

PRAYER, THE CURE FOR CARE NO. 2351

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 11, 1984.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 4:6, 7.

WE have the faculty of forethought; but, like all our faculties, it has been perverted, and it is often abused. It is good for a man to have a holy care, and to pay due attention to every item of his life; but, alas! It is very easy to make it into an unholy care, and to try to wrest from the hand of God that office of providence which belongs to Him and not to ourselves. How often Luther liked to talk about the birds, and the way God cares for them! When he was full of his anxieties, he used to constantly envy the birds because they led so free and happy a life. He talks of Dr. Sparrow, and Dr. Thrush, and others that used to come and talk to Dr. Luther, and tell him many a good thing. You know, brethren, the birds out in the open yonder, cared for by God, fare far better than those that are cared for by man. A little London girl, who had gone into the country, once said, “Look, mamma, at that poor little bird; it has not got any cage!” That would not have struck me as being any loss to the bird, and if you and I were without our cage, and the box of seed, and glass of water, it would not be much of a loss if we were cast adrift into the glorious liberty of a life of humble dependence upon God. It is that cage of carnal trust, and that box of seed that we are always laboring to fill, that makes the worry of this mortal life; but he who has grace to spread his wings and soar away, and get into the open field of divine trustfulness, may sing all the day, and ever have this for his tune—

*“Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow;
God provides for the morrow.”*

Here, then, is the teaching of the text: “Be careful for nothing.” The word “careful” does not now mean exactly what it did when the Bible was translated; at least it conveys a different meaning to me from what it did to the translators. I would say that we should be careful. “Be careful,” is a good lesson for boys and young people when they are starting in life; but, in the sense in which the word “care-full” was understood at the time of the translators, we must not be careful, that is, full of care. The text means, be not anxious; be not constantly thinking about the needs of this mortal life. I will read it again; stretching the word out a little, and then you will get the meaning of it: “Be care-full for nothing.” Oh, that God might teach us how to avoid the evil which is here forbidden, and to live with that holy carelessness which is the very beauty of the Christian life, when all our care is cast on God, and we can joy and rejoice in His providential care of us!

“Ah!” somebody says, “I cannot help caring.” Well, the subject tonight is to help you to leave off caring; and, first, consider here *the substitute for care*. Be careful for nothing, but be prayerful for everything; that is the substitute for care, “prayer and supplication.” Secondly, note *the special character of this prayer*, which is to become the substitute for anxiety: “In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” And then I hope we shall have a few minutes left in which to consider *the sweet effect of this prayer*: “The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

I. To begin, then, here is, first, THE SUBSTITUTE FOR CARE.

I suppose it is true of many of us that *our cares are manifold*. If you once become careful, anxious, fretful, you will never be able to count your cares, even though you might count the hairs of your head. And cares are apt to multiply to those who are care-full; and when you are as full of care as you think you

can be, you will be sure to have another crop of cares growing up all around you. The indulgence of this ill habit of anxiety leads to its getting dominion over life, till life is not worth living by reason of the care we have about it. Cares are manifold; therefore, let your prayers be as manifold. Turn into a prayer everything that is a care. Let your cares be the raw material of your prayers; and, as the alchemists hoped to turn dross into gold, so do you, by a holy alchemy, actually turn what naturally would have been a care into spiritual treasure in the form of prayer. Baptize every anxiety into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and so make it into a blessing.

Have you a care to get? Take heed that it does not get you. Do you wish to make gain? Mind you do not lose more than you gain by your gains. I beseech you; have no more care to gain than you dare turn into a prayer. Do not desire to have what you dare not ask God to give you. Measure your desires by a spiritual standard, and you will thus be kept from anything like covetousness. Cares come to many from their losses; they lose what they have gained. Well, this is a world in which there is the tendency to lose. Ebbs follow floods, and winters crush out summer flowers. Do not wonder if you lose as other people do, but pray about your losses. Go to God with them, and instead of fretting, make them an occasion for waiting upon the Lord, and saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Show me why You contend with me, and deliver Your servant, I pray You, from ever complaining of You whatever You do permit me to lose!"

Perhaps you say that your care is neither about your gaining nor your losing, but even about your daily bread. Ah, well, you have promises for that, you know! The Lord has said, "So shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." He gives you sweet encouragement when He says that He clothes the grass of the field, and shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? And the Lord Jesus bids you consider the fowls of heaven, how they sow not, neither do they gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Go, then, to your God with all your cares. If you have a large family, a slender income, and much ado to make ends meet, and to provide things honest in the sight of all men, you have so many excuses for knocking at God's door, so many more reasons for being often found at the throne of grace. I beseech you, turn them to good account. I feel free to call upon a friend when I really have some business to do with him, and you may be bold to call upon God when necessities press upon you. Instead of caring for anything with anxious care, turn it at once into a reason for renewed prayerfulness.

"Ah!" one says, "but I am in perplexity; I do not know what to do." Well, then, dear friend, you should certainly pray when you cannot tell whether it is the right hand road, or the left hand, or straight on, or whether you should go back. Indeed, when you are in such a fog that you cannot see the next lamp, then is the time that you must pray. The road will clear before you very suddenly. I have often had to try this plan, myself, and I bear witness that, when I have trusted to myself, I have been a gigantic fool, but when I have trusted in God, then He has led me straight on in the right way, and there has been no mistake about it. I believe that God's children often make greater blunders over simple things than they do over more difficult matters. You know how it was with Israel, when those Gibeonites came, with their old shoes and patched, and showed the bread that was moldy, that they said they took fresh out of their ovens. The children of Israel thought, "This is a clear case; these men are strangers, they have come from a far country, so we may make a league with them." They were certain that the evidence of their eyes proved that these were no Canaanites, so they did not consult God; the whole matter seemed so plain that they made a league with the Gibeonites, which was a trouble to them ever afterwards. If we would in everything go to God in prayer, our perplexities would lead us into no more mistakes than our simplicities, and in simple things and difficult things we should be guided by the Most High.

Perhaps another friend says, "But I am thinking about the future." Are you? Well, first, I beg to ask you what you have to do with the future. Do you know what a day will bring forth? You have been thinking about what will become of you when you are old, but are you sure that you ever will be old? I knew one Christian woman who used to worry herself about how she would get buried. That question never troubled me, and there are many other matters about which we need not worry ourselves. You can always find a stick with which to beat a dog; and, if you want a care, you can generally find a care with which to beat your own souls; but that is a poor occupation for any of you. Instead of doing that, turn everything that might be a subject of care into a subject of prayer. It will not be long before you have a subject of care, so you will not be long without a subject of prayer. Strike out that word "care" and just write in the place of it this word "prayer"; and then, though your cares are manifold, your prayers will also be manifold.

Note, next, dear friends, that *undue care is an intrusion into God's province*. It is making yourself the father of the household instead of being a child; it is making yourself the master instead of being a servant, for whom the master provides his rations. Now, if, instead of doing that, you will turn care into prayer, there will be no intrusion, for you may come to God in prayer without being charged with presumption. He invites you to pray; no, here, by His servant, He bids you "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Once more, *cares are of no use to us, and they cause us great damage*. If you were to worry as long as you wished, you could not make yourself an inch taller, or grow another hair on your head, or make one hair white or black. So the Savior tells us; and He asks, if care fails in such little things, what can care do in the higher matters of providence? It cannot do anything. A farmer stood in his fields, and said, "I do not know what will happen to us all. The wheat will be destroyed if this rain keeps on; we shall not have any harvest at all unless we have some fine weather." He walked up and down, wringing his hands, and fretting, and making his whole household uncomfortable; and he did not produce one single gleam of sunlight by all his worrying, he could not puff any of the clouds away with all his petulant speech, nor could he stop a drop of rain with all his murmurings.

What is the good of it, then, to keep gnawing at your own heart, when you can get nothing by it? Besides, it weakens our power to help ourselves, and especially our power to glorify God. A care-full heart hinders us from judging rightly in many things. I have often used the illustration (I do not know a better) of taking a telescope, breathing on it with the hot breath of our anxiety, putting it to our eye, and then saying that we cannot see anything but clouds. Of course we cannot, and we never shall while we breathe upon it. If we were but calm, quiet, self-possessed, and God-possessed, we would do the right thing. We would be, as we say, "all there" in the time of difficulty. That man may expect to have presence of mind that has the presence of God. If we forget to pray, do you wonder that we are all in a fidget, and a worry, and we do the first thing that occurs to us, which is generally the worst thing, instead of waiting till we saw what would be done, and then trustfully and believingly doing it as in the sight of God? Care is injurious, but if you only turn this care into prayer, then every care will be a benefit to you.

Prayer is wonderful material for building up the spiritual fabric. We are ourselves edified by prayer; we grow in grace by prayer; and if we will but come to God every moment with petitions, we shall be fast growing Christians. I said to one this morning, "Pray for me, it is a time of need," and she replied, "I have done nothing else since I woke." I have made the same request of several others, and they have said that they have been praying for me. I felt so glad, not only for my own sake who had received benefit from their prayers, but for their sakes, because they are sure to grow thereby. When little birds keep flapping their wings, they are learning to fly. The sinews will get stronger, and the birds will leave the nest before long; that very wing-clapping is an education, and the attempting to pray, the groaning, the sighing, the crying, of a prayerful spirit, is itself a blessing. Leave off, then, this damaging habit of care, and take to this enriching habit of prayer. See how you will thus make a double gain; first, by avoiding a loss, and secondly, by getting that which will really benefit you and others, too.

Then, again, *cares are the effect of forgetfulness of Christ's closeness to us*. Did you notice how the context runs? "The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing." The Lord Jesus Christ has promised to come again, and He may come tonight; at any moment He may appear. So Paul writes, "The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Oh, if we could but stand on this earth as upon a mere shadow, and live as those who will soon have done with this poor transient life, if we held every earthly thing with a very loose hand, then we would not be caring, and worrying, and fretting, but we should take to praying, for thus we should grasp the real, and the substantial, and plant our feet upon the invisible, which is, after all, the eternal! Oh, dear friends, let the text, which I have read to you over and over again, now drop into your hearts as a pebble falls into a mountain lake, and as it enters let it make rings of comfort upon the very surface of your soul!

II. Now we want to look into the text a little more closely to see, in the second place, THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF THIS PRAYER. What sort of prayer is that which will ease us of care?

Well, first, it is *a prayer which deals with everything*. "In everything" "let your requests be made known unto God." You may pray about the smallest thing and about the greatest thing; you may not only pray for the Holy Spirit, but, you may pray for a new pair of boots. You may go to God about the bread you eat, the water you drink, the garment you wear, and pray to Him about everything. Draw no line, and say, "So far is to be under the care of God." Dear me, then, what are you going to do with the rest of life?

Is that to be lived under the withering blight of a sort of atheism? God forbid! Oh, that we might live in God as to the whole of our being, for our being is such that we cannot divide it! Our body, soul, and spirit are one, and while God leaves us in this world, and we have necessities which arise out of the condition of our bodies, we must bring our bodily necessities before God in prayer. And you will find that the great God will hear you in these matters. Say not that they are too little for Him to notice; everything is little in comparison with Him. When I think of what a great God He is, it seems to me that this poor little world of ours is just one insignificant grain of sand on the seashore of the universe, and not worth any notice at all. The whole earth is a mere speck in the great world of nature; and if God condescends to consider it, He may as well stoop a little lower, and consider us; and He does so, for He says, "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Therefore, in everything let your requests be made known unto God.

The kind of prayer that saves us from care is *prayer that is repeated*: "In everything by prayer and supplication." Pray to God, and then pray again: "by prayer and supplication." If the Lord does not answer you the first time, be very grateful that you have a good reason for praying again. If He does not grant your request the second time, believe that He loves you so much that He wants to hear your voice again; and if He keeps you waiting till you have gone to Him seven times, say to yourself, "Now I know that I worship the God of Elijah, for Elijah's God let him go again seven times before the blessing was given." Count it an honor to be permitted to wrestle with the angel. This is the way God makes His princes. Jacob had never been Israel if he had obtained the blessing from the angel at the first asking; but when he had to keep on wrestling till he prevailed, then he became a prince with God. The prayer that kills care is prayer that is continued and importunate.

Next, it is *intelligent prayer*: "Let your requests be made known unto God." I heard of a Muslim who spent, I think, six hours in prayer each day, and lest he should go to sleep, when on board a ship, he stood upright, and only had a rope stretched across, so that he might lean against it, and if he slept, he would fall. His objective was to keep on for six hours with what he called prayer. "Well," I said to one who knew him, and who had seen him on board his boat on the Nile, "What sort of prayer was it?" "Why," my friend replied, "he kept on repeating, 'There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God,' the same thing over, and over, and over again." I said, "Did he ask for anything?" "Oh, no!" "Was he pleading with God to give him anything?" "No, he simply kept on with that perpetual repetition of certain words, just as a witch might repeat a charm." Do you think there is anything in that style of praying? If you go on your knees, and simply repeat a certain formula, it will be only a mouthful of words. What does God care about that kind of praying? "Let your requests be made known unto God." That is true prayer. God knows what your requests are, but you are to pray to Him as if He did not know. You are to make known your requests, not because the Lord does not know, but perhaps because you do not know, and when you have made your requests known to Him, as the text tells you, you will more clearly have made them known to yourself. When you have asked intelligently, knowing what you have asked, and knowing why you have asked it, you will perhaps stop, and say to yourself, "No, I must not, after all, make that request." Sometimes, when you have gone on praying for what God does not give you, it may be that there will steal over your mind the conviction that you are not on the right track, and that result of your prayer will in itself do you good, and be a blessing to you.

But you are to pray, making your requests known unto God. That is, in plain English, say what you want, for this is true prayer. Get alone, and tell the Lord what you want; pour out your heart before Him. Do not imagine that God wants any fine language. No, you need not run upstairs for your prayer book, and turn to a collect; you will be a long time before you find any collect that will fit you if you are really praying. Pray for what you want just as if you were telling your mother or your dearest friend what your need is. Go to God in that fashion, for that is real prayer, and that is the kind of prayer that will drive away your care.

So, dear friends, again, the kind of prayer that brings freedom from care is *communion with God*. If you have not spoken to God, you have not really prayed. A little child has been known (I daresay your children have done it) to go and put a letter down the grating of a drain; and of course there was never any reply to a letter posted in that way. If the letter is not put into the postbox, so that it goes to the person to whom it is addressed, what is the use of it? So, prayer is real communication with God. You must realize that He is, and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, or else you cannot pray. He must be a reality to you, a living reality, and you must believe that He hears prayer, and then you must speak with Him, and believe that you have the petition that you ask of Him, and so you shall have it. He has never yet failed to honor believing prayer. He may keep you waiting for a while, but delays are not deni-

als, and He has often answered a prayer that asked for silver by giving gold. He may have denied earthly treasure, but He has given heavenly riches of ten thousand times the worth, and the suppliant has been more than satisfied with the exchange. "Let your requests be made known unto God." I know what you do when you are in trouble; you go to your neighbor, but your neighbor does not want to see you quite so often about such business. Possibly you go to your brother, but there is a text that warns you not to go into your brother's house in the day of your calamity. You may call on a friend too often when you are hard up; he may be very pleased to see you till he hears what you are after; but if you go to your God, He will never give you the cold shoulder. He will never say that you come too often. On the contrary, He will even chide you because you do not come to Him often enough.

There is one word which I passed over just now because I wanted to leave it for my last observation on this point: "By prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God." Now what does that mean? It means that the kind of prayer that kills care is a *prayer that asks cheerfully, joyfully, thankfully*. "Lord, I am poor; let me bless You for my poverty, and then, O Lord, will You not supply all my needs?" That is the way to pray. "Lord, I am ill; I bless You for this affliction, for I am sure that it means some good thing to me. Now be pleased to heal me, I beseech You!" "Lord, I am in a great trouble; but I praise You for the trouble, for I know that it contains a blessing though the envelope is black-edged; and then, Lord, help me through my trouble!" That is the kind of prayer that kills care: "supplication with thanksgiving." Mix these two things well; one drachma—no, two drachma of prayer, prayer and supplication, then one drachma of thanksgiving. Rub them well together, and they will make a blessed cure for care. May the Lord teach us to practice this holy art of the apothecary!

III. I finish with this third point, THE SWEET EFFECT OF THIS PRAYER: "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

If you can pray in this fashion, instead of indulging evil anxiety, the result will be that *an unusual peace* will steal over your heart and mind, unusual, for it will be "the peace of God." What is God's peace? The unruffled serenity of the infinitely happy God, the eternal composure of the absolutely well-contented God. This shall possess your heart and mind. Notice how Paul describes it: "The peace of God, which passes all understanding." Other people will not understand it; they will not be able to make out how you can be so quiet. What is more, you will not be able to tell them, for if it surpasses all understanding, it certainly passes all expression; and what is even more a wonder you will not understand it yourself.

It will be such a peace that it will be to you *unfathomable and immeasurable*. When one of the martyrs was about to burn for Christ, he said to the judge who was giving orders to light the pile, "Will you come and lay your hand on my heart?" "The judge did so. "Does it beat fast?" inquired the martyr. "Do I show any sign of fear?" "No," said the judge. "Now lay your hand on your own heart, and see whether you are not more excited than I am." Think of that man of God, who, on the morning he was to be burned, was so soundly asleep that they had to shake him to wake him; he had to get up to be burned, and yet knowing that it was to be so, he had such confidence in God that he slept sweetly. This is "the peace of God, which passes all understanding." In those old Diocletian persecutions, when the martyrs came into the amphitheatre to be torn by wild beasts, when one was set in a red-hot iron chair, another was smeared with honey to be stung to death by wasps and bees, they never flinched. Think of that brave man who was put on a gridiron to be roasted to death, who said to his persecutors, "You have done me on one side; now turn me over to the other." Why this peace under such circumstances? It was "the peace of God, which passes all understanding." We do not have to suffer like that nowadays, but if it ever comes to anything like that, it is wonderful what peace a Christian enjoys. After there had been a great storm, the Master stood up in the prow of the vessel, and said to the winds, "Be still," and "there was a great calm," we read. Have you ever felt this? You do feel it tonight if you have learned this sacred art of making your requests known unto God in everything, and the peace of God which passes all understanding is keeping your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This blessed peace keeps our hearts and minds; it is a *guardian peace*. The Greek word implies a garrison. Is it not an odd thing that a military term is used here, and that it is peace that acts as a guard to the heart and to the mind? It is the peace of God that is to protect the child of God; strange but beautiful figure! I have heard that fear is the housekeeper for a Christian. Well, fear may be a good guardian to keep dogs out, but it has not a full cupboard. But peace, though it seems weakness, is the essence of strength; and, while it guards, it also feeds us, and supplies all our needs.

It is also a *peace which links us to Jesus*: "The peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds."—that is, your affections and your thoughts, your desires and your intellect;

your heart, so that it shall not fear; your mind, so that it shall not know any kind of perplexity—"the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It is all "through Christ Jesus," and therefore it is doubly sweet and precious to us.

O my dear hearers, some of you come in here on Thursday nights, and you do not know anything about this peace of God, and perhaps you wonder why we Christian people make such a fuss about our religion. Ah, if you knew it, you would perhaps make more fuss about it than we do, for if there were no hereafter—and we know that there is—yet the blessed habit of going to God in prayer, and casting all our care upon Him, helps us to live most joyfully even in this life. We do not believe in secularism, but if we did, there would be no preparation for the earthly life like this living unto God, and living in God. If you have a sham god, and you merely go to church or chapel, and carry your prayer book or your hymn book with you, and therefore think you are Christians, you are deceiving yourselves; but if you have a living God, and you have real fellowship with Him, and constantly, as a habit, live beneath the shadow of the wings of the Almighty, then you shall enjoy a peace that shall make others wonder, and make you yourself marvel, too, even "the peace of God, which passes all understanding." God grant it to you, my beloved hearers, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Philippians 4.

Verse 1. *Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, do stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*

You know that the church at Philippi was very dear to the apostle's heart. He could never forget the time when he and Silas prayed with the women at the riverside, and afterwards prayed and sang praises unto God in the prison, when the prisoners heard them. Lydia and her household and the Philippian jailor were among the first fruits of Paul's work at Philippi, and there was always a very intimate love between him and the members of the church in that place. They cared for him, and he cared for them. Twice in this one verse he speaks of them as his, "dearly beloved." He says that he "longed for" them, longed to come and see them face to face, longed that they might be happy in the Lord to the very highest degree. So he says, "My brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy." It was such a joy to him even to think of them as his spiritual children, and especially to see after what a godly and generous fashion they behaved themselves. Yes, and he calls them his "crown"—a garland which he had won in spiritual wrestling. The Christian's converts are his joy here, and they will be his crown forever in glory. Paul bade these Philippians "stand fast in the Lord." It looks like a very simple thing to stand fast, but they who try to do it know how difficult a task it is.

2. *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.*

Only two women who had fallen out with one another; but the apostle is so anxious for perfect unity that he puts in a "beseech" for each of them. He does not say which was right and which was wrong, but he would have them "of the same mind in the Lord." Little differences, even between obscure members of the church, may hinder the work of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is like a dove; and doves love quiet places, they do not come where there is noise and strife. Oh, let us cultivate love towards one another; and if in anything we have disagreed at any time, let us think that we hear Paul saying tonight, "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Make it up, my sisters; make it up, my brothers; whatever the quarrel is, end it, and "be of the same mind in the Lord." Bought with the same precious blood, robed in the same perfect righteousness, on the way to the same heaven, "be of the same mind in the Lord."

3. *And I entreat you also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other of my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life.*

We do not know who this "true yokefellow" was. Very likely it was Epaphroditus, who carried this Epistle to Philippi. Whoever it was, it was someone who had worked with Paul shoulder to shoulder. If two bullocks bear the same yoke, and yet do not agree, they make it very uncomfortable for one another. If one tries to lie down, and the other wants to stand up, or if one goes faster than the other, the yoke becomes doubly galling. Paul speaks of somebody here as having been his "true yokefellow"; and he says to him, "Help those women which labored with me in the gospel." What an eminent place women have always held in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and here Paul speaks of them as laboring with him in the gospel! Surely, Lydia must have been one of those. "With Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life." According to some learned commentators, a man's name

may be in the book of life for a time, but it may be removed. If their teaching is true, that book will be very much scratched and blotted. I thank God that I do not believe in any such book as that. If the Lord Jesus Christ has written my name in the book of life, in the great family register of the redeemed, I defy all the devils of hell to ever get it erased.

4. Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

If you ever rejoice in the Lord, you may always rejoice in the Lord, for He is always the same, and always gracious. There is as much reason for rejoicing in God at one time as at another, since He never changes.

5. Let your moderation be known unto all men.

The word “moderation,” in the Greek, is a very difficult word to translate into English. It does not mean moderation in the sense in which some people use the word, for they make it, as I think, almost an accursed one. “Let your moderation”—your gentleness, your willingness, your forbearance—“be known unto all men.” That is what it means. Do not push your own rights too far; stop short of what you might fairly demand; and when you feel, at any time, a little vehement in temper, check yourself, hold yourself in, bear and forbear. Go not as far as you may, nor even as far as some think that you ought, in defending your own rights; let your gentleness, your yieldingness, be known unto all men.

5. The Lord is at hand.

Christ is coming; why do you put yourself out? The Lord is near you to help you; why are you so excessively anxious? Why are you so carried away with the present temporary trial? “The Lord is at hand.”

6. Be careful for nothing;

Be anxiously careful for nothing; sing, with Faber—

*“I have no cares, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are Yours.”*

6-8. But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Everything of this kind concerns you, therefore help it as far as you can. Be on the side of every cause that may be thus described. If it vindicates truth, uprightness, reverence, religion, chastity, holiness, be on that side. If there is anything the reverse of this, do not have anything to do with it; but if there is any movement in the world that will help forward things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, “think on these things,” and so think upon them as to increase their influence among the sons and daughters of men.

9. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do:

It is well when a preacher can speak like that; when he has not to say, “Do as I say, and not as I do,” but when, like the apostle, he can say, “Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.”

9. And the God of peace shall be with you.

The God of peace is always with those who receive His dear Son, and who help His gospel. It is one of the privileges of true believers that the God of peace shall be constantly with them.

10. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me has flourished again; wherein you were also careful, but you lacked opportunity.

Paul was in prison at Rome; and these Philippians had made a contribution, and they had sent Epaphroditus with it to relieve the apostle in his poverty, so he said to them, “You cared for me before; but for a time you had not the opportunity of helping me, and now you have thought of me again; wherefore, I rejoice in the Lord greatly.”

11. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Is not that a splendid piece of learning? Paul was a learned man, and so are you, if you have learned this lesson. You may not be able to put D.D., or LL.D., after your name; but you are a learned man if you can say, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

12. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound:

These are two grand things to learn. There are some who know the first, but who do not know the second. I have known several of God’s children who seemed quite eminent for piety when they were abased,

but they were never worth anything after they grew rich. They did not know how to abound; they became top-heavy, and far too great for their place. It was not so with the apostle, for he could truthfully say, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.”

12. *Every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

Was he not a true Master of Arts? He had mastered the art of being hungry without murmuring, the art of being full without boasting, the art of suffering need without impatience, the art of abounding without setting his affection on worldly things. He was indeed a Master of Arts of the very highest order.

13. *I can do all things—*

That looks like bragging, does it not? Finish the sentence.

14. *Through Christ which strengthens me.*

There is no improper boasting there, for Paul could do all things through Christ’s mighty power. It has been well said that the angels excel in strength, but the saints excel in their weakness. When we are most weak, and Christ strengthens us, then are the most excellent virtues produced.

14-17. *Notwithstanding, you have done well, that you did communicate with my affliction. Now you Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desired a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*

Their liberality was set down to their account in God’s book.

18, 19. *But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

It is Paul’s God who took care of the Philippians; and it is Paul’s God who will take care of you and me: “My God,” says Paul, “shall supply all your need—not as you have supplied mine, out of your poverty, but according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Do any of you know the measure of this immeasurable text, “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”? Do not imagine that you will ever exhaust God’s riches in glory, or drain the national treasury of all-sufficiency; that cannot be.

20. *Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

He blesses us; let us bless Him. He supplies all our need according to His riches in glory; let us extol his glory forever and ever.

21. *Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.*

Give him a shake of the hand. Say, “How are you, my brother? I wish you well.” These hearty salutations ought to be common in every Christian assembly. I always deprecate that wonderful respectability that exists in some places of worship, where nobody knows anybody else; they are too respectable to become acquainted with their brethren. If you are in Christ Jesus, get to know one another. “Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.”

21, 22. *The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.*

I suppose most of these were only slaves in the imperial household. There may have been one or two, perhaps, of a higher class; but, in all probability, the gospel first reached the slaves in the Roman palace, that pandemonium of vice, where lust and cruelty abounded. There were saints even there; and God still has some of His jewels lying on dunghills.

23. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

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