

Anxiety, the Curse, and its Cure, pt.3

If you have your copy of God's word turn with me to Matthew 6.

We are going to continue to examine the critical subject of anxiety and seek to know what God says about it so that we will not sin against God in this area of life.

(Matthew 6:24–34, read)

What we find in passage is the Lord's teaching on anxiety.

What makes this such an important teaching is that it comes as the inaugural address from the King!

When Matthew wrote this gospel he was intentionally seeking to reveal Jesus as the Messiah!

He wanted his readers to know that Jesus was not just a carpenter from Galilee, but that He was and is the prophesied Messiah, who is the King of the Jews and of the world!

And so when we come to Matthew 5–7, we are reading the King declaring what life should look like and be like in His kingdom.

Here, King Jesus is addressing what ought to be characteristic of the citizens who live in His kingdom.

And because of this, He addresses all areas of life from swearing oaths to giving to the poor.

But one such area of life King Jesus speaks of is that of faith and being anxious.

And what King Jesus makes abundantly clear is that those who are citizens of His

kingdom should be those who are not anxious; they should be those who are not marked by worry. What Jesus tells us is that we should be characteristically free from anxiety!

This is easily proven by the three-time repeated command to not be anxious (v. 25, 31, 34.)

So, Jesus, the King, is serious about this issue of anxiety.

Coming out of this is command not to be anxious are two realities:

- 1. Anxiety is sinful**
- 2. You can (and by God's grace) must put to death being anxious (you can control whether or not you are anxious.)**

The first reality of anxiety being sinful rightly identifies anxiety as a spiritual issue!

It is all too common, even among saints, to view anxiety as just some negative character trait or some unwanted set of feelings that they need to get over instead of it being viewed as sin that needs to be repented of and put to death.

Anxiety, as we have said, is deeply spiritual!

And if we are to conquer it then we must see anxiety as sin, the same way God does!

The second reality of us having control over being anxious or not should make you see that you are not passive when it comes to being anxious!

In other words, you are not a victim that has no control over whether or not you are anxious!

If you are anxious, it is because are giving yourself to it!

One of the definitions we have of anxiety is that is: ***Anxiety is proactive worrying that comes from a heart that does not trust God!***

When you are anxious it is because you are proactive in your worrying about things!

I know that many people, maybe even you, have convinced themselves that they cannot control whether or not they are anxious.

And if that is you, I will tell you plainly that you are lying to yourself; you have deceived yourself into believing something that is not true!

The reason why I know you can control whether or not you are anxious is because Jesus tells you, “do not be anxious!”

Jesus gives commands in keeping with what He has empowered you to do!

What He calls you to, He equips you for!

So, if you calls you to not sin by being anxious, guess what you can do, by the power of the Spirit, not sin by being anxious!

Now, of course, you will not do this perfectly.

But the question is not whether you can do it perfectly, but rather the question is can you do this at all...AND THE ANSWER IS YES, YOU CAN (AND MUST) CONTROL (AND PUT TO DEATH) BEING ANXIOUS!!! (We will consider this further when we examine Philippians 4.)

Those are the two realities:

- 1. Anxiety is sinful**
- 2. You can (and by God’s grace must) put to death being anxious (you can control whether or not you are anxious.)**

Now, as Jesus teaches on this subject of being anxious, He teaches several truths that help us to understand what anxiety is and why we should not be anxious.

(We looked at the first two truths last week):

Truth #1: Do Not be Anxious...Because Life is More than Provision (v. 25)

Jesus asks, “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

What Jesus helps us to see by asking this question is to break us out of the myopic perspective of life that anxiety produces!

Here’s what happens when you are anxious: When you are anxious you have tunnel vision and reduce all of life down to whatever it is you are being anxious about.

And by Jesus asking this very poignant and penetrating question, it shakes out of our tunnel vision to see with panoramic vision!

Jesus forces you to consider and answer the question.

And when you do answer it, you are forced to conclude that yes, life is more than food and the body more than clothing!

And I ponder this question. What the Lord has helped me to see is that when you ask this question, it helps you to rightly see life and avoid the black hole of anxiety.

Let me give you an example:

In this season of my life, I am tempted to be anxious about providing for my family.

But when I ask the question, “Is life more than providing for my family?”

The answer helps me to calm down and not reduce all of life down to me working to provide.

The question does not take away my responsibility to provide but it does allow me to avoid stepping off the cliff into the ocean of anxiety!

So, part of waging war against being anxious is when you are anxious or are tempted to be anxious to ask yourself, “Is life more than the thing I am anxious about?”

And what you will find is that when you agree with God and say, “Yes, life is more than the thing I am anxious about,” it will help you rightly orient that situation in the light of all the goodness and riches of living the life God has given you.

And because of this, it will help you not to be anxious.

That’s truth #1: **Truth #1: Do Not be Anxious...Because Life is More than Provision (v. 25)**

Truth #2: Do not be Anxious...Because Birds and Flowers Are Not Anxious and God provides for them (v. 26, v. 28, read)

With this truth the Lord directed our attention to nature.

And by doing so, Jesus is telling us to observe the goodness, graciousness and care of God to other creatures.

And what Jesus wants us to do is a comparative analysis! (Illustrate it.)

Conclusion:

Why, then, do we EVER worry about provision!!

Why, then, are we EVER anxious!!

So, what this reveals is that when we are anxious, we blind ourselves from rightly seeing the character and nature of God!

This is why anxiety is sinful, because the anxious heart and mind obscures the goodness and benevolent care of God!

That's why Jesus says, you want to be reminded of who God is, go and look at the birds! Go and consider the Lilies!

It might sound deep, but all of the water in the world can fit in this truth (this observation)!

There is an old poem written about two birds observing anxious people.

It goes like this:

"The Robin and the Sparrow"

Said the robin to the sparrow,

"I should really like to know,

Why these anxious human beings

Rush about and worry so."

Said the sparrow to the robin,

"Friend I think that it must be,

That they have no Heavenly Father [to care for them as He does]for you and me."

The conclusion of the birds in this poem strikes at the tragic theological conclusion your anxiety leads to: which is the denial of your heavenly Father's care for you!

And so, our Lord tells us, do not be because the birds and the lilies are not and they are provided for by God [who is your God and Father!)

These are the first two truths:

Truth #1: Do Not be Anxious...Because Life is More than Provision (v. 25)

Truth #2: Do not be Anxious...Because Birds and Flowers Are Not Anxious (v. 26, v. 28, read)

There is a third truth that Jesus teaches us and it is this

Truth # 3: Do Not Be Anxious...Because it is A Waste of Time (v. 27)

Jesus, the master teacher, He is, asks another profound question:

He says in v. 27 (read).

He says in effect “by being anxious, tell me, does that help you live longer?”

Think on this with me for a moment:

- What have you ever gained from being anxious? *You've gained nothing!*
- When has being anxious ever profited you anything? *It never has!*
- How has being anxious *ever* helped you? *It hasn't!*
- When was the last time you were anxious, and ever felt like that was time well spent? *Never!*
- When was the last time you were anxious, and thought, “I should do this more often!”

You never have and you never will!

Anxiety is fruitless; it is a waste of time!

To state it another way: ***Anxiety is counter-productive; nothing good is produced or comes from you being anxious!***

In fact, instead of anxiety adding to your life, it actually robs you of it!

Instead of anxiety giving you joy, hope, contentment and peace, it robs you of it!

Instead of anxiety giving you mental, emotional and physical balance, it drains and strains you mentally, emotionally, and physically and leaves you imbalanced!

When you are anxious, it is like you are building a house with bricks of air!

You say, well that's pointless...that's exactly the point! Being anxious is a waste of time!

To go a step further: Anxiety **NEVER** helps you solve the problems that you face!

Say, for example, you are anxious about your provision.

- Is being anxious going to cause you to have the provision you need or desire? No!
- Is being anxious going to contribute to the support of your budget? No!
- Is being anxious going to assist you in being content with the provision you have? No!

Anxiety, in every way, is unhelpful!

Anxiety, in every way, is one of those weights and sins the author of Hebrews says we need to rid ourselves of!

It is little wonder then that Jesus asks this profoundly helpful question!

He helps us to see that anxiety is a waste of time!!

As believers, we are called in Ephesians 5:15, God tells us, “**15** Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”

When you are anxious, you are living as a fool, who is not making the best use of the time!

It is impossible for you to walk in wise and be anxious at the same time!

It is impossible for you to make the best use of the time and be anxious at the same time!

It is impossible for you to be full of faith and anxious at the same!

Jesus, would have us avoid being faithless fools, who waste time by being anxious!

Truth #1: Do Not be Anxious...Because Life is More than Provision (v. 25)

Truth #2: Do not be Anxious...Because Birds and Flowers Are Not Anxious (v. 26, v. 28, read)

Truth # 3: Do Not Be Anxious...Because it is A Waste of Time (v. 27)

There is one point of application that I have found profoundly helpful to me:

1. When you are tempted to be anxious be intentional about asking yourself the two questions our Lord asks:
 - a. Isn't life more than provision?
 - b. How is being anxious helpful at this moment?

(By answering these questions they help to guard you against sinking into the quicksand of anxiety and keep you in a place where you trust God with your life!)

Let's pray!