

Anxiety, the Curse, and its Cure, pt.10

This evening we will conclude our series on anxiety.

I trust that the Lord has helped you and has given you insight into the peril of anxiety and how to overcome it.

As we end this series there are three things I want to do:

1. I want to give two concluding summary statements.
2. I want to briefly examine Philippians 4:9
3. I want to briefly examine 1 Peter 5:6–7

First, concluding summary statements:

1. The first statement is this:

Anxiety is a matter of self-control.

When you are being tempted with anxiety and thinking improperly, the issue is one of whether or not you are able to control how you engage, react or respond to any and every situation that you are in.

This is why it is correct and proper to see thinking as a spiritual discipline because thinking is directly connected to the spiritual fruit of self-control!

The Spirit of God produces within us the fruit self-control!

And what we are to control, most chiefly, is our minds (how we think and what we think!)

Because we know that all of life (and the issues of life) is lived through our minds! (Prov. 4:23)

With this summary statement, I am saying this: You will not overcome anxiety if you do not seek to grow in self-control.

2. To overcome anxiety, you have to think rightly about the things you are thinking about.

This may seem obvious, but let me flesh out what I mean:

Anxiety is the fruit of thinking that is not anchored to truth!

Because the truth of matter is that all thoughts are not in and of themselves anxious thoughts!

Anxiety comes when we think about our thoughts in the wrong way.

For example:

Say, if I have been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease.

I am not in sin if I should think about the fact that I have a life-threatening disease.

I am in sin, however, when I begin to think wrongly about my life-threatening disease and start becoming anxious about it.

If I think about my life-threatening disease so as to call God's character into question then I am in sin!

If I think about my life-threatening disease so as to cause my heart to grow anxious then I am in sin!

The point I am making is this:

We do not have to deny reality in order to think truthfully. (2x)

We need to think truthfully about the things we think about!

The reason why I want to speak to this is because you could think that God is calling us to deny reality in order to think truthfully.

No, He is calling you to embrace reality by thinking about it truthfully!

We are to deal with whatever we face, whether good or bad, truthfully!

So, it is not so much about the thoughts themselves, more so than how I am to think about my thoughts.

So, beloved, be mindful to think rightly about the things you are thinking about!

Those are the two summary thoughts.

Now, let's look at Phil 4:9. (I will start the reading at v. 4)

As we have considered this text of scripture, we made several key observations that are important to mention.

- 1. The war against anxiety is fought on the battlefield of your mind!**
- 2. You will not overcome anxiety if you refuse to proactively renew your mind with the truth of scripture.**

We can say it this way: **The degree to which you renew your mind with scripture is the degree to which you will not give in to the temptation to be anxious.**

So, the stronger your mind, the stronger your resistance against anxiety!

Now, of course, we know that what I just said is easier to speak than to do.

However, the truth remains, you will only defeat anxiety if you fortify your mind with the truth of the word of God!!

Now, as Paul closes this paragraph, in v. 9, he does so by calling us to be, what I call, “Sanctified Copycats!”

Our brother Paul calls us, by the Spirit, to imitate his way of living! (v. 9, read)

Perhaps one of the most neglected or underdeveloped aspects of our Christian living is the responsibility we have to look at and imitate the example of other saints.

There should be a real sense in which we eagerly observe and follow the faith walk of other mature saints.

Notice what our brother Paul, says,

What you have learned [by watching my customs or habits] and received [what I gave you through example] and heard and seen in me [in my teaching, preaching and lifestyle]—practice these things [that is, do the same things you observed and heard from me!]

How do we apply this, because we do not have Paul living among us today?

There are two ways we can apply this:

1. **We can copy Paul by examining his life and doctrine as recorded in scripture.**

We have examples of how our brother Paul lived and thought in the book of Acts and the epistles that He wrote.

We can and should take time to read Acts and Pauline epistles and examine the life of our brother Paul.

And if you do, you will gain insight on ways of thinking and living that are pleasing to God!

Another way is that:

2. We can copy the God-glorifying example of those who we currently know.

I would inform you that this is what Paul called us to do in Phil. 3:17, where he said,

“¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, *and* keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.”

The reason why this is acceptable and praiseworthy is because the lives of those we are seeking to copy are those who are ultimately seeking to copy Jesus!

And because we love Christ, we can gladly copy the example of those who are seeking to copy HIM!

This is why Paul can confidently say in 1 Cor. 11:1, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ!”

We are commissioned to see those who are more mature and follow their examples!

We are called to be sanctified copycats!

The writers to the Hebrews echoes this same truth:

Hebrews 13:7,

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. ***Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.***”

This is no joke, there has been a time or two where I was in a situation and I asked myself, “What would Pop do?” “How would Pop handle this situation?”

This type of question pleases the Lord!

One of the reasons God places godly people in our lives is so that we can look at them and imitate them!

So, stop trying to be original!

We live in a world of people trying to be original!

Stop trying to be original, instead be a sanctified copycat!

Side note: And if you are the most mature person you know, then you need two things;

1. You need new people to hang around!
2. You need to immerse yourself in the scriptures and look at the example of Jesus (because He is the pinnacle of godliness.)

But, this is what we are called to do and called to be!

We are to be sanctified copycats!

And just by way of insight, if we do this several things will happen:

1. We will be strengthened in faith!
2. We will be thankful for the grace of God that is operative in the life of the saints we imitate!
3. We will be thankful for the grace of God that is operative in our own lives!

But most importantly, what Paul tells us will happen is that God will be with you!!

The God that promised to give you His peace in v. 7, will ***Himself*** be present with you!

God will be with you!!

This is a reminder that we are NEVER alone!

The Lord is with you as you fight to control your thinking!

The Lord is with you as you seek to fight being anxious!

The Lord, your God, is with you!

And the primary reason I think Paul can promise that God will be with us is because God is always with those who walk according to His standard!

And if we are seeking to walk according to His standard by copying those who are also seeking to walk according to His standard then just as God is with them, He will be with us!!

So, do you know a saint or two who is mature and, by the grace of God, walks in freedom from anxiety?

- Watch their manner of living.
- Observe their posture in prayer.
- Listen to the way they talk.

And copy it!

(Caveat: Of course, this does not mean simply trying to act like somebody for the sake of acting like them!

I have known people who have so imitated people that they are no longer themselves!

Do not do that!

God is not calling us to copy people's personalities, He is calling us to copy their godliness!

Now, the finally thing I want us to do as we conclude this series on anxious is look at 1 Peter 5:5–7

Here, we have a fascinating truth revealed about anxiety that is not necessarily intuitive, but one that makes complete sense once you give consideration to it!

(read 1 Peter 5:5–7)

In this passage we have the command to humble ourselves.

He says it twice in two different way:
v. 5., “Clothes yourself with humility”
v. 6., “Humble yourself”

To be humble is to be low in posture.

Humility is, as our brother Paul says, not to think more highly of ourselves that we ought. (Rom. 12:3).

That we should think soberly about ourselves and not have an intoxicated view of ourselves.

Humility is rightly understanding who you are in light of who God is!

You will be humble in direct proportion to your understanding of God!

Those who are humble in spirit, are those who know God!

So, again, humility is rightly understanding who you are in reference to God; it is having a correct view of yourself; it is a lowering of yourself, where you do not think more highly of yourself than you ought.

And our brother Peter says we are to wear humility like a garment!

We are to clothe yourselves with humility!

Some wear Gucci, others wear Fendi; some wear Louis Vuitton; others wear Prada!

WE WEAR HUMILITY!!

We clothe ourselves with humility!

This command to clothe ourselves with humility and to humble ourselves is glorious for several reasons:

1. God graciously allows us to humble ourselves!

Notice the text,

“Clothe yourselfs with humility...”

“Humble yourselfs...” “

This is something that God allows us to do!

He kindly allows us to consider the posture of our heart and mind and then allows us to humble ourselves.

Because here is the truth of the matter, family: **GOD WILL ENSURE THAT YOU ARE HUMBLE!**

The question is a matter of how you will get to that place of humility!

You will be clothed with humility!

The question is how you will put on that garment.

There are two ways (and only two ways):

1. You humble yourself!
2. Or God will humble you!

And trust me, you want option number one!

It is FAR BETTER and FAR LESS PAINFUL for you to humble yourself than for God to humble you!

Because if God has to humble you that humiliation is coming with the rod of discipline and it–will–be–painful!

So, here is a word to you: **Humble you *before* God does!**

Consider your ways and humble yourself!!

So, the first reason why this command is glorious is because God allows us to do it.

The second reason this command is glorious is because,

2. The Lord has pledged to give grace to you! (v. 5)

Notice the word “for.”

That is a word of reason or explanation.

The reason we are to humble ourselves is because God has said that He dispenses and pours out His grace upon the one who walks humbly.

Peter gets this from Proverbs 3:34, where it says, “Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.”

God has determined to be gracious and give grace (favor) to the one who is humble!

So, if you want to be favored by God and live under his blessing, clothe yourself in humility!

If you want God to dispense His grace upon you, walk humbly!!

But, if you want to find yourself being in opposition to God, be arrogant!

If you want God to be against you, posture yourself like you are high and mighty; act like you are self-sufficient and independent of God and He will be against you because as the text says, “He opposes the proud...”

So, the second reason this command to humble ourselves is glorious is because God promises to give us grace!

The third and final reason this command is glorious is because,

3. God promises to exalt us!

This exaltation is to be viewed as God raising you up. (of God bestowing honor upon you!)

And this is one of the paradoxes of the Christian faith.

God says, “if you lower yourself, I will lift you up! But if you lift yourself up, I will lower you!”

This exaltation could be several things.

This exaltation could result in a higher position (of some sort), greater status (among people), blessed possessions (greater wealth), or greater spiritual power and fruitfulness (more conformity to Christ likeness!)

The text does not tell us what this exaltation will be, but it simply tells us that He will exalt us!

We have the preeminent example of this truth in our Lord Jesus, who *humble* himself to become obedient to death on a cross and the Father highly *exalted* Him and gave Him a name that is above every name!

So, if we humble ourselves, He will exalt us!

Now, we must be careful here: Because if you listen to this the wrong way you may be more concerned with the exaltation than you are with humbling yourself!

Do worry about the exaltation (what it will be or when it will be), busy yourself with being humble!

Busy yourself with being clothed with humility! That's what you must preoccupy yourself with!

And when you do, you can guarantee He will exalt you!

Now, this leads us to the all important question of,

- “How do I humble myself?”
- “How do I clothe myself with Humility?”

There are several ways to do this, but the one we must focus on it the one that comes from the text, and it is this:

You humble yourself by casting all your anxieties on the Lord!

To cast, literally means to throw!

This word is the same word used to describe what the people did when they threw their cloaks on the donkey for Jesus to ride on (Luke 19:35).

They cast (or threw) their cloaks.

So, in the same way, we are called to throw all of our cares on God!

To say it another way: ***You humble yourself by giving yourself fellowship and communion with God through prayer!***

So, here is what this means (and let your heart and mind capture this): **If you do not go to God in prayer with your cares, you are being arrogant. (2x)**

Hear it again: According to this text, when you are anxious and not communing with the Lord, you are displaying a heart and attitude of pride and arrogance!

Far from you being a victim to anxiety, anxiety can actually be a form of arrogance!! (SELAH!)

Again, if we are thinking biblically, anxiety is not something that just happens to you, instead anxiety reveals the condition of your heart (and the condition of your heart when you are could be that of pride!!!)

And the Lord says, if you are not casting your cares (or anxieties) you are displaying arrogance!

The reason this is true is because the one who casts their cares is the one who recognizes that the source of their help, strength, comfort, peace and joy is God!

And when you do not cast, you are rejecting this reality and denying the sufficiency and power of God to aid you and supply you with what you need to endure.

When you do not cast your cares or concerns on God it is as if you are saying, “Why go to God, it’s not like He can do anything about it anyway!”

It is as if you are saying, “It’s not like He is going to come through and help!”

In hearing that, you can hear how prideful and arrogant that sounds!

So, instead of being prideful, humble yourself and cast **ALL** (every, single one of) your cares, concerns and anxieties on him!

(Sidenote: Casting ALL your cares shows your belief in the greatness, grandness and BIG-ness of God!

In other words, when cast you are declaring your faith in God!

And know this: **You can cast all things, because He can handle all things!**

And to the degree to which we believe that will be to the degree to which we cast!!)

And really, is there anything too big for God!? NO, OF COURSE NOT!!!

Now, the last part of the text gives us the ultimate reason why we are to cast our cares.

Why do we cast our cares on Him? (notice the text, v. 7)

“BECAUSE HE CARES FOR US!”

So, the motivation for casting is not only to display true humility, but because you know that the Father cares for you!

This word “care” means, “to have regard for; to take interest in”

Hear this, beloved: **God cares for you! He has regard for you! He takes interest in you!**

Your Father cares for you!!

So, go to Him in faith, casting all your worries, cares, anxieties and concerns on Him fully assured that He cares for you! (This should give you rest no matter the circumstance! You can take all things to Him!)

What a blessing!

This concludes our series on anxiety!

May the Lord take all that we have heard and learned and cause it to bear fruit in our lives!

Let's pray!