

## Providence and Politics

Don't forget the call to worship at both services...

### Prayer:

### Introduction:

Every four years, Americans have the habit of saying, "This is the most important election in our nation's history." While it is hard to prove that Tuesday's election is the most important election in our nation's history, it is very significant. Why? The divide between our nation's two major political parties has never been wider. Meaning there are significant implications for many of us no matter who wins on Tuesday.

We are divided on...

The sanctity of human life  
The definition of marriage  
The LGBTQ agenda  
The extent of religious liberty  
The role of the courts  
Sex education in the schools  
Immigration  
America's role in the world  
Socialism verses Capitalism

Many of us are increasingly concerned about our nation's future. Sometimes our concern turns into anxiety. Anxiety often keeps us up at night and rob us of joy. More importantly, it dishonors God!

Let me ask you a question? Are you anxious about Tuesday?

When anxiety strikes what should we do? This brings us to Phil 4:6-7. Paul's message in these verses is crystal clear. Christians must not be anxious about anything, ever! Including politics.

These verses can be divided up into three sections-

*The command*  
*The actions*  
*The result*

### First, the command

**What is the command? Don't be anxious!**

**Philippians 4:6 (ESV) 6 do not be anxious about anything,...**

This is an incredible command, especially when we consider that it comes from the apostle Paul. From a human perspective had much to be anxious about. He wrote these words from a Roman prison cell awaiting trial. Before prison he had a bounty on his head.

Notice what Paul, inspired by the holy Spirit does not say... he does not say, "do not be anxious about anything...."

Unless your life is in danger  
Unless you are really sick  
Unless you just lost your job  
Unless your flat broke  
Unless your worst enemies want to torture you.  
Unless you are about to go to prison for being a Christian...

Unless your nation is increasingly divided and unraveling at the seams.

He simply says, “do not be anxious about anything...” period. What does anything mean? It means anything....

In other words, nothing (no-thing) should ever cause us to be sinfully anxious.

Notice that I said sinful anxiety. Not all anxiety is sinful, Jesus was anxious in the garden when he sweat great drops of blood. With that said, righteous anxiety is about as rare as righteous anger.

How do we know if we have crossed the line from healthy concern to anxiety? We have crossed that line when thinking about that thing ruins our joy and peace.

*What is the command? Do not be anxious...*

**What is the basis for the command?** God is sovereign!

This text does not mention the sovereignty of God, but it does not need to because the sovereignty of God is everywhere in the Bible. When theologians say that God is sovereign, they mean that God controls all things.

I want to focus specifically on the sovereignty of God and politics. One author makes the point that one of the most frequent references to sovereignty in the Bible is God’s sovereignty over the nations. (Bridges, 75) **There are at least 40** verses in Scripture dealing with this topic. (Bridges, 76)

Here is a quick sampling...

*God is sovereign over the installation of rulers*

**Daniel 2:21 (ESV) — 21** He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

**John 19:11 (ESV) — 11** Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

**Romans 13:1 (ESV) — 1** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

**Romans 13:4 (ESV) — 4** for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.

**Psalms 75:6–7 (ESV) — 6** For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, **7** but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.

(see also Dan. 4:17, 25, 32, Ex. 9:16)

God is sovereign over the decisions of rulers

**Proverbs 21:1 (ESV) — 1** The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

(see also Prov. 16:33)

We could also talk about the fact that ...

God uses rulers to carry out his purposes (Isa. 44:28, 45:1)

God is sovereign over the outcome of military battles (Proverbs 21:31)

God is sovereign over every detail of the universe (Eph. 1:11)

God is sovereign. In other words, God is in control of the upcoming elections. Yet the Bible is also clear that God is not the author of evil.

*What is the basis for this command? God is sovereign.*

**What is another basis for this command? God is good.**

If God was in control but not good, we would have plenty of reason to be stressed out. Hitler was in control of Germany during the early 1940s but there was plenty to be stressed about because he was an evil man.

Not only is God in control, but he is also good. God is so good that he sent his son to die in our place.

I'm not good at math. I remember being stressed out in math from about 7<sup>th</sup> grade on. But I can do some theological math. Here is some really important theological math...

Believing in *God's Providence + God's goodness = a life of joy and peace.*

These are Paul's assumptions in Phil 4:6-7

*What is the basis for this command? God is sovereign and God is good.*

**What is another basis for this command? Life is short!**

**James 4:14 (ESV) — 14** yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

**Psalms 39:4 (ESV) — 4** "O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!"

Life is short! Someday you will be in heaven!!!

**Application:**

God may give us a horrible president. Someone like Nero. This horrible despot may appoint judges to the supreme court who completely disregard the constitution. This may lead to the loss of religious freedoms and many other horrible things. We still have nothing to fear.

God is in control and he is using all things for our good and his glory. Including despotic presidents and rogue supreme courts.

Life may get very, very, very hard... health care costs may skyrocket, the markets may collapse, we may lose freedom, we may find ourselves embroiled in civil war.

But God is still in control and God is good and he will use all things for our good. But we may not know what that good is until the life to come.

The great hymn, *God moves in a mysterious way* captures this well,

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flow'r.

We are commanded not to be anxious, but is there anything we are supposed to do? Yes, this brings us to the second point.

*First, the command*

## **Second, the activities**

**Philippians 4:6 (ESV)** — 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Instead of being anxious God calls us to engage in two activities- prayer and thanksgiving.

### **Prayer...**

“but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

Paul tells us to pray and supplicate, that is ask him to do certain things.

What should we ask him to do in our current political climate?

**1 Timothy 2:1–2 (ESV)** — 1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

We can...

Pray that our leaders would uphold righteousness  
Pray that our leaders would act with integrity  
Pray that our leaders would fear God  
Pray that our leaders would allow us to lead peaceful and quiet lives

*Prayer is the first activity, but there is another activity he calls us to...*

**Thanksgiving...**

**Philippians 4:6 (ESV) — 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**

We have so much to be thankful for...

Hopefully, you can feel the apostle Paul standing behind you and saying... why are you complaining???

Roughly 108 billion people have lived in world history. Close to half of them have been slaves. You live in the top 2% of world history.

You live in a democracy  
You have health care  
You get to vote  
You get to take warm showers  
You have electricity  
No one has thrown you in prison for following Jesus  
You have a system of courts (you have the ability to appeal your speeding tickets)  
You have a constitution  
You are not living hand to mouth  
You probably have money in the bank

98% of world history's population experienced none of these things. 105 billion people experienced none of these things.

We can also give thanks no matter who gets elected because God will accomplish all of his purposes... (Rom. 8:28)

We can give thanks no matter who gets elected because the gates of hell will not prevail against the church... (Matt. 16:18)

We can give thanks because on the day of judgment God will hold all rulers and nations accountable for their actions. (Isa. 13-23, Jer. 46-51, Ezek. 25-32, Amos 1-2, Hab. 2, Zeph. 2)

Most importantly we can give thanks that there is ultimately only one sovereign and his name is Jesus.

**Psalms 103:19 (ESV) — 19 The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.**

**One scholar writes,**

**“Elections come and go. Coups and revolts come and go. Legislative sessions come and go. We watch news reports with bated breath, waiting and wondering. We send our letters and make our phone calls, pleading**

with our representatives to obey God's commands. We fret and we worry as election results trickle in. We grumble like Habakkuk at the throne of God. We forget that whether it is the Chaldeans or the Clintonians, whether it is the governor of Judea or the governor of our own state, none is mightier than the Mighty one." (Sproul Jr. 83)

Trump and Biden will come and go.  
The democrats and the Republicans will come and go.  
Our constitution will come and go.  
America will come and go.

But King Jesus reigns forever and nothing can stop the expansion of his kingdom and for this we can be thankful.

The communists have tried to stamp out the church in China for several decades and it has only grown.

### **Application:**

This passage gives us two activities... instead of being anxious we must pray and give thanks.

One scholar writes, "The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything."

When we participate in these activities, what is the result? This brings us to the last point.

*The command*  
*The activities*

### **Third, the result**

**What is the result of prayer and thanksgiving? Peace that surpasses understanding!**

**Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV) — 6** do not be anxious about anything, 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 understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Instead of being anxious we are to do two things- pray and give thanks. As a result of doing these two things something amazing happens. We experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding and it guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

What exactly is the peace of God that surpasses all understanding? Since it surpasses all understanding it is hard to describe. But we can say this...

This peace is rooted in the character of God (he is sovereign and good)  
This peace is the opposite of anxiety  
This peace is capable of guarding our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus from the crippling effects of anxiety.

### **Application:**

I want this peace... do you want this peace? It is supernatural. We can't drum this up. If you have not experienced it, I can't describe it for you, if you have experienced it you know what I'm talking about.

Trying to describe this peace is like trying to describe falling in love, or trying to describe what you feel

while watching the sunset while sitting on a sandy beach in Hawaii, or trying to describe what you feel when you listen to Handel's Messiah, or trying to describe what you feel when you hear Louis Armstrong play the trumpet.

But Dave you don't understand my circumstances??? If you did you would understand why I get anxious.

Let me remind us all that Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians while in a Roman prison cell awaiting trial. He did not have cable TV, prisoner rights, a lawyer, well balanced meals, sanitation, or a weight room. Furthermore, he had no clue whether or not he would receive a fair trial. Therefore the possibility of having his head removed from his body was very real.

Yet... in this context he talked about the peace of god, which surpasses all understanding. This means that you can experience this peace no matter who gets elected. The key to experiencing this peace is praying and giving thanks to the God of the universe who controls all things.

When this happens a supernatural peace, that defies human logic, floods our souls.

**Illustration:** Several years ago, I was very anxious... Sometimes waves of anxiety overtake us and seem to control us. I was experiencing one of those moments. I read a lot of church history, I read the news, and I track what happens on the religious freedom front. Things were changing quickly back then, and things are changing even faster now. Anyways... I was very anxious about what might happen to my family 15 years from now if I stand up for the truths of scripture.

I went for a 45-minute walk and recited Phil 4:6-7 over and over again... nothing happened at first. Peace did not flood my soul. I had to fight for peace. I started giving thanks and praying and after about 25 minutes I experienced peace as I contemplated the truths of God's providence and goodness.

Sometimes we have to fight for peace... we fight for peace through prayer and thanksgiving while casting our cares on the mercy of a good God who controls all things.

### **Conclusion:**

We have looked at three things...

*The command*

*The activates*

*The result*

Paul gives us a command... Do not be anxious about anything. None of us obey this command perfectly. Anxiety is not a little sin. When we are anxious, we are functionally saying one of two things about God. First, we are saying that God is not in control. Second, we are saying that God may be in control, but he is not good. Both of these things are blasphemous. You may not be consciously thinking blasphemous thoughts, but our anxiety reveals our true theology.

The sin of anxiety separates us from God.

Fortunately, there was one person who was never ever sinfully anxious. His name is Jesus. He was perfect, which means that he never committed the sin of anxiety. This is astonishing considering the fact that he knew what was in store for him on the cross. He knew that dying for the sins of the world was going to be incredibly painful which is why he sweat great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane beforehand.

Although he sweat blood, he was never sinfully anxious. And I can guarantee you that the temptation to do so was very real and very strong!!!

He was earning for us a perfect record of trust.

Although he was sinless, he died in our place so that we could be forgiven of the sin of anxiety along with every other sin. Furthermore, because of his perfect anxiety free life God now sees Christians as never being anxious.

Not only does the cross of Christ enable us to be forgiven of the sin of anxiety it gives us reasons to never be anxious again. How?

When we look at the cross of Christ, we see that our greatest fear has been dealt with.

The thing we should fear most is being separated from God for all eternity. Since Jesus has taken care of our greatest possible fear than surely, he will take care of every other fear.

**Romans 8:32 (ESV) — 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?**

If you are not a Christian this morning Donald Trump and Joe Biden should be the least of your fears. Yet Jesus has made a way for you to escape your greatest fears. All you need to do is admit your need for his cleansing grace and power. If he is able to take care of the thing that you should fear most then surely, he will deliver you from every other fear.

Let's pray...