

Text: Phil. 4:6; 2:20

Title: "Don't Worry, But Show Concern"

Time: 1/1/2023

Place: NBBC

Introduction: We have come to another new year, and as we say goodbye to 2022 and look ahead to 2023, we do so perhaps remembering some difficulty of the year past and wondering whether we will have some more to endure in the year ahead. It is at times like this that I think we do well to look at some truth surrounding the word *be careful* in our text. Like our English word *care*, this Greek word can be a positive emotion—care as the opposite of apathy, or a negative emotion—care as worrisome anxiety as Paul uses it here.

After Maureen and I were married in the summer of 1988, we moved to Washington, CT, where she worked as a caretaker for an estate we lived on, and where I began a short career as a commercial painter. One of the downsides of being a painter was the fact that you had to work around other contractors and builders on the construction site who loved to have the radio on, normally quite loudly. That year a song called "Don't Worry Be Happy" came out and was rated the number one song for two weeks in September of 1988. I had to listen to it a lot. In 1989 the song won the Grammy Award for the Best Song of the Year. A guy named Bobby McFerrin created the song, and he did so after being inspired by seeing the phrase, "Don't Worry; Be Happy" on a Meher Baba poster.

Meher Baba was an Indian Hindu guru who believed that his spiritual identity was "The Ancient One." On February 10, 1954 Baba declared that he was the Avatar, meaning an incarnation of God. Part of Baba's mystique was the fact that he remained silent from 1925 to the end of his life in 1969. He lived and traveled in the company of a close circle of disciples called his mandali, comprised of men and women from whom he demanded absolute obedience.

The philosophy taught by Baba and the McFerrin song is basically that the key to happiness is to never let anything concern you or make you worry. Part of the song said:

“Ain’t got no place to lay your head
“Somebody came and took your bed
“Don’t worry, be happy.”

“The land lord say your rent is late
“He may have to litigate
“Don’t worry, be happy.”

The trouble with this philosophy, of course, is that it never works in real life. It turns out that Meher Baba was not God, and that he was all wet when it comes to dealing with the problems of real life.

We certainly have some passages of Scripture that tell us not to worry, but the goal is not happiness, it is a peace that comes from the God of the Bible; and the means is not forgetting about your responsibilities, it is adding to them the responsibility of prayer.

In our text, we see the need we have to avoid worrisome anxiety, “Be careful for nothing. . .” But I want us to notice that the same apostle who said *Be careful for nothing* also commended Timothy for being the kind of man who would naturally care in a way that others would not (Phil. 2:20). The same Greek verb, *merimnao*, is used in both passages. So there is an important sense in which we as believers should pray and not worry, but also an important sense in which we should show real concern, a concern that moves us to faithful prayer. Notice two things about this with me this morning.

I. Don’t worry because it is spiritually damaging to God’s people (Phil. 4:6-7).

Illustration: John Bunyan is one of our Baptist forefathers. Six months after the Stuarts were restored to the throne of England in 1660, Bunyan was imprisoned in Bedford jail for the crime of preaching the gospel without a king-approved license, where he spent the next 12 years of his life. He left behind him a wife and kids to support themselves. Bunyan wrote of the importance of guarding the soul with the peace of God in his book *Holy War*. There, it is the job of Mr. God's-Peace to govern the town of Mansoul, and he does so from the castle garrison.

Application: Bunyan knew from his Bible that anxiety is a spiritual attack on the well-being of the heart and mind. *Shall keep* is a military term meaning *watch guard over* (see 2 Cor. 11:32 for a mundane usage). I want us to see 4 truths about damaging worry from the way the New Testament uses this special Greek word.

A. The Bible lists some causes of damaging worry.

1. The material needs of life (Matt. 6:15-33).
2. The prospects of death/old age (Matt. 6:27).
3. The unknowns of the future (Matt. 6:34).
4. Persecution (Matt. 10:17-19).
5. Daily responsibilities (Luke 10:38-42).
6. Domestic needs (1 Cor. 7:32-34).

Application: When being attacked, it helps to know from whom the attack is coming. In football a defensive coordinator would love to know what play the offence he opposes is going to call next. We know what our enemy's next call is. We know the causes of damaging worry.

B. The Bible warns against false cures for damaging worry.

Illustration: Our bodies are fascinating creations. Isn't it interesting that we experience certain reactions when we incur

physical pain? It may be a grimace; it may be a scream or a cry; it may be clutching that toe that got stubbed or holding that head that got bumped. There are simply certain natural reactions that go with physical pain, yet none of these are actually things that cure the pain. In a sense, I guess that you could call them false cures for the pain.

Application: In the same way, Scripture indicates that there are certain natural ways people often try to deal with spiritually damaging anxiety, but that are false cures. The reason they are false cures of anxiety is that they are natural approaches to dealing with this problem in the flesh that never work.

1. More money (Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19).

Application: Feeling the need for more money is a common natural response of our sinful world to the cares of this life. If only I had more, then I could be happy. If only the school had more, then the problems would be solved. If only the government had more, then the problems of society would be over. Where you see worry, you see also a desire for more money. But this is a false cure, because riches are deceitful. They actually increase our cares in this life instead of mitigating them.

2. More pleasure (Luke 8:14; 21:34).

Application: The world tells us that if we are going to be happy we need to focus on the pleasures of life: if it feels good do it, even substance abuse — alcohol and drugs. The idea is that we have anxiety and trouble because we have not been focused on ourselves enough. The Bible teaches that such a focus actually weighs down the heart. It is a false cure for anxiety. Don't fall for the idea that more pleasure and an easier time of it are the keys to a more worry free life. That is the doctrine of Meher Baba, and it is not true.

C. The Bible cites some disastrous results of damaging worry.

1. The choking of the word and spiritual fruitlessness (Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19, Luke 8:14).

Application: These passages speak of a result of worry in the life of someone with a false profession of faith. True believers can experience the same problem. Lack of faithfulness in Bible study, prayer, church attendance, and ministry is often a result of just being too worried about too many things. Anxiety can choke off our access to God's grace in His Word and give us unfruitful lives. This fruitlessness is a disastrous result.

2. A lack of preparation for Christ's return (Luke 21:34-36).

Application: Living in worry is living the life of people who are caught by surprise at the second coming of Christ. As born again Christians, our lives are to be affected by what Paul calls our Blessed Hope, "the glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13). Hopefulness is the opposite of anxiety.

D. The Bible encourages us with cures for damaging worry.

1. Take heed (Luke 21:34). Understand that anxiety is spiritually damaging; it is an attack on your heart and mind that should not be tolerated or welcomed.

2. Pray (Luke 21:36, Phil. 4:6). Prayer is the activity that reminds us that God cares for us. Boyce: "It is the means by which an empty soul that has been touched by Jesus Christ can be thrust beneath the life-giving fountain of God's grace, can bask in God's goodness, and can be supernaturally refreshed for life's tasks" (*An Expository Commentary on Philipians*, 239).

3. Thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6). This is a part of the prayer mentioned in this passage, but it is an important part when it comes to dealing with spiritually damaging anxiety. The Bible

says that we should be thankful people (Rom. 1:21; 14:6; 2 Cor. 1:11; 4:15; 9:11-12; Eph. 5:20; Col. 2:7; 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:18; 1 Tim. 2:1).

4. Fellowship with Jesus (Luke 10:39-42). Note that the Lord calls this the one thing that is necessary.

5. Reflection on the wonders of nature (Matt. 6:26, 28-30, Luke 12:24, 27-28). "Wake up and smell the roses" is a scriptural directive. We can learn important lessons from the way God cares for these things. We are far more valuable than they are.

6. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33-34; Luke 12:31). Did you notice that this is very different from seeking nothing, or "Don't Worry, Be Happy"? We need to put God's will and work first in order to conquer spiritually damaging worry.

7. Be generous (Luke 12:31-34). Luke indicates that an important means of seeking first the kingdom of God is being generous with the needs of the work.

8. Be content (1 Cor. 7:32-35; Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:8). Learn to appreciate the opportunities of singlehood.

II. Do show concern because it is spiritually essential for God's people (Phil. 2:19-23).

Illustration: In sports today we hear pundits ask themselves who the G.O.A.T is in each sport. That stands for "greatest of all time." Here in New England, Tom Brady is called football's G.O.A.T. The apostle Paul names a G.O.A.T when it comes to the work of the Lord. He refers to Timothy this way. Want to be a great football player – imitate Brady. Want to be a great servant of the Lord – imitate Timothy with his special concern.

A. This kind of concern is not self-concerned (Phil. 2:20-21).

Application: We need our natures to be transformed, and the sign that they are being transformed is that we have an uncommon concern for the spiritual well-being of God's people. Where there is no concern for God's people, there really is very little concern for God. Remember Cain's protest to God: "Am I my brother's keeper?" He assumed the answer was no, but he was wrong. Jude 11 makes clear that we need to avoid the way of Cain. We need to be genuinely concerned for one another's spiritual well-being.

B. This concern can handle pressure (2 Cor. 11:28).

Application: The NASB translates "which cometh upon me daily" as "the daily pressure on me." I think that does a good job clarifying Paul's meaning here. Showing concern for God's people often means performing under pressure. We are not called to a stress-free existence. We are called to be stressed about the right things, the things that really matter.

C. This concern commits to unity (1 Cor. 12:25).

Application: Notice the emphasis on the *same care* for one another. We saw this emphasis in Phil. 2:2 where we read about *the same love*. We should not have one level of care and love for one set of folks in the local church, and a different level of care and love for a different set of folks. It ought to be the same love and the same care.

Conclusion: As we begin a new year of gospel ministry together, this important word in our Bibles tells us, "Don't worry, but do show concern." These two forms of concern are like water and oil. They do not mix well. The less godly concern we have in our lives for the Lord and His people, the more will we find ourselves experiencing spiritually damaging worry and anxiety.

The 18th century hymnist Edward Peronnet authored a prayer to avoid damaging worry in favor of godly concern:

O grant me, Lord, that sweet content,
That sweetens every state;
Which no internal fears can rent,
Nor outward foes abate.
Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace —
Thy word the truth hath said —
Who, clothed with Thy great righteousness,
Thy arm his strength has made.

Grant me then, Lord, a contrite heart,
A meek and quiet breast;
Thy own unspotted mind impart,
Thy own unshaken rest.

That rest for humble souls prepared,
The bosom of Thy love;
Where patience finds her full reward,
When perfected above.

Give me then grace this rest to seek,
And, as I seek, to find;
My heart all pure, my soul all meek,
The copy of Thy mind.
So shall I know Thy utmost power,
Thy utmost glory prove;
And in eternity adore
The matchless gift of love!

“A man came — I think it was actually in Philadelphia — on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction — the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

— David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching