CONTENTMENT AND FORBEARANCE

We have seen that anxiety is opposed to forbearance. Anxiety is like a worm which devours our ability to forbear. If we have no forbearance, it will be easy for us to be upset or to lose our temper. Anger often comes out of anxiety. If I am worried about my future, my circumstances, or my family, I will not be happy with others. This worry will cause me to be upset with everyone. Only when we are happy and contented do we have forbearance.

Only a happy, satisfied person can forbear. One who is sorrowful and discontented, on the contrary, is easily irritated or offended. Because Paul was full of happiness and contentment, with him there was no anxiety, but an abundance of forbearance.

We know from Paul's word in [Philippians 4:10-12](#) that, at least for a period of time, he was short of supply. But he could testify, "I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content." He could say, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want." Because Paul had learned the secret, he could be content and, as a result, have an abundance of forbearance.

Many have pointed out that Philippians is a book of joy. Again and again Paul exhorts us to rejoice in the Lord. Paul's environment would have made it difficult for anyone to be joyful. We do not usually think of a prison as a place for rejoicing. But because Paul had no anxiety, no worry about his circumstances or future, he could rejoice in the Lord and be forbearing.

GOD'S ASSIGNMENT

If we would have a life free of anxiety, we need to realize that all our circumstances, good or bad, have been assigned to us by God. We need to have this realization with a full assurance. Suppose a brother is in business as a merchant. His business may prosper, and he may

earn a good deal of money. Later his business may fail and he may lose much more than he earned. Both earning money and losing it are God's assignment to him. If this brother has the full assurance that his circumstances come from God's assignment, he will be able to worship the Lord for His arrangement. Perhaps losing money will benefit him more than earning money, for through such a loss he may be perfected and built up.

The first prerequisite to having no anxiety is to have the full assurance that all the sufferings we experience are God's assignment. What need is there to worry about things? God has assigned them to us. He knows what we need.

When I was very young, I read a story about a conversation between two sparrows who were talking about the sorrows and the worries common among human beings. One sparrow asked the other why people worry so much. The other sparrow answered, "I don't think they have a Father who cares for them like we do. We don't need to worry about anything because our Father takes care of us." Yes, our Father does care for us. But sometimes He sends us hardships and sufferings to serve in fulfilling our destiny to magnify Christ. We can be freed from worry not

because God has promised us a life without suffering, but because we know that all our circumstances come to us as God's assignment. Paul did not care about life or death. He cared only that Christ would be magnified in him. He realized that every circumstance was for his good. This is the way to have no anxiety.

Why do certain saints worry about losing money? Simply because their desire is to have more money. Why are others anxious about their health? They are anxious because they are afraid to die. If we are ill, we need to declare, "Satan, what can you do to me? I am not worried about death. Death does not make me anxious. Rather, the possibility of dying gives me another opportunity to magnify Christ." Instead of fearing poverty, illness, or death, we should welcome them if God sends them to us. Then we shall have no anxiety, for we shall know that every circumstance is an assignment from our Father. This does not mean, however, that we should seek suffering for its own sake. We should not do things that will cause us to suffer. Those who are in business should seek to make money, and those who are employees should try to get a promotion. But if we lose money or even lose our job, we need not be anxious. Such a loss

comes from God's assignment, and we need not be anxious about it.

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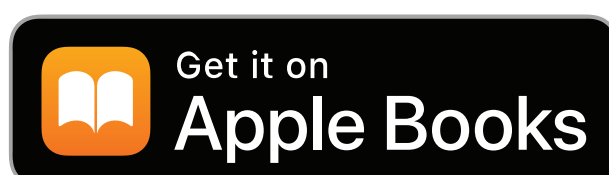
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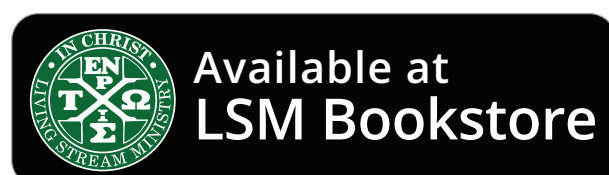
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