

## FEAR - PART 2 (In the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic of 2020)

Sunday Morning - April 26, 2020

### Overcoming worry and anxiety and replacing it with Peace

Worry originates in the fear of pain. We worry because we fear loss of some kind. It might be the expectation of pain, or a loss (like the death of a loved one), but worry is always tied up in the expectation of something bad happening.

I've been asked if it's a sin to be a chronic worry wart. I'm not sure it's a sin, but I CAN tell you that it is not the way God wishes us to live. I do know that a person who is a worrier is unable to have a positive path forward for their lives. It is easy to worry yourself sick or at the very least to become immobilized by fear. As I've taught many times at Union Grove, worry will leave you totally stressed out and paralyzed.

As I spoke on Wednesday, when we worry, we end up worrying about things that we can't control or do anything about. We looked at Matthew 6 where Jesus said, " 'Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?' (Matthew 6:27)." What Jesus is basically saying is, "Don't start worrying about ANYTHING. And, if you do start worrying, then stop!"

Someone in our congregation wrote me a text this week and said, I don't really have trouble with worry, but it is anxiety that is my problem. Anxiety is worry lived out. **Anxiety** is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. You might feel anxiety on the first day of school, or maybe going to a job interview, or giving a speech or a sermon. That anxiety you feel is born in being fearful or nervous about some discomfort or pain that's looming out there.



So what is the cure to worry? Well I'll tell you. It is TRUST. To rid yourself of worry, you must trust in His love and protection. God loves me and He loves you, the the proof that He loves each of us is that He sent Jesus who gave His life for my salvation and yours.

If we can trust God for our eternal destiny, then we can trust Him for our daily needs. Jesus said in

Matthew 6:34, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself," (Matthew 6:34)."

So, how do we go from the head knowledge of believing God will take care of our tomorrow to the heart knowledge of resting in Him to do so. How do we get beyond anxiety and fear to shalom. I think it comes from perhaps putting your worries into His

hands every day. You do it over and over. When fear and anxiety come, take them to the Lord in prayer. When the worries of life threaten us, we must answer them with the truth of God's Word. You will never get over your anxieties and worries until you know what the Bible has to say about them, and until you believe in your heart that God will do what He says He will do. The Bible is clear that God knows all about your situation. He knows all about what's going on in your life, and you can trust Him for the future because He loves you and knows what is best for you.

I want to be very clear about something. This does not mean that you shouldn't plan for the future or take whatever steps you can to deal with the possible loss of your job, or take steps to avoid this Covid illness going on. As I told you all on Wednesday. You do your part, and leave the outcome to God. If oil hits rock bottom, don't stake your future in a job in the oil field. I'll tell it to you maybe in a funnier way, If the grocery store runs out of toilet paper, don't wring your hands and sit waiting for the store to get more toilet paper. Ask God to help you figure out how to keep yourself clean. This may seem trivial to you, but what I'm saying is, "Don't worry. If you can do something about your situation, then get off of your backside and do something about it. If you can't do anything about it, trust God that He'll take you through this painful difficult time.

For example, many of you all know that I have a little female dachshund that I love and adore. A week or so ago, she suddenly became partially paralyzed in her back legs. It has torn my heart out to watch her struggle through the grass just to go and do her business. I've asked God to heal her, but I've taken her to the vet and I'm doing exactly what the vet told me to do. I have to trust her to God or my heart will be full of sorrow. My eyes will be full of tears. I love that little dog so much. So what do I do? I do what the vet says, and everytime I take her outside I lay my hands on her and ask God to heal her. I'm doing what I know to do, and I must trust God to do what He will do. Any less than that will destroy my personal peace.

On Wednesday, we looked at Matthew 6 in detail. This morning, let's look at other truths from God's Word with which we can overcome anxiety and worry.

Corrie Ten Boom said, "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength". Strength for today comes from God's Word.

Start with an expectation of good and not of bad. **Jeremiah 29:11** For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

**Colossians 3:15** says, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful." How do we get this peace, this shalom. I think it starts by saying, "LORD JESUS RULE IN MY HEART". "Lord, I can't do this anymore. Take control of my heart, my emotions, my mind, my all."

**2 Thessalonians 3:16** says, "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all." Paul was assuring that little church in Philippi that the Lord CAN AND WILL give peace AT ALL TIMES and IN EVERY WAY.....That means in any circumstance that comes our way.

On Wednesday, I quoted one of mother's favorites. She taught me as a little boy, the power of 1 Peter 5:7. Mom would tell me, "CAST ALL YOUR CARES ON HIM FOR HE CARETH FOR YOU." That means throw them on the Lord. Get them off of your own shoulders.

**Psalm 55:22** Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved. The righteous are promised a firm bottom on which to stand.

This always gets a little confusing because we as humans complicate our lives over and over. I know when I had accumulated more cattle and more equipment than God wanted me to have, I was spending all of my time chasing my tail and trying to catch up. I had to do what I could do and leave the rest to God. What did I do? I sold about 200 cows and almost half of my equipment. When things are no longer peaceful, do what you can do and leave the rest up to God.

#### GETTING OVER ANXIETY

Now, let's talk about the anxiety that comes with chronic latent fear. For those that don't know, "latent" means something laying there in the background waiting to do whatever it's going to do. You may not have your eyes on the problem, but you've kept your heart focused on the problem. It might be all kinds of things..... a niggling health problem stewing in the background, the fear of being alone the rest of your life, the fear of being stuck with someone for the rest of your life, or the fears associated with aging and passing through eventual death.

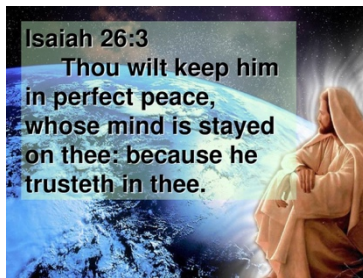
**Proverbs 12:25** "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." So right there scripture tells us one of the dangers of anxiety is that it will weigh us down. Anxiety will anchor us firmly to our problem and will never let us be free to experience peace/shalom.

And then we can rephrase mother's favorite.....**1 Peter 5:7** Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. I think mother loved this verse because she suffered with anxieties. She chose to battle her weakness with the power of God's word.

Paul is explicit in his letter to the church in Philippi. **Philippians 4:6-7** Do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus. Can you see the formula here?

Don't be anxious + pray with thanksgiving laying it before God = a guarded mind and heart (PERFECT SHALOM)

That takes us straight away to another wonderful promise of God.



"Thou wilt keep him/her in perfect peace whose mind is fixed/stayed/focused on Thee."

### **Worry Goes Away When We Focus On Him**

When we keep our focus where it needs to be, on Jesus, worry will be displaced by trust and will lose its grip on our hearts.

### **KEEPING MY FOCUS ON HIM**

**Matthew 6:33** "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you". Stop seeking the world. Stop seeking the treasure. Stop seeking to be secure in every situation. Seek **FIRST** the kingdom of God. Go back to the beginning. Spend some time in worship, prayer, study, reflection. Peace **WILL COME**.

**Hebrews 12:1-2** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And **let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

I love this verse so much. It says so much. It reminds me that in this life, I am on a race that is marked out for me. God has a journey for me and I must live it. I can live it by His rules or by my own. His way will bring peace. My way will bring chaos.

As I make this run through my life, I have a crowd of witnesses **CHEERING ME ON**. You have a cloud of witnesses **CHEERING YOU ON**. It's like you are in the arena of life and God wants you to know that **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**. Theologians have debated for centuries who this cloud of witnesses is. Could it be those who have gone on to heaven

before us? Well, yes. Could it be angels? Well, yes. Could it metaphorically just be the idea that others went through pain like we have? I don't really think so. I think it speaks of those in Hebrews that have just been listed in that great hall of faith. And yes, it very well may include my mom, dad, grandparents, and others.

So what am I to do as I run this race being cheered on by many? Well, one thing you and I are to do is to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." For me, that means getting rid of the stuff that is totally distracting to me. My life is becoming simpler and simpler and I am enjoying it more and more. I have slowed down enough to enjoy what I have and that is a refreshing change.

I am also asking God to remove the sin that so easily entangles. You should do that to if you are to obey this scripture. I don't know what sin gets itself around your heart, but it might include worry and not trusting God for your future. THROW IT OFF. It might include gross dissatisfaction in your job or some other facet of your life. Rip that out by the roots and hand it to God. Now what?



"Let us run with perseverance the race set out for us." Perseverance is that sticktuitivity. It is commitment, hard work, patience, and endurance. When I was little I was taught that it meant, "If at first you don't succeed, try try again." I'd change that just a little to read, "If at first you don't succeed try try again and keep asking God if you're following the "race that's set our for you."

We've discussed today some positive steps to overcome worry and replace it with peace; real peace - Shalom. We're each in a race. Throw off what is holding you back from the things God has for you. Keep you mind fixed on Him today, and keep placing all your fears on Him. He promises that He cares for you. Change what you can and leave the rest up to God.

Join me again on Wednesday, and we'll take a deeper look into God's Word and the promises He gives to replace our fears with faith and to replace our worries with wonder.

Let us pray.