

Calm My Anxious Heart

Lesson 1: God's Heart in Our Anxiety



Speaker: Carol Helland

Philippians 4:6-7

***Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication,
with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard
your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***

Saturday, January 25, 2025

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*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Test me and know my anxious thoughts. ~ Psalm 139:23*

Introduction

Anxiety and worry can harass all of us at times. There are plenty of reasons to be worried, but there are better reasons not to be. God never intended us to bear the overwhelming burden of life on our own. That's why we shouldn't be surprised that Scripture says so much about anxiety.

Anxiety comes with life, but it doesn't have to run our life. The Lord Jesus has taken our anxieties to heart without minimizing them. He has a solution—a prescription for our anxiety—a daily dose of His therapeutic Truth to calm our anxious heart.

Lesson One: God's Heart in Our Anxiety

God used the pen of the apostle Paul to write the prescription for anxiety in Philippians 4:4-8. Paul, too, had experienced anxiety, and God had calmed his heart: "*We were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless, God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us.*" ~Phil 4:4-8

Read [2 Corinthians 2:2-11; 7:5-7.](#)

Do not fret; it only causes harm (Psalm 37:8). Fretting (anxiety) does harm to our physical and mental conditions. Scripture advises: "*Be anxious for nothing.*" ~Phil 4:6

What should believers be anxious about?

Nothing—not even one thing. Paul writes this verse in the present, active tense, which implies an on-going state, so he's saying, "*Don't be in a perpetual place of anxiety or worry.*"

It's the life of perpetual worry to which Paul is referring. Paul is not writing about anxiety in a clinical sense—a cluster of physical symptoms and a physiological reaction that we treat under a doctor's advice or medication.

Anxiety in Young People

According to data from the National Institute of Mental Health, approximately 38 percent of girls and 26 percent of boys aged thirteen through seventeen suffer from anxiety. After teens got a Smart Phone, they started getting more anxious, especially girls, research reveals.

"Did you know that Philippians 4:4-8 is the most helpful passage on worry? Anxiety is not good for us; however, with Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, He can redeem something that is not good and work it all together for our spiritual good as we trust Him with our anxieties."

Definition of Anxiety

"Anxiety is a state of uneasiness and apprehension; as about future uncertainties" (The American Heritage Dictionary). It's an emotion characterized by thoughts of worry that we tend to ruminate over and over again.

Anxiety (*merimnao*) in Philippians 4 is used as a synonym for "worried," which means "to pull in different directions"—ripping apart our thoughts and feelings.

The Power of the Imagination

Anxiety is always surveying the future—looking for all the things that could possibly go wrong: "I KNOW God CAN take care of me, but WILL He take care of me?"

Anxiety says, "I think this will happen." It's part of our imagination. It's the ability to consider things that don't presently exist. Anxiety lives in the future—in living Technicolor. Scripture says we are to be casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (KJV) ~2 Corinthians 10:5

The Worry Chart

The word "worry" comes from the Old English word which means "to strangle." Worry can strangle us mentally and emotionally. How much do you worry? Constantly or occasionally? What is worrying you right now?

Concern and worry are different.

A worried person foresees a problem and a concerned person attempts to solve a problem. Fear and anxiety share similar characteristics though not the same emotion. Fear sees a threat. Anxiety *imagines* one. Fear says: "This is;" Anxiety says, "What if. . ."

Depression and anxiety are also closely related but not the same emotion.

Depression often looks at the past: "If only." Anxiety looks forward and worries about tomorrow.

God is in our tomorrows.

Take no thought for tomorrow for tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself. ~Matthew 6:34

Sometimes you lie in bed at night,
and you don't have a single thing
to worry about...
That always worries me!

Charles M. Schulz



This is the blessed life—not anxious to see far in front, nor eager to choose the path, but quietly following behind the Shepherd, one step at a time. The shepherd was always in front of the sheep. He was down in front. He is in the tomorrows. It is tomorrow that fills us with dread. God is already there. All the tomorrows of our life have to pass Him before they can get to us.

~F.B. Meyer

“Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say, rejoice.” ~Phil 4:4

Did you notice that Paul's prescription for anxiety begins with a call to rejoice? Why?

“This is what breaks my heart about worrying. It makes you miserable in the present moment—to try and present misery in the future. For chronic worriers, this process leads them to be continually stressed all their lives in order to avoid later events that never happen.

Worry sucks the joy out of the here and now.”

~Dr. Lucas LaFraneir

Whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is [s]he. ~Proverbs 16:20

Let your gentleness be known to all. ~Phil 4:5a

Why would Paul add gentleness to help with anxiety? Because we can create anxiety for ourselves and others by disagreeableness. Gentleness is one of the Fruit of the Spirit of God and means “sweet reasonableness”—an absence of a bad temper or irritability.

Paul knew that Euodia and Syntyche, who had once labored with Paul in the Gospel, now had disagreements. He urged them to be of the same mind in the Lord (Phil 4:2-3).

“A gentle spirit of Christ would reduce your anxiety,” Paul writes (Phil 4:5).

The Lord is at hand (near). ~Phil 4:5b

Paul has in mind the nearness of the Lord's Return (the Rapture). *We are looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13). This thought encourages gentleness.

Let your requests be made known to God—with thanksgiving. ~Phil 4:6

Paul gives another cure for worry, believing prayer. I recommend not to start with your anxieties when you pray. You can come out of prayer worse than when you started. Make God BIG at the beginning of your prayer. Remind yourself of what God thinks of you (Read Psalm 139.). God is bigger than any problem you will face today or tomorrow. And we are to pray with thanksgiving—thankful He hears our requests. I don't know of anyone who is thankful who is anxious.



The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ~Phil 4:7

Through rejoicing, prayer, and thanksgiving, God's peace will guard your emotions and thoughts—keeping worry out. God's peace is so personal and a gift from the Lord Jesus: “My peace I give to you.” If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you have access to His peace through the Holy Spirit to calm your anxious heart.

But you must be “in Christ Jesus” to have the peace OF God.

I would be very anxious if I did not have peace WITH God. *Since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ~Romans 5:1

Everyone is born a sinner, separated from a holy God. And sin comes with a steep penalty. It means eternal separation from God in hell—unless it is remedied.

On the Cross, Jesus personally reviewed your full list of sins and paid for each one in advance. There is not one sin you have committed or will ever commit that has not been fully paid for by Christ.

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth to take away your penalty and my penalty. If you had been the only sinner on earth, Jesus would have gone to the cross for you. He paid a debt you couldn't pay—a debt He did not owe—to pay for your sins. He was your substitute. And then He defeated death, hell, and the grave when He arose again the third day which proves that God the Father accepted the payment made by His Son.

Thankfully, our eternal destiny isn't determined by what we do. We are justified freely by God's grace. It is by grace alone, by faith alone, in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The word grace means something which is given freely without cost or obligation: Not your good works; not keeping the sacraments; asking Jesus into your heart; or giving your life to Christ.

The only way to heaven is by faith in Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross: "*I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" ~John 14:6.

Are you anxious about where you'll spend eternity?

Have you trusted in the finished work of Christ? If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Savior, that's where it all starts. You won't have the peace of God unless you have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

For God so loved you that He gave His only Son, that if you would believe on Him, you will not perish but have everlasting life.

~John 3:16

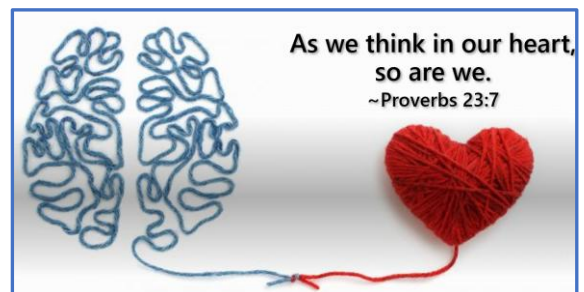
Today can be your day of salvation. And the one God saves, He keeps. The one He makes His child, He never deserts. It is a part of God's wonderful salvation—we can have a relationship with Jesus Christ. And we spend the rest of our lives realizing how rich we are in Christ—and one of these riches is His peace.

Whatever is true . . . think on these things. ~Phil 4:8

Yes, joy, prayer, and peace of God are vitally important. But God's Truth is the key to battling anxiety. Where you put your mind, what you choose to think has a lot to do with how you deal with anxiety. You select your thoughts. Make sure your mental diet is healthy for your brain.

As we think in our heart so are we. ~Prov 23:7

Scripture has a keen interest in your soul because your soul is you—your desires, imagination, thoughts, intentions. The Bible uses words like *heart, soul, mind, conscience and inner person of the heart* to describe it. We are warned to be careful what we put in our mind (our heart) because we'll preach it to ourselves as if it were true. We're in a battle—a battle for our mind.



*"The greatest conflict being waged is not international, not political, not economic, not social. The greatest conflict taking place in the world today is the battle for control of our minds."
~J. Dwight Pentecost*

God has empowered you through the Holy Spirit to help with your thoughts.

Just because you have a thought, you don't have to think it. You can take sides against yourself and say, *"This is what I feel, but this is what God says."*

Be careful what you think for out of it flow the issues of life. ~Proverbs 4:23

Do you want anxiety tomorrow? Then think about how bad your life is or how miserable you are or how everyone has it better than you do. We become what we believe. We are the sum of our thoughts.

Feelings are not facts. And thoughts are not always true.

That's why Paul gives us a description of what IS true: Things that are *honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report* (not gossip). Meditate—dwell on—these things.

Our growth in facing our anxieties is tied to our trust in the Lord.

May we come to this conclusion: I can trust my Savior who died for me. If I cannot trust Him, then whom can I trust? The Lord Jesus who loved me enough to die for me can be absolutely trusted with the total concerns of the life He had saved.

Renew Your Mind and Transform Your Life

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2).

"The Bible is the only book on the planet when you read it, it's doing something to you."

~Dr. Howard Hendricks

And that's how you transform your life—by building into your life the Word of God—and allowing the Holy Spirit to do His good and perfect work. (See Hebrews 4:12.)

Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. ~2 Corinthians 10:5

You engage those neuropathways ahead of time, so you don't fall into the deep rut of anxiety. Take thoughts captive and bring them to the Throne of Christ and leave them there. God wants us so convinced that He can handle whatever comes into our life that we don't have room to worry about anything else.

Aging can cause anxiety.

This is why we are not discouraged, though outwardly we are wearing out, inwardly we



are renewed day by day.

~2 Corinthians 4:16

Even in your old age and gray hairs I am He;

I am He who will sustain you.

~Isaiah 46:4

C: Continue to rejoice in the Lord.

A: Always pray in faith with thanksgiving.

L: Let God's peace guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

M: Meditate on God's Truth.

Conclusion

Realizing the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. ~Ephesians 1:9

We may never find the end of anxiety until we are face to face with the Lord Jesus, but God will calm our anxious heart by a new focus of attention—a preoccupation with our lovely Lord Jesus.

Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

~Matthew 11:28

We need the One who is close and compassionate.

All Your Anxiety

All your anxiety, all your care

Bring to the mercy seat, leave it there

Never a burden He cannot bear

Never a friend – like Jesus