

Glow: Philippians 4:1-9, 7/19/20

Proverbs 12:25

Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down but a good word makes him rejoice.

So much anxiety right now. Americans are anxious people. Studies tell us that for the last century, 3x more likely than previous generation to be anxious. Tripling our anxiety with every generation.

I have shared about my **mountaineering expeditions in my 20s**, we would wear a pack much like this one. Anxiety is like this pack.

- From early life we worry about what people think about us and that is an anxiety many carry with them throughout their entire lives. **Green Pack**
- Anxiety about getting good grades, if we don't get good grades, won't get into the right school, get the job and being living in a van down by the river. 📊
- Where we fit- band, jock, star wars nerd ✂️ ✂️ 🧑
- FOMO- 📱
- Fulfilling the American Dream- graduation, relationships, married, kids, how the kids turn out, house 🏠
- Money, retirement, stocks 💰
- Health- eating right, workout- 🏋️
- Politics, especially in election year- 🐘
- Unknown- terrorism, wars, loss job, sick, death- 🗡️
- And then comes a global pandemic. **Orange Pack**

I heard a Christian counselor recently comment, *In a fallen world, it is a miracle that everyone isn't in a constant panic attack.* And he wrote this before the pandemic. It should be no surprise that according to recent data: anxiety is at an all-time high. A Healthline survey in the midst of this pandemic said, 13% increase in anxiety. In May the Census Bureau released survey results- A third of Americans are showing signs of clinical anxiety. And so the pandemic is a whole additional pack, shoved into this pack. Do any of you feel like this right now? **Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down...BUT a good word makes him rejoice.** Can lift a burden. This is my goal today is to share a good word that is not from Nate...but a good word that's from God's Word- Philippians 4 that if we take it to heart, will lift us, and release the straps of the burden of anxiety that weighs us down. [Slide] Pray.

What does Paul know about anxiety?

2 Corinthians 11:23-29

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty

lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,

²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.

²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak?

Like the Farmer's Insurance commercial- Paul knew a thing or two because he's seen a thing or two. And yet- Paul says in verse 4- *Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!* V.6 *Do not be anxious about anything*. It's one thing if this guy were saying that...it's another if it is Paul. Chained to a guard, awaiting a death-sentence. There is something that Paul has discovered about releasing the burden of anxiety that we need to hear today. We are going to see Paul share with us a key principle and 3 practices to release our burden of anxiety. First let's look at the principle. *Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters...stand firm in the Lord in this way.*

In what way?

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

The principle- Our uncertain and temporary status must be filtered through our certain and eternal status. Nothing is certain in this life, nothing is stable and unchanging in this world. If you didn't know that before the pandemic, you are having to face that reality now. Paul says that as Christians, we must anchor our experiences in this life into the person and the place that is the exact opposite. A person who is unchanging in his nature, unconditional in his love, unmatched in his power, who forever fulfills all our deepest desires- The Lord Jesus Christ. And there is a place where everything good and beautiful and meaningful lasts forever, growing stronger every day. This is our true citizenship. Our identity and destination.

Now look how Paul turns around and applies this principle to an argument between two women. ² *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.* This isn't a random thought, it's a direct application of this principle. Sisters- remember where you are from and where you are going! If you are both citizens of heaven, how can there be pettiness or lack of conflict resolution or whatever else was keeping these two Christian women from being in harmony? Lift up your thoughts! We have all heard the saying, "You're so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good." But for Paul, that's impossible. It's only when you are so heavenly minded that you truly can be earthly good. **This principle** is what makes Christianity so different than every self-help book, philosophy, or other mindfulness activity

that you'll find out there to help you combat anxiety. All those other resources are practices that aren't anchored in any profound truth that goes beyond this world into the next. It is Christianity that says- no we have a certain savior and a certain citizenship that impacts how we face anxiety in this life. If we miss this, if we don't really believe the gospel, the practices lose all their power.

Now let's talk about putting that principle into practice to release the burden of anxiety. **Three practices of Heaven-Bound Citizens**

⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

It's easy to skip over this and miss the power in this practice. The word translated "gentleness or moderation" one commentator said is a "radical evenness of temper". Your highs are not too high, and your lows are not too low. Even-keeled in the waves. Not a personality trait, it is a spiritual discipline.

Heaven-Bound Citizens...#1 Keep Composure in Uncomposed Times.

John Newton "If you know the grace of God it makes the worst times bearable and the best times leavable." Both good and bad times, we don't live and die with them as heaven-bound citizens. This isn't my main thing, this isn't my life, this isn't my true status. I belong to heaven.

It is harder to diagnose the things that compete with our citizenship in heaven during peaceful, relaxed times. Unnerving, anxious times reveal the things that compete with Heaven for our functional citizenship. When we get anxious about our kids, our money, our job, our health, our politics- they reveal that even if we say- like a good Christian- that our citizenship is in heaven, our functional citizenship is found in something else.

Do you see how the practice of heaven-bound composure combats anxiety? My friend had a health scare and he started having some panic-attacks and feeling overwhelmed by what he was finding as he googled it. Worrying about what might happen to him, his wife and family... But his wife, calmly said- "Will, it is probably nothing. God has us in the palm of his hand. You know where you are going. And besides if something did happen to you, I'm going to be OK because as much as I love you, you aren't my life. Christ is my life." Wow! That is a heaven-bound composure. What might rival your true citizenship? Ask the Spirit to reveal your functional citizenship. Confess those things. Ask him to give you a heaven-bound composure.

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Heaven-bound Citizens...#2 Cast their burdens onto the King.

Paul is saying, don't carry your backpacks of anxiety and worry around with you- cast it upon Jesus. In every situation! **¹ Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.** Why is it that the very first thing we should do ends up being the very last thing we even try, prayer? We wrestle with it, and it gets worse and worse. And then, finally, we go, man. There's nothing left to do but pray. Yeah, we should have thought that two weeks ago when this whole

thing first started. We should have immediately let that go and cast that, and then kept doing that as a process along the way.

[Slide] But it isn't but that you pray, it is how you pray. Some prayer can make you more anxious. "God the world is so terrible, I can't believe all these things that are happening in my life, my car died and my dishwasher broke..." I mean some of our prayers can sound like a country music song. Now it's not that we can't complain or be honest about our frustrations (in fact Kristi is going to discuss that tonight at 6pm for our Summer Series), but notice what Paul says- it is prayer with thanksgiving. How can I be thankful if I don't know how he will answer it? You thank him ahead of time for the entire range of possibilities knowing he is the all-powerful, all-wise, all-good king who will work good and will never leave you ultimately fulfills every prayer in eternity. When we cast our burdens on the King, by faith and with thanksgiving- His promise is that He will guard us from anxiety and give us peace, a peace that our circumstances can't explain. You can take that to the bank.

Illustration of Mary: Many of you have met Mary Evans, Pastor Todd's mom. You may also know that Mary's beloved husband, Eric, passed away from his battle with ALS. The night after he passed, Todd asked Mary if she wanted to stay with them for the night. Everything in Mary wanted to say, "Yes! I can't be alone. I need to you to be my comfort." But she knew, if she said yes, that she would not learn to let her King be her comfort. She said, "If I really believe Jesus is enough for me, I must allow Him to minister to me." Mary took all over her anxiety and grief and fear of being alone and she cast it onto her King. You know what happened- exactly what God said would happen. Mary would say that a peace that her circumstances can't explain or comprehend came over her. The devil didn't win that evening or any other evening. She was guarded by the King and his peace!

What is in your backpack that you have yet to cast onto the king?

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Heaven-bound Citizens... #3 Think Up!

Paul says, you want the peace of God, not the burden of anxiety? You have to learn to think up! Don't think down about what is false and what is a lie, think up about what is true. Not on what is dishonorable, but noble. Not on what is unjust, but what is just! Not on what is polluted but what is pure, not on what is disgusting and distasteful but what is lovely, not on what is irreputable but what is admirable and worth repeating, not on what is corrupted but what is excellent and praiseworthy. It's all about what's happening up here.

Neuroscientists say the average person thinks 70,000 thoughts every single day. Which means, in a year's time you will have produced 25.5 million thoughts. So that's a lot of options, right? We're bombarded with a lot of thoughts, many of those will be downward thoughts...lies, fears, worries, frustrations, fantasies, temptations, insecurities...be sober-minded- there is a battle for

your thought life. I think most people that you will encounter think down more than up. We must learn to take downward thoughts, and turn them upward toward heaven! Now, don't get twisted. This isn't the power of positive thinking, Tony Robbins or Joel Osteen. It's not- that positive thoughts force the universe...or God to bring us power, wealth, blessing. No we reject that kind of shallow, self-centered version of positive thinking. **2 Corinthians 10:5 *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

Thinking up means that we learn to **recognize** every lie, every fear, every anxiety, every temptation that sets itself up against who God is, what He has said about us, what He has promised, and where we are headed! Then we **reject** those downward thoughts. Those are not true, Satan I will not allow you to whisper. I do not accept that temptation. With the Spirit's help, we then **replace** the downward thought with what is upward- loving, true, righteous, pure. Which means- we have to read and meditate on and know and be ready with God's Word when those thoughts come.

Let me give you an example downward spiraling thoughts. "Oh no, this pandemic is lasting longer than I thought. I don't think I can take this much longer. I can't stand staying in this house any longer. Everyone is getting on my nerves. What if we go back into a shutdown again and the kids don't go back to school? I can't do online classes again and my kids are going to freak out. What if the economy tanks and I get laid off? God I can't believe you would let this happen? Don't you love us? Maybe you really aren't in control. Maybe you aren't who you said you are? I need something to make me feel better right now, maybe I should get a prescription, or a few cocktails should help. I'm really a mess, I'm probably the only one feeling like this, I can't tell anyone else, they will probably reject me."

Thinking Up:

I'm struggling with this pandemic, what's going on in our world and I don't know what to do. But I do know that God is God and I am not. God is good. He is with me and I know he will give me the grace I need. God must have some good in this and He wants to teach me to trust Him more. Even if the kids don't go back to school, I know there will be some blessing in that and I will fight to see the silver lining from God. He will strengthen me and not abandon me. I will cast my cares on Him. If I'm struggling, I know others are as well. I will reach out to my Christian community so that we can encourage each other. Even if things get worse, I know that my job, my security, my family- these things are not my true life and my true citizenship. That belongs with God and I am thankful that this light and momentary trouble isn't even worth comparing to the glory that is to come.

Do you see why the battle for your thoughts is so important? The same circumstance, completely different outcomes all depending on whether or not your thoughts are up or down.

Let's **review**.

Believe The Gospel, Feel The Gospel, Pray The Gospel, Think on The Gospel

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