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CAN YOU REALLY “BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING”???

Philippians 4:6-7(KJV Schofield)

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Introduction: “One of My Favorite Verses”

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Philippians 4:6-7, **“Be anxious 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 passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”** If I can zip through that first phrase, “Be anxious for nothing”, the rest of it’s a breeze, but, oh, those first few words!

Can you really “be anxious for nothing”? And, if I **am** anxious for something, does that mean that there’s something wrong with me as a follower of Jesus Christ? Would you, please, find Philippians 4:6-7 in your copy of the Bible?(*read Scripture*).

I. A FIRST LOOK AT PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

A. Some Key Words

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“be anxious for”/“be careful for”(KJV)/“don’t worry about”(HCSB):

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From somewhere, I’m hearing Bobby McFerrin’s hit from 1988, “Don’t worry, be happy”. Is that what’s being called for in a follower of Jesus? The original Greek language word for “anxious” will help us here. It means to “stop being anxious”, “stop being distracted”, “stop debating anxiously”. Two things here: “stop”-assumes that it’s natural for a person to begin to react to some things this way; but, then you need to stop debating with yourself(and with others) over it, before it becomes a distraction.

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“by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving”:

What’s being called for in a follower of Jesus is to talk to God, with “supplication”-that’s a word that’s closely related to “requests”; in other words, to the degree of begging(absolute dependence upon the Lord); and do so with “thanksgiving”, absolute trust in Him(as a follower of Jesus, you’re always in the position of being thankful, whether for blessings God has already given you, blessings He’s giving you right now, and/or blessings He’s going to give you in the future)!

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“be made known unto God”:

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Do we really need to do this, when, in Matthew 6:8, Jesus said, **“your Father knows what you need before you ask Him”**? The original Bible language word for “be made known” may also be translated as “declare”. When you go through customs to enter another country, the officials ask you to “declare” what you’re bringing in: tell them what you’ve got. Sure, they can see for themselves, but “declaring” is an action of trust in those officials. Yes, God already knows what we need, but, when we “declare” it to Him in prayer, we’re making it official that we trust Him!

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“keep”: Or “guard”: the original Bible language word means, “to be a lookout over, like a soldier in a guard tower”.

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B. Let’s group these key words together into three thoughts:

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1. There’s something for you to be: “Be anxious for nothing”.

2. There’s something for you to do: “but in everything, by prayer and supplication with

thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God”.

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3. There’s something for you to have faith in: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”.

C. What difference does that make? How do you live that out? Can you really “be anxious for nothing”?

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T.S.: Join me, please, for some “Scripture clips” of a guy who did live that out: “Jacob”, in the Book of Genesis.

II. JACOB

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We start the story of Jacob with God’s creation of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. In Genesis 1:28, **“God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth”**. Keep that covenant promise in mind; it’s going to show up again!

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By around a thousand years later, people had gotten so bad that God did a “reboot” with mankind, bringing a flood that spared only obedient Noah and his family. After the flood, God told Noah and his family, in Genesis 8:17, **“be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth”**. There’s that covenant promise again!

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About four hundred years pass, and we meet one of Noah’s descendants, Abraham. One of the things God said to Abraham, Genesis 17:4, was, **“As for Me, My covenant is with you, and you will become the father of many nations”**, again, very similar to what He said to both Adam and Eve, and to Noah and his family.

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Abraham was the father of Isaac, then Isaac, with his wife, Rebekah, had twin boys, Esau and Jacob. Genesis 25:22 says of her pregnancy, **“But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, ‘Why is this happening to me?’”**.

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It was just a foretaste of what was to come. “Jacob” means “heel grabber” or “supplanter”. Esau was born first, but as he came into the world, Jacob was hanging on to his heel, as if he wanted to supplant---take the place of---Esau as the firstborn child. Later, when Esau came home incredibly hungry one day, and asked his brother to share a stew he had made, Jacob said, in Genesis 25:31, **“First sell me your birthright”**. Again, as their father, Isaac, was nearing death, Jacob tricked him into giving him the bigger blessing that rightfully belonged to the firstborn son, Esau. Covering himself with goatskins, Jacob was able to deceive his father, whose eyesight was failing, into believing he was his hairier brother. When he found

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out what Jacob had done, Genesis 27:41 says, **“Esau held a grudge against Jacob”**, and promised that, one day, **“I will kill my brother Jacob.”**

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Despite all this, God said to Jacob, in Genesis 28:14, **“Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out toward the west, the east, the north, and the south. All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.”** Ah, there’s the covenant promise again!

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Later, it was Jacob who was on the receiving end of a trick. Having worked for Laban for seven years, to earn his daughter Rachel’s hand in marriage, he gave Jacob her older sister, instead! Genesis 29:25 says, **“When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, ‘What is this that you have done to me? Wasn’t it for Rachel that I worked for you? Why have you deceived me?’”**

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After seven more years of work, Jacob did get to marry Rachel. But, there would continue to be trouble between him, Laban, and both of his daughters. Genesis 30:2 is but one example of the tension that existed in their household: **“Jacob became angry with Rachel and said, ‘Am I in God’s place, who has withheld children from you?’”**

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But, God had not deserted Jacob. God wrestled with him all night on Mount Penueel. At daybreak, Genesis 32:28 tells us that God told him, **“‘Your name will no longer be Jacob,’ He said. ‘It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.’”** Jacob would walk with a limp for the rest of his life, due to this encounter, but he would forever be seen as the father of the nation of Israel.

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Soon after, Jacob met Esau for the first time in many years, the first time since he stole his brother’s birthright. What would Esau do? Would he make good on his promise to kill Jacob? Genesis 33:4 says, **“But Esau ran to meet him, hugged him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. Then they wept.”**

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But, on the heels of joy came another tragedy. In Genesis 34:2, a terrible thing happened to Jacob and Leah’s daughter, Dinah: **“When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, a prince of the region, saw her, he took her and raped her.”** Jacob’s sons retaliated, without his knowledge, by slaughtering Shechem and all the rest of the males in his family.

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In Genesis 35:2, Jacob made an act of repentance, calling upon his family, **“Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves”**.

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But, tragedy soon struck again. The rest of Jacob’s sons were resentful towards his favorite, Joseph. They wanted to kill him, but, instead, sold him into slavery in Egypt, yet told Jacob he had been killed by a wild animal. Genesis 37:34 says, **“Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth around his waist, and mourned for his son many days.”**

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God had plans for Joseph, and blessed him to become the second-most-powerful man in all of Egypt, as he stockpiled food that got not only the Egyptians through seven years of famine, but made him the “go-to” guy for food for the rest of the world...all this without his father and brothers knowing it was him. Jacob sent his sons to him, in Genesis 42:2, **“I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us so that we will live and not die.”**

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Joseph recognized his brothers, but, instead of paying back their wickedness, he gave them food; however, he required that one of them, Simeon, stay with him as “insurance”. Also, they were to bring back with them Joseph’s full brother, Benjamin, who, being the youngest, hadn’t made the trip to Egypt. Genesis 42:36 says, **“Their father Jacob said to them, ‘You have deprived me of my sons. Joseph is gone and Simeon is gone. Now you want to take Benjamin. Everything happens to me!’”** Still, Jacob took a risk and a step of faith, and let

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Benjamin go, saying, in Genesis 43:14, **“May God Almighty cause the man to be merciful to you so that he will release your other brother and Benjamin to you. As for me, if I am deprived of my sons, then I am deprived.”**

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Jacob would know great joy, when Joseph finally revealed his true identity to his brothers, and they brought the good news back to their father. He said, in Genesis 45:28, **“Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go see him before I die.”** And, he, along with all of his family, moved to Egypt. God said to Jacob, in Genesis 46:3, **“I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.”**

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Jacob met Pharoah, in Genesis 47:7: **“Joseph then brought his father Jacob and presented him before Pharoah, and Jacob blessed Pharoah.”** He blessed the children Joseph had had in Egypt, in Genesis 48:11, **“I never expected to see your face again, but now God has even let me see your offspring.”** As his life was coming to a close, in Genesis 49:1, **“Jacob called his sons and said, ‘Gather around, and I will tell you what will happen to you in the days to come.’** For some, he predicted good times, but, for others, the opposite: definitely, a “mixed blessing”.

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Jacob made Joseph promise that he would see to it that he be buried, back home. In Genesis 50:7, he kept that promise: **“Then Joseph went to bury his father, and all Pharoah’s servants, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt went with him”.**

Our final Scripture clip of Jacob deals with what happened to his family, after he passed away. Joseph’s brothers feared that now he would pay them back for what they had done to him. Joseph’s forgiveness; however, was genuine, full, and forever, as he told them, in Genesis 50:19-20, **“Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result---the survival of many people.”**

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T.S.: What does the incredible life of this one follower of the Lord long ago tell us about how to follow the Lord without anxiety today?

III. ANOTHER LOOK AT PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

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A. Jacob...

1. Had some good times

a. Some of these were his doing

- 1) He got his family to get rid of their idols to foreign gods
- 2) He took the risk of trusting God and moving his family to Egypt
- 3) He blessed Pharoah

b. Some of these were not his doing

- 1) Esau forgave him
- 2) His son Joseph was restored to him
- 3) His family was well taken care of in their new home

2. Had some bad times

a. Some of these were his doing(cheating his brother out of his birthright...twice)

b. Some of these were not his doing

- 1) Laban pulling the wife switcheroo with Leah & Rachel
- 2) Losing his son Joseph
- 3) His daughter being molested, then his sons committing mass murder

3. Had some struggles that went on and on and on

a. With his brother

b. With his two wives and their father

c. With the “mixed bag” future of his sons

4. Had some circumstances that were simply the difficulties of life(the famine)

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5. Yet, none of this changed the fact that he could completely, always trust in God

- a. He came into this world with a promise from God that had stood solid for generations”You will become a great nation”

- b. God reaffirmed that same promise to him("Israel")
- c. God gave never revoked it, no matter how well nor how poorly Jacob obeyed Him(at the end of his life, in the last chapter of Genesis, he is still called "Israel")

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B. Philippians 4:6-7

1. There's something for you to BE: "be anxious for nothing"

No matter how good; no matter how bad; no matter how happy; no matter how sad; no matter how exciting; no matter how exasperating; no matter how worrying(and, like Jacob, we, too, will have plenty to worry about), there comes a point where we must stop debating with ourselves about it, stop being distracted by it, and stop being anxious about it, and go on with what God has given us to be and do in this life.

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2. There's something for you to DO: "in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God".

It was in his all-night wrestling match with the Lord that Jacob really got to know God. A prayer is simply a set of words that you say to God. PRAYER is intense, regular, deep communion(that is, spending quality time with God), and, sometimes, it's painful, because God is at work in it to make changes in our lives. Jacob's night of wrestling with God left him with a limp for the rest of his life, but it also left him with this, in Genesis 32:30, "**I have seen God face to face, and I have been delivered.**" And, we can be delivered(rescued), too!

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3. There's something for you to HAVE FAITH IN: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Yes, as a follower of Jesus Christ, you really CAN be "anxious for nothing", no matter what you're going through, no matter what it's putting you through, because it doesn't depend on you...except for your concept of Who God is: this is what's going to decide whether or not you're going to go to Him with everything, therefore, whether or not you will be "anxious for nothing".

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Francis Chan, in his 2013 book, **Crazy Love: Overwhelmed By A Relentless God**, wrote: "Worry implies that we don't quite trust that God is big enough, powerful enough, or loving enough to take care of what's happening in our lives. Stress says that the things we're involved in are important enough to merit our impatience, our lack of grace toward others, or our tight grip of control."(page 44)

C. So, is God big enough, powerful enough, and loving enough?

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1. Revelation 1:8-"I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'the One Who is, Who was, and Who is coming, the Almighty'"

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2. Acts 17:28-"For in Him we live, and move, and have our being"

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3. Jeremiah 29:11-"For I know the plans I have for you'---this is the Lord's declaration--- 'plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope'"

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4. Romans 8:28-"We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose"

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5. Jesus, in Matthew 7:9-11, "What man among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?"

Conclusion: Edward Mote's "The Solid Rock"(verse 2)

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“Be anxious 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, will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”, from Philippians 4:6-7, is one of my favorite Bible verses. Here’s one of my favorite hymn verses, from Edward Mote’s “The Solid Rock”:

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“When darkness seems to hide His face, I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev’ry high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

I feel anxiety. I know that means I should go to God about it. Sometimes, that’s easier said than done. Sometimes, I struggle with putting absolute faith in God. But, thanks be to God, because I belong to Him, He is always faithful to me: even in my struggling, He is at work to bring me to absolute faith in Him. So, yes, you really can be “anxious for nothing”!

Would you, today, start following Jesus(yes, I’m asking you to become a Christian!)?
If you’ve already done that, would you, today, start really spending some deep, quality time with the Lord(yes, I’m asking you to wrestle with Him!)?

Will you, today, no matter what you’re going through, and no matter what it’s putting you through, trust God that He is keeping you, and will keep on keeping you, safe in

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Christ Jesus(yes, I’m asking you to believe I Peter 5:7, **“cast all your care upon Him, because He cares for you”!**)?