

Overcoming Anxiety

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Clearing the way Out...Guarding the way In

Today is Pentecost Sunday in Christian churches – two Celebrations of the power of One God

The Old Testament Pentecost. God gave the Israelites seven feasts to honor Him in different ways. One of those was the Feast of Weeks Shavuot (7 weeks of 7 days). It took place fifty days after celebration of **Passover**. It was to serve as a reminder of God's power, protection, and deliverance of His people. The name *Pentecost* was given by the Hellenistic Jews (Greek) because the word is Greek not Hebrew.

500-600 years later, in the 9th century BC, the Prophet Joel spoke one of the most amazing prophecies in Joel 2: 28 – 32, "I will pour out my Spirit..." . This prophecy **looked ahead** to what Christians would celebrate each year as Pentecost. At His ascension in Acts 1: 8, Jesus told the disciples He was going to send the Holy Spirit to guide, comfort, and empower them to spread the Gospel and live in a harsh world that hated them – both of which are impossible on our own no matter how hard we try to be and do good.

So our New Testament Pentecost celebration came from that of the Jews. The timing is interesting because that feast brought Jewish men from all over the world to Jerusalem for the feast. So when the tongues of fire fell on those gathered together praying for days, the tongues were of languages from all over the world and these men who were there understood them. God is intentional in all He does. According to biblical scholars, **this Pentecost also fell fifty days after the Resurrection of Jesus**. His power over death enabled Him to send God the Holy Spirit to give us power He promised. Keep

that thought in mind as we now move to today's message-

Overcoming Anxiety

It is not surprising that anxiety in the US is at an all time high according to published reports. It has already been steadily rising each year for a number of reasons, and this viral disaster certainly has amped it up. One definition I read for anxiety is this:

“a persistent apprehension regarding potential future threats.”

There can be a healthy element to it like fear, but too often anxiety leads to incapacitating places, emotionally and, sometimes, physically. Let me add here, I am not a professional counselor, and there are times you are best served by one.

Fear is fight or flight. Anxiety is a kind of fear that can overwhelm and overpower us in unhealthy ways. It becomes exaggerated fear or dread over things that have not happened, may not happen, or could happen over which we have no control. Our lack of control allows anxiety to control us. We get stuck in place like a car in the mud—spinning our wheels trying to get out until we finally give up. God sent me to you today to say, ***“Never give up!”***

Today we are going to look at anxiety as it is spoken of and treated in the Bible. We will consider examples of people who dealt with it as well as pathways in and out.

Encouraging Word #1 God knows and understands people suffer from anxiety

Of course He does because He created us and made us emotional creatures. We have minds that are free to think great thoughts or wander into dark places. Perhaps the verse that best recognizes this was written by the wisest man who ever

lived, Solomon.

"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression..." (Proverbs 12: 25a, NKJV)

Considering he was the wisest man who ever lived, he made a lot of bad decisions that probably caused him to be anxious, and even depressed. Read Ecclesiastes to see what I mean. So that fact that we also suffer from anxiety, even depression, does not make God mad at us. But He certainly does not want us to dwell there and let it become a **stronghold**. That is why the Bible speaks so much on this potentially crippling enemy.

Encouraging Word #2 Take some comfort in this, you are among good company.

I only have time to give you three examples of great men and women in the Bible who dealt with anxiety, but they are excellent ones.

- David (the man after God's own heart). The source of David's anxiety we consider here was *self-inflicted*. If we are honest, so is much of ours. David loved the Lord God and worshiped him perhaps more than any person in the Bible. But he was still human and made some STUPID decisions, e.g., adultery, murder, the census, terrible family life. I suggest you read some of his words in Psalm 22 vs 1, 2, 7, **14, 15, 17**. He felt like God had abandoned him! Ever feel like that? Of course we do.
- Martha (the sister of Lazarus and Mary) Jesus came to visit and she was in a dither about all the preparations that things that had to be done. Anxious and mad Mary was not helping, Martha implored Jesus to make her help. Jesus' answer was not what she expected.

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary..." Luke 10: 41-42

What was the necessary thing Jesus was talking about? We have to go back to verse 39 to remind ourselves.

(Mary was) "seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word."

My third example may shock you.

- Jesus – the Garden of Gethsemane prayer session before His crucifixion. Here are excerpts from the accounts of Matthew and Luke.

*"Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and **began to be grieved and distressed**. Then He ***said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death..."**" (From Matthew 26)*

*"Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And **being in agony** He was praying very fervently; and **His sweat became like drops of blood...**"(Luke 22: 43-44)*

Hematidrosis. Only Luke the physician mentioned it. This is the human condition when someone is in such an anxious state of mind, blood can become mixed with their sweat.

Encouraging Word #3 Jesus will help you find and clear the way out

You or your children probably did this when you were afraid as a little child. You climbed in bed with or in the lap of your daddy and said, **Daddy, I'm asca**red. The Apostle Paul used a wonderful name for God in Romans 8. He called God, "Abba Father" which translates "Daddy". If you are in Christ, your Abba Father is there for you no matter what you have done or how deep the pit of despair and anxiety you are in. Be encouraged by these comforting verses:

"Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be (moved) shaken."

Psalm 55: 22

*“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.**”* Philippians 4: 6-7

*“Casting our cares on Him (Jesus) because **He cares for you.**”* 1 Peter 5: 7

*“There is no fear in love, but **perfect love casts out fear.** For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”* 1 John 4: 18

*“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ Jesus.**”* Romans 8: 1

Do Christians fall into fear anxiety and even depression? Absolutely. But we do not have to give in to these failings of our flesh or even demonic attacks. If you will receive Christ as Savior or have, then do what He said to get out of dark places.

*“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.** “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* Matthew 11: 28-30

Encouraging Word #4 The Holy Spirit is in your life to help guard the way in

Remember I told you what Pentecost is—OT and NT and what it meant then and now. Now it means as Christians, we have the power of the living God in us and at our disposal 24/7/365 but most of us fail to use it. It seems sometimes the more we need His power, the more we rely on ours. Two final verses for you to read and remember:

*"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and **take every thought captive to obey Christ,**" 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5*

*But **the Comforter**, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and **bring all things to your remembrance**, whatsoever I have said unto you. John 14: 26*

Closing

For some listening, you do not need words to help save you from your anxiety. You need to begin with the Savior Who will save you from your sins. Only then can you find lasting eternal comfort not matter your current circumstances or how dark your days. Jesus is calling you out of the darkness into His marvelous light. Amen! I saved perhaps the best verse for last.

"For He (God) has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13: 5

You can rest in Him and His words all the way Home. I pray you receive Him today.

For Christ's sake,

Walter