

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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FROM ANXIETY

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Living Stream Ministry
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THE WAY TO BE FREED FROM ANXIETY

ONE WITH THE LORD

[Philippians 4:4-7](#) speaks of living a life full of forbearance but without anxiety. To have such a living we need to live Christ ([Phil. 1:21](#)). If we live Christ, we are truly one with the Lord. In [Philippians 4:4](#) Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” To rejoice in the Lord is to be one with Him. When we are one with the Lord, we are not anxious about anything, for we are not only under the Lord’s sovereign hand, but we are in the Lord Himself. If we live this kind of life, how could we be anxious? The more we practice being one with the Lord, the more we shall realize that His destiny is our destiny. If He wants us to stay on earth for a longer period of time, He will keep us alive. But if it is His desire that we go to Him, He will take us to Himself. Since everything depends on His will and since we are one with Him in a practical way, there is no reason for us to be anxious.

When we are separated from the Lord, we are anxious about everything. Everything in human life gives rise to anxiety. But when we are one with the Lord, we are separated from the natural human life and its anxiety. If we would make our forbearance known to all men and not be anxious in anything, we need to practice being one with the Lord. This is the reason Paul charges us to rejoice in the Lord before he exhorts us to make known our forbearance.

We become anxious whenever we are not one with the Lord in a practical way. Doctrinally speaking, we are always one with Him. However, quite often we are not one with Him in practice.

Even though Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he was not anxious about anything, because he was one with the Lord actually, practically, and thoroughly. He could even say that to die was better than to live. Paul was so one with the Lord that he knew that the Lord was his destiny. Not only was Paul's destiny in the hand of the Lord—his destiny was the Lord Himself. Because Paul was one with the Lord, he knew that Satan could not do anything to him, even though he might send a messenger, a thorn in the flesh, to buffet him. Paul was not worried about what Satan might do, for the Lord was his destiny.

THE SECRET OF SATISFACTION

If we are truly one with the Lord in our experience and something negative happens to us, we need not be anxious or troubled. If we are not one with the Lord in a practical way, virtually every person, every matter, and every thing will bother us. We may be disturbed by our husband or wife or by our children. When we are not one with the Lord, nothing will be satisfactory to us. For example, apart from the Lord, no job is satisfying. The secret of satisfaction is to be one with Christ. When we are one with the Lord, we can be satisfied with our circumstances, and we can be forbearing with everyone, everything, and every matter. Only when we are one with Christ can we be forbearing to the uttermost and be satisfied in all situations.

If we would not have any anxiety, we must recognize that all afflictions, sufferings, calamities, disasters, and catastrophes are assigned by God. We also must be one with the Lord in our experience. Yes, we may realize the necessity of passing through suffering and affliction. But if we would be free from anxiety, we need something more than this realization. We must also be one with the Lord. Otherwise, eventually our

circumstances or the things which happen to us will cause anxiety, and we shall not be satisfied with anything or anyone.

The older a person becomes, the more difficult it is for him to be satisfied. Throughout the years I have observed a good number of elderly persons who did not have Christ. The older they were, the more dissatisfied they became. Some were disgusted with almost everything and everyone. If we do not practice being one with the Lord, our situation will also become worse as we grow older. Out of a feeling of dissatisfaction, we may blame our circumstances or the members of our family. It is easy to satisfy a child or a young person, but difficult to satisfy someone who is older. This fact should motivate us to be one with the Lord in a practical way that we may be free from anxiety and have a life of forbearance.

PRAYER AND PETITION WITH THANKSGIVING

In Philippians 4:6 and 7 Paul says, “In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.” It is significant

that in 4:6 Paul does not speak of prayer, petition, *and* thanksgiving, but of prayer and petition *with* thanksgiving. Both our prayer and petition should be accompanied by thanksgiving to the Lord.

Suppose a brother prays that the Lord will change his wife. If he prays in this way, the Lord may ask him why he does not offer thanks for his wife. Then the brother should pray, “Lord, I thank You for giving me a good wife.” After offering thanks to the Lord, he then may proceed to ask Him to transform his wife.

Another brother may lose his job and pray to the Lord concerning employment. Instead of saying, “Lord, I have lost my job and I need You to have mercy on me,” he should first thank the Lord. Perhaps he should say, “Lord, I thank You that I did not lose this job before now. Lord, I also thank You for the means I still have to support my family. O Lord, I have many things for which to thank You.” Then along with his thanksgiving, he may ask the Lord to give him another job. But even as he prays concerning a new job, he should still be thankful and say, “Lord, I believe that You will give me a new job. Lord, You know what I need. I even thank You ahead of time for the job You will give me.”

Let us all learn to pray and petition with thanksgiving. If we are thankful to the Lord, this will keep us from anxiety. But if we pray to the Lord out of worry, our anxiety will increase. Praying about our situation may actually cause our anxiety to grow. But if we pray and petition with thanksgiving, our anxiety will be driven away.

ACCEPTING THE LORD'S WILL

To overcome anxiety we need to pray and have fellowship with the Lord and worship Him. Then with thanksgiving we need to make our petitions known. When we do this, we may think that the Lord will always answer us and give us what we ask. However, sometimes the Lord will say “no.” Consider Paul’s experience of the thorn in the flesh. In [2 Corinthians 12:8](#) he says, “Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.” However, the Lord denied Paul’s request, and said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness” ([v. 9](#)). Therefore, Paul could declare, “Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me.” The crucial point here is that Paul accepted the will of God. He realized that God’s will was to leave

the thorn with him so that he could experience His sufficient grace. Because Paul accepted the Lord's will, he did not have any anxiety.

Yes, we need to pray and petition the Lord with thanksgiving. But when the Lord does not grant our petition, our anxiety may increase instead of decrease. At such a time, we realize that the Lord will not change our situation. Instead, He allows the “thorn” to remain. He knows that we need the thorn. He also needs it that He may reveal His sufficient grace and in addition train us to trust in Him. If we do not accept the Lord's will but insist on making petitions according to our own will, we shall not be able to escape anxiety.

Suppose you pray to the Lord when you are suffering from a certain illness. The Lord may answer your prayer and heal you. He does this especially on behalf of those who are rather young in their experience of Him. At a later time, however, you may again become sick and ask the Lord to heal you. Instead of healing you suddenly, He may heal you gradually, or He may not heal you at all. Eventually, it may become clear to you that the Lord intends for the illness to remain. If you accept His will in the matter, you will be at peace. You will not have any anxiety.

When Brother Watchman Nee was a young

man, he suffered from heart disease. Often when he ministered the Word, he was in such pain that he had to lean on a stand for support. Although he contracted this disease before he was thirty years of age, he lived with that illness for nearly forty years. Although he knew that he could die from that disease at any time, he accepted the Lord's will and was not anxious. He realized that his illness was a thorn given him for the fulfillment of God's purpose.

Accepting the Lord's will in particular matters not only enables us to experience His sufficient grace; it also teaches us to have a life of trusting the Lord. If the thorn had been taken away from Paul, Paul probably would not have trusted in the Lord as much as he did with the thorn. Simply because the thorn was allowed to remain, day by day Paul had to live a life of trusting in the Lord.

We all prefer that hardships and sufferings be taken away from us. But sometimes the Lord will say, "No, I cannot answer your request. It is better for this thing to remain so that you may learn to trust Me and not be anxious." If we accept the Lord's will and trust Him, we shall not be anxious. However, if we do not accept His will or if we do not live by trusting in Him, we shall be anxious.

A PROPER REALIZATION

Whether or not we can exercise forbearance in difficult situations depends on the kind of realization and practice we have. If we realize that a particular situation is of the Lord, that it is needed to perfect us, and then thank Him for it, we shall not be anxious or threatened. We shall be able to say, “Lord, I thank You for this. I am not threatened by this thing, because I know that I am one with You and that everything which comes to me is Your assignment. Lord, I also know that You allow this thing to remain that it may help You to fulfill Your purpose and to perfect me.” If we realize that everything is the Lord’s assignment and if we accept His will and thank Him for it, we shall be able to say with Paul, “Wherefore we do not lose heart, but if indeed our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is being renewed day by day. For our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory” ([2 Cor. 4:16-17](#)). Then we shall not have any anxiety.

SIX POINTS TO UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE

If we would be free from anxiety, we need

to understand and practice six points. First, we need to realize that just as anxiety is the totality of the human life, so forbearance is the totality of the Christian life. Second, we need to see that the source of forbearance is God and that the source of anxiety is Satan.

The third matter is to realize that forbearance and anxiety cannot exist together. The reason for this is that forbearance is actually a person, Christ Himself. Only when Christ is lived out of us do we have forbearance. This is indicated by the fact that in [Philippians 1, 2, and 3](#) Paul speaks of Christ again and again. He emphasizes magnifying Christ, taking Christ as our pattern, and pursuing Christ as our goal. But in [Philippians 4](#) he uses the term forbearance and charges us to make our forbearance known to all men. Actually, this forbearance is the very Christ revealed in the foregoing chapters. Therefore, to let our forbearance be known is to live Christ.

We have seen that God may assign certain sufferings to us. But although the sufferings are God's assignment, they do not come from God, but from Satan. The experiences of both Job and Paul illustrate this. The calamities assigned to us by God actually come to us from Satan. Satan is the messenger who brings these things

to us. God assigned a certain thorn to Paul, and He permitted Satan to bring the thorn to him. Immediately after sending us a certain difficulty or affliction, Satan comes to cause anxiety. This anxiety is not assigned by God and it does not come from Him. On the contrary, it is always caused by Satan to frustrate God's purpose. If we have a full realization of this, we shall see the need for Christ as our forbearance. If we have this forbearance, we shall not have anxiety. But if we have anxiety, we shall not have forbearance.

The fourth matter we need to understand and exercise is that to have a life full of forbearance but without anxiety, we need to be one with the Lord in a practical way. To be one with the Lord experientially is to be in Him.

Fifth, we need to pray. Prayer does not mean merely to ask the Lord for things. Prayer involves conversing with the Lord, communicating with Him in fellowship, and worshipping Him. As we spend time with the Lord in this way, we should make known our petitions with thanksgiving.

Sixth, after praying, having fellowship with the Lord, worshipping Him, and making our petitions known to Him, we shall know what the will of the Lord is. For example, if we are ill, we shall

know whether the Lord intends to heal us or allow the sickness to remain. Once we know God's will, we should accept it, experience His sufficient grace, trust in Him, and thank Him. Then we shall have a life full of forbearance but without anxiety.

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