

Series: God Is Near #1630

Title: Philippians 4.4-9

Know, Pray, Think

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Welcome back. Over the last couple of weeks we have been talking about the fact that God is near. We have spoken of the immensity and of the omnipresence of the Living God. He is present to you, my friend. Wherever you are today and in whatever circumstances you find yourself, God is near. I hope knowing this is a blessing and an encouragement to you. And in a few moments I want to return to our text and offer more.

If you have your Bible with you, open it to Philippians chapter 4. (Philippians 4.) And as we exit the theological reflection we have given to God's omnipresence, I want to share with you how even ancient pagan people understood the reality that God is the God who is near. Listen, if you would, to these. The first, and best, comes to us from Trismegistus purported to write the ancient work *Hermetica*. Quote, "God is a circle whose center is everywhere but His circumference nowhere (*Hermetica*, 1:324)." Let me say that again, because you will have to think about this. But once you get it, you'll be amazed at how well said this is, and accurate. "God is a circle whose center is everywhere but His circumference nowhere." I love that!

Virgil the Roman poet wrote this, "God they say, pervades all things, earth and the sea's expanse and heaven's depth (*Georgics* 4.221)." And Seneca the Stoic philosopher of ancient Rome said this, "Wherever you turn yourself, there you will meet [God]; no place is without Him; He fills His own work (*De Beneficiis*, 4.8.2)." These men understood God accurately on this point, His omnipresence. God is everywhere present. And if they got this right, men who were not godly, how much more so should we who revere the Scriptures and believe in God and worship Him understand what it means that God is near. So, I hope, having been with us you will be able to articulate what the immensity and omnipresence of God means.

"God is a circle whose center is everywhere but His circumference nowhere." "God they say, pervades all things, earth and the sea's expanse and heaven's depth." "Wherever you turn yourself, there you will meet [God]; no place is without Him; He fills His own work."

And now I am reading Philippians chapter 4, verses 4-9, "**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!** ⁵ **Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.** ⁶ **Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.** ⁷ **And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** ⁸ **Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."**

Please notice that in verse 5 we read "The Lord is near." And then what follows at the beginning of verse 6 are these words, "Be anxious for nothing..." The Apostle Paul makes a very clear connection. Because the Lord is near, be anxious for nothing. This is a very pastoral statement. And this is very applicable to our lives at present. Many of us are anxious people. But knowing the Lord is near must take all our anxieties, worries, and fears away. And I see three primary ways that this text encourages us to deal with what troubles us.

First, know that the Lord is near. And you now have assurance of this from our study. Second, pray. And third, think. Let me show you where I see that we should pray and where I see that we should think. Prayer is here: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Friends, pray to God who is near. Over on *Thru the Bible* with Dr. J. Vernon McGee he quotes this from Fenelon, a saint and mystic of the 16 and 1700s. I love this and pass it along to you now, especially if you have not heard it before.

“Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one’s heart, its pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may sober them; tell Him your longings, that He may purify them; tell Him your dislikes, that He may help you to conquer them; talk to Him of your temptations, that He may shield you from them; show Him the wounds of your heart, that He may heal them; lay bare your indifference to good, your depraved tastes for evil, your instability. Tell Him how self-love makes you unjust to others, how vanity tempts you to be insincere, how pride disguises you to yourself as to others.

If you thus pour out all your weaknesses, needs, troubles, there will be no lack of what to say. You will never exhaust the subject. It is continually being renewed. People who have no secrets from each other never want for subjects of conversation. They do not weigh their words, for there is nothing to be held back; neither do they seek for something to say. They talk out of the abundance of the heart, without consideration, just what they think. Blessed are they who attain to such familiar, unreserved intercourse with God.” That was Fenelon on prayer.

First, pray. And second, think. Here is this in the text. Philippians 4, verse 8, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” You hear it: “dwell on these things.” The Greek form of this word “to dwell on” makes it a command. We are commanded to do this. And the meaning here is to evaluate, to consider, and to calculate. Our minds are to think about what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, what is excellent and worthy of praise. And if we will do this, we will (verse 7) have “the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, (that) will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The problem a lot of Christians have is that we do not think! We do not use our minds to dwell on these things. And so we are inundated with anxious and worrisome and nervous thoughts that rule us and drive us to despair. We need right thinking. Jesus, over in Matthew chapter 6, verses 25-34 addresses anxiety. Listen to Him, **“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?**

²⁷ And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸ And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹ yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! ³¹ Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments, “Faith, according to our Lord’s teaching in this paragraph, is primarily thinking; and the whole trouble with a man of little faith is that he does not think. He allows circumstances to bludgeon him. That is the real difficulty in life. Life comes to us with a club in its hand and strikes us upon the head, and we become incapable of thought, helpless and defeated. The way to avoid that, according to our Lord, is to think...Christian faith is essentially thinking...

The trouble with most people, however, is that they will not think. Instead of doing this, they sit down and ask, What is going to happen to me? What can I do? That is the absence of thought; it is surrender, it is defeat. Our Lord, here, is urging us to think, and to think in a Christian manner. That is the very essence of faith (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 2:129-130).” End quote.

If we want the peace of God, then we have to know the Lord is near, we have to pray, and we have to think. I encourage us towards this. And I will be praying for you, that knowing God is near, you will have peace that passes all comprehension.

A reminder you can get this entire series on our website anytime, plus each day's manuscript with all the quotations. Just visit godisministry.org and click on the series title *God Is Near*. Godisministry.org. Share these with a friend. And join us next time as we continue to discover who God is.

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