

Anxiety and the Goodness of God, pt.1

Matthew 6:25–34

This evening we will start a new series that I think is very appropriate following the series we finished on suffering.

This new series will be on the subject of anxiety.

I believe that this is a much needed subject to unpack and get to the heart of.

So, my plan is to do an introduction the topic this evening and when I come back from vacation we will examine the biblical passages we will read later in more detail.

Permit me to read into your hearing a few statistics:

A publication indicates that some 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older are being affected by Anxiety disorders. And the number could be higher if you include children.

And according to this publication anxiety is a classified “mental illness” and is something that can be passed down genetically.

More than that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), 1 in 13 people (globally) suffers from anxiety.

And they report that anxiety disorders are the most common mental disorders worldwide.

The point in mentioning these things is that regardless of if you see anxiety as a mental illness or not, ***anxiety is affecting the lives of many people in the world!***

But if we are honest, we also know that ***anxiety is affecting the lives of many***

people in the church!

Many Christians, myself included, struggle with anxiety.

So, as we walk through this series, prepare your heart and mind to be challenged and encouraged.

Because we have to look at the underbelly of anxiety and just to forewarn you, it is not pretty!

Anxiety is and can be dangerous!

But, I want to extend this hope to you: If you struggle with anxiety, you need to know that there is a light at the end of what can seem to be a dark tunnel!

Because Christ died and rose again, there is nothing that you cannot overcome in His name and by His blood!

So, beloved there is hope. There is hope!

In this series there are three main texts we will examine in this series.

I will give them to you now and then in the coming weeks we will examine them more thoroughly.

I will start with the last text we will look at to the first one. (turn with me, I want you to see these passages.).

1 Peter 5:6–7,

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Philippians 4:4–7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness[d] be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **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.

Matthew 6:25–34

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, 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: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?[g] **28** And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

These are the texts and there is much to examine.

Each text has a nuanced perspective that if taken together gives us a complete, panoramic definition of anxiety.

According to 1 Peter 5, being anxious is tied to being arrogant.

According to Philippians 4, being anxious is tied to improper thinking.

And according to Matthew 6, being anxious is tied to a lack of faith in God.

So, if we were to combine these definitions, we would come up with something like this (and I will give you several definition):

- 1.) Anxiety is a faithless and arrogant state of thinking and feeling that is more preoccupied with a given situation than it is with God! (2x)*
- 2.) Anxiety is proactive worry that comes from a heart that does not trust God! (2x)*
- 3.) Anxiety is having overwhelming concern without reference to God! (2x)*
- 4.) Anxiety is the worshipful preoccupation with the things of this world to the exclusion of the worshipful preoccupation of God! (2x)*
- 5.) Anxiety is becoming so fixated on a particular thing or situation, real or unreal that affects you to the point where you become fearful, troubled, overwhelmed and faithless. (2x)*

Now, there are two very important truths to get as we start!

1.) **Anxiety is sinful!** (we will see why in a moment.)

To state it plainly: be anxious about anything whatsoever is to sin!

So, please understand this: anxiety is an issue of morality!

You have to understand that anxiety is not just an emotional or mental issue, it is a deeply spiritual issue.

So, to be anxious is to sin against God!

The reason it is important to highlight this out of the gate is because we live in a culture that wants to redefine and medicate sin.

And anxiety is one of those sins the culture seeks to medicate.

And if we are not careful, we, as the people of God, will begin to think that medication is the answer for something that needs to be repented of!!

Repentance is the first and most important remedy for the sin of anxiety!

If you fail to have this perspective, you may look to other resources to supply what the word of God and the Spirit of God has been given to accomplish.

Now, at this point, just as a quick aside: I know what some people could be thinking: “Should Christians take medication to help them deal with anxiety?”

Or does medication have a role to play in helping Christians deal with anxiety?

Or is it ok to take medication for anxiety or depression (which, in my opinion, is an offshoot of anxiety.)

Let me give an answer (and if we need to talk further we can.)

Because we live in a fallen world and sin affects every part of our humanity—mind, body and soul and because of this medication may be used to assist a saint who may have hormonal imbalances.

To say is another way:

Sin affects our emotional, mental and physical state, and there may be appropriate times to take medications that seek to restore, recalibrate and realign healthy hormonal levels.

Medication can be seen as a grace from God to assist, aid and help a saint who has legit hormonal imbalance that affects them.

There are some who say, no medication at any time and if you take medication for any reason then you are not exercising faith.

I would not go that far, but I will say that if medication is an option it should be option Z, it should be the last resort.

I'm too convinced of the sufficiency and authority of the word of God to give medication any other place than last in the believers life!

But despite this brief tangent, please remember that anxiety is a moral/spiritual issue just as much as it is an emotional or mental issue!

You must understand that anxiety is not just an emotional and mental mistake, it is sin if you are anxious.

This is the first truth.

The second truth is this:

You, by the grace of God, can control whether or not you are anxious!

Anxiety is not just something that “happens” to you, like any sin, anxiety is something that we give ourselves to!

I understand that there are thoughts and emotions can seemingly come from nowhere; where you cannot pinpoint its origin, but I must side with scripture that makes it ABUNDANTLY clear that you can control whether or not you are anxious!

I know we can control this because Jesus and Paul like Him, says to us, plainly, “Do not be anxious...”

In addition to this point: 2 Peter 1:3–4,

“**3** His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to[c] his own glory and excellence,[d]
4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

What God tells us is that everything we need in order to live a whole, complete, full, mature, sin less (not perfect, but more holy) has been granted to us!

This means that in, through and by Christ, we have EVERYTHING we need to obey the command, “Do not be anxious!”

So, as we have talked about in the past: If God commands it, we can and must obey it!

The Lord saying, “DO NOT BE ANXIOUS” is not a suggestion; He is not asking us not be anxious!

HE IS TELLING US!!

And if He is telling us to obey, then you must know that He has equipped you with everything necessary to obey and fulfill the command.

So, what you must do is to apply the remedies the Lord supplies in order to overcome the sin of anxiety!

These are the truth introductory truth you must get:

1.) Anxiety is sinful!

2.) You, by the grace of God, can and must control your anxiety!

Now, anxiety is different from being concerned and giving careful thought to things.

It is not sinful to be concerned or to give serious consideration to a thing; in fact, we have the biblical responsibility to do so.

Ecclesiastes 7:14, we are to consider days of joy and days of adversity.

Proverbs 31:16, the righteous woman considers a field and buys it (which requires economic thinking and processing.)

Haggai 1:5, (when our brothers and sisters in Israel were more preoccupied with their houses, than the house of God, God tells them): “Consider your ways!”

That is, give careful, thoughtful consideration to how you are living.

And Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, where he addressing the subject of marriage he says, “**32** I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. **33** But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, **34** and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. **35** I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.”

Paul, here, is not necessarily talking about sinful anxiety, but rather just the husbandly care and concern that a husband has for His wife.

So, the point that I am making is that we are called to give careful, thoughtful consideration to things, but that is a far cry from committing the sin of being anxious!

Anxiety goes beyond just being concerned.

As I said earlier, anxiety is the inappropriate preoccupation with a given situation or circumstance.

So, yes, give consideration to the situations and circumstances the Lord has led you to, but do not allow your consideration of a things so preoccupy your heart and mind that you lose sight of God and begin to live as if there is no God! (cause ultimately that’s what your anxiety says.)

So, we have considered several definitions of anxiety. They were:

1.) *Anxiety is a faithless and arrogant state of thinking and feeling that is more preoccupied with a given situation than it is with God! (2x)*

2.) *Anxiety is proactive worry that comes from a heart that does not trust God! (2x)*

3.) Anxiety is having overwhelming concern without reference to God! (2x)

4.) Anxiety is the worshipful preoccupation with the things of this world to the exclusion of the worshipful preoccupation of God! (2x)

5.) Anxiety is becoming so fixated on a particular thing or situation, real or unreal that affects you to the point where you become fearful, troubled, overwhelmed and faithless. (2x)

You must remember two foundational truths:

1.) Anxiety is sinful.

2.) You can, by the grace of God, control whether you are anxious.

-And the reason you can is because God has granted to you everything necessary to live a life free from anxiety!

Just some practical considerations to help fight against anxiety as we close:

1. You must remember that the things that tempt you to be anxious are temporal.
2. You must trust God and see Him and greater than your tempted to be anxious by!
3. You must continually renew your mind according to the word of God!
4. Repent whenever you commit the sin of being anxious and know that the grace of the Lord is sufficient for you!

Let's pray!