

# Our Struggle With Anxiety

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Recorded on August 22, 2020

Let's start the sermon today by going to 2 Timothy 3:1; a very familiar scripture to all of us. It has been covered in several sermons recently, because it applies to the times in which we live. It does seem that our Father has loosed the bands of restraint on Satan and is allowing him more freedom to do what he does. It seems obvious as we look at world conditions and the conditions around us.

**2 Timothy 3:1** *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.* (KJV)

The New International says:

**2 Timothy 3:1** *But mark this, there will be terrible times in the last days.* (NIV)

They translate the word *perilous* in the King James to *terrible*. This word *perilous* is used only one other time in the Bible and that is in Matthew 8:28. So let's go there just to get a notion of what is being referred to by Paul about the last days. Christ is traveling with the disciples, early in His ministry.

**Matthew 8:28** *And when he [referring to Christ] was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce [that is the same Greek word translated *perilous* in the King James or *terrible* in the NIV], so that no man might pass by that way.* (KJV)

Also, the Greek can mean "dangerous", so we see that the times towards the end are going to be *terrible*, *dangerous*, *perilous*, they are going to be *fierce* at times. Towards the end—we're getting closer every day; we don't know when the end is—but it sounds a lot like what we are seeing today. Since March, this has become a different world. I think we all have to agree on that, no matter what part of the world we live in. Life has been turned upside down. Schools have been closed, businesses have been closed, ICU beds are at capacity in certain areas. Working parents worry about educating their children. I cannot imagine having children and yet having to work full time with no school open. They have to be schooled online but I have to work to put food on the table. That causes a lot of stress, a lot of anxiety. Then the people out of work—yes some of them, but not all of them, have received some financial assistance. Now, as we see on the news, that is running out and they are worried about how they are going to feed their children. They are worried that when this opens up down the road, is the business they currently work for going to even be there; that's a worry.

Small business owners, who I feel for, because my wife and I started a small business and know what the trials and tribulations are of owning a small business, are worried

about losing their businesses. The big corporations have had bail outs but the small corporations have slipped between the cracks. I can't tell you the number we have talked to, who have said that if this goes on for another a month or another two months, they can't last that long. They don't have the finances; they don't have the reserves and they are just going to have to walk away from a business they have invested all of their savings and energy and time in.

As we know, churches can't meet as normal; we are here with a skeleton crew today. We are still on version 1.5 I guess you would call it; still locked down. While all this is going on, there are riots in the streets. People burning down buildings, writing graffiti and throwing rocks at police. All because of this virus. People are more isolated now than they have ever been. They can't gather as they are accustomed to, whether it is church or groups of any kind and they feel more isolated. The result of all of this, is that levels of personal anxiety are on the rise—in the church and out of the church. This is because of uncertainty; uncertainty about the economy, about jobs, about health, about where the future is going and what tomorrow is going to bring. It's all uncertainty and that gives rise to anxiety.

Paul addressed this issue in Philippians 4:6; let's go there. We are going to read just the first part of the verse. It is a dogmatic statement on Paul's part. This out of the NIV. Paul addresses this issue of anxiety, worry and angst head-on.

**Philippians 4:** *Do not be anxious about anything.* (NIV)

What he is saying here is, "stop being anxious". Ok, well for most of us, as we would say today, that's a lot easier said than done. Paul's desire and goal are for us not to be anxious or in a constant state of anxiety. But it is easier said than done. The truth is, if we are honest with ourselves, all of us have struggled with anxiety from time to time—some more than others. More are probably struggling with anxiety now because it seems to me—it's obvious to me—that God the Father is allowing Satan more room to maneuver these days, if you look at the world conditions, the conditions in this country and the conditions in the church.

What we want to do today is look at this subject of anxiety and the key principles found in our Father's word that might help us in times of anxiety. Looking forward, those times are probably going to be on the increase. So, the title of the sermon is:

Our Trouble With Anxiety

**1. If you struggle with anxiety, you are not alone.**

Sometimes it is good to admit even to ourselves, to say "yes, sometimes I am a little anxious" or "I am over anxious" or "I'm too anxious". Whether we admit it or not, all of us struggle with anxiety to one degree or another. Because of that, some people think if I admit I am anxious then that's admitting that I'm not perfect, I'm not all together and they don't like to admit that. So, they sometimes feel that they can't talk to family about

it or to friends about it. This leads to isolation and to a feeling that these individuals who are going through problems of anxiety, are on their own; that there's no help. Some people who go through a crisis of anxiety, can feel that the Father does not care about them or that He has abandoned them. As we are going to see in the Bible, that is just a common human reaction.

We are going to see, as we go through the Bible, that we are not alone in this battle with anxiety. It is common to many biblical figures, as we will see in this first point. If we struggle with anxiety, we are not alone.

The disciples were anxious. In Luke 12:22. from the New King James we see the disciples were indeed anxious and Christ understood this and tried to comfort and help them.

**Luke 12:22** *Then He said to His disciples [notice what He said; He is speaking directly to them and by extension to us today], Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life [obviously He wouldn't be saying this unless they were worrying] , what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on.  
25) And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?  
26) If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest?  
27) Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these.  
28) If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He, [referring to His Father obviously] clothe you [referring to His children], O you of little faith?  
29) And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. (NKJV)*

Don't have an anxious mind.

*30) For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. (NKJV)*

He knows in advance, even before we ask. Clearly Christ is addressing the disciples and He is addressing them because they are worried and they are anxious. The text doesn't tell us why. But it's my personal speculation, and I think it's obvious when you think about it; they had given up everything to follow the Messiah. They gave up their family, they just walked away from their families—you remember—their calling is described in the gospels. They gave up their occupations, their ability to earn money, they gave up their community and their extended family and just walked away. You do that and there are a lot of concerns. How is my wife doing? How are my children going? Is family helping them put food on the table and so forth? Since they were convinced that Christ was the Messiah they probably assumed, at least in the beginning, that He would come quickly and overthrow Rome—glory and honor to everybody. That He would act powerfully and quickly. As we know, that did not happen; that wasn't His purpose.

So, we don't know why the disciples were anxious, but my guess is that this was part of it. The bottom line is, Christ was comforting the disciples and He did not want them to have anxiety. But the fact is, they did. That example is in the record.

David had anxious moments. We know David's history and he had many anxious moments. In Psalm 139:23, it's interesting how this one verse is translated in the New King James version.

**Psalm 139:23** *Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;* (NKJV)

The New International says, "Know my anxious thoughts." David is admitting that he has his set of anxieties and he has his moments of anxious thoughts. Now going back to Psalm 94:18-19, again out of the New King James.

**Psalm 94:18** *If I say, My foot slips", Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up.*  
19) *In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.*  
(NKJV)

Remember there was a time David was running for his life. There was a time when people were after him. He had disloyalty in his own family, seeking his life, so David had his anxious moments and he looked to God for His help.

Now look at a man mentioned in Hebrews 11. We won't go there, but he is mentioned there and held up as a man of God. The fact is, this man was crippled with fear. At times he wondered where God was. God went off and left him. He wondered why God was allowing all this stuff to happen to him and to Israel and he questioned all of that. This is the story of Gideon found in Judges 6.

I will set the stage. It's a familiar scenario. Israel sinned and Yehovah had allowed the Midianites to oppress Israel. It was not a good situation. Gideon and the nation were living in fear. What we are told is, that for the last several years at harvest time, the Midianites would raid Israel and steal the harvest; steal the fruits of their labors. It was so bad, that at the end of the seven years many Israelites had given up their towns and had taken to the hills to live in caves for safety sake. We begin the story in Judges 6:11.

Judges 6:11 *And there came an angel of the LORD,*

The Hebrew word for *angel* has been pointed out many times before, it is Malak and it means "to dispatch as a deputy, a messenger; specifically of God", quoting Strong's there. As we go forward, let's just see if this might be Jesus Christ.

*11 continued) ... and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezwite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.*

This speaks to the apprehension Gideon had of being found out. Obviously, he was anxious, worried, and scared of doing this because he knew they were going to look for the crop. Threshing floors in those days were normally mounted on the top of a hill, where the wind was the strongest. You will recall, David bought the Jebusites a threshing floor that was at the top of Mount Mariah because the wind was there more often than not. What they would do is have cattle or oxen walk over the cut wheat to crush it. Then, they would toss the sheaves and all of that, up in the air where the wind would carry away the chaff and the wheat would drop to the ground. Normally it was over wood, not on the dirt. That is not what is going on here, as Jameson Faucet and Brown's comment about this incident shows:

*This incident tells emphatically, the tale of public distress. The small quantity of grain that he was threshing [Gideon] indicated by his using a flail instead of the customary treading of cattle and the unusual place, near a winepress under a tree and on bare ground, not a wood floor, for the prevention of noise; all these circumstances reveal the extreme dread in which the people were living.*

Continuing in verse 12.

*12) And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. (KJV)*

This guy is hiding under trees in a vineyard and he is called a mighty man of valor. The problem is, at that moment, Gideon was anything but a mighty man of valor.

*13) And Gideon said unto him, oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us ... (KJV)*

If Yehovah be with us, why is this happening to us? Does that sound familiar? Israelites complaining about their problems?

*13 continued) ... why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. (KJV)*

He felt God had abandoned him and his nation, forsaken him and his nation; it's a common reaction in times of anxiety. We can see that there is anxiety and fear all around.

*14) And the LORD looked upon him, and said, go in this thy might, [Gideon didn't have much might, as we'll see] and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?*

*15) And he said unto him, oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. (KJV)*

Kind of like David was—he was out herding sheep as the rest of his brothers were paraded in front of Samuel to be chosen for the next king. Gideon says, “I’m the smallest, I’m the youngest”. We see that Gideon is not showing a ton of confidence.

16) *And the LORD said unto him, Surely, I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.*

17) *And he [Gideon] said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. (KJV)*

Gideon, like all of us, in a moment of anxiety, needed encouragement. Gideon was asking for some encouragement.

18) *Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he [the messenger] said, I will tarry until thou come again.*

19) *And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it.*

20) *And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock [he picked a rock and said to put it on that rock], and pour out the broth. And he did so.*

21) *Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock ... (KJV)*

I think that would get Gideon’s attention really fast, as it would any of us.

21 continued) *... and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. (KJV)*

Could this have been the Messiah? Igniting a fire to consume an offering to Yehovah, seems like something that the Messiah would do—that Christ would do. The important thing is, we see Gideon asking for a sign, and Yehovah gave him a sign and He didn’t rebuke him for asking. He didn’t call him weak or sniveling or tell him to buck up. Gideon asked for a sign and God Almighty gave him a sign.

Then the angel of Yehovah proceeded to tell Gideon to tear down his father’s alter to Baal. What he required Gideon to do was to clean up his own house first, before he could do God our Father’s bidding. But we see that Gideon was still afraid—verse 27.

27) *Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. (KJV)*

We see, Gideon is still afraid, he is still anxious and he asks for another sign—verse 36.

36) *And Gideon said unto God, if thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,*

37) *Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth besides, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.*

38) *And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. (KJV)*

Despite the Almighty doing exactly what Gideon wanted, Gideon still had his doubts.

39) *And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.*

40) *And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground. (KJV)*

In one sense this was a bigger miracle because wool absorbs water and the wool was absolutely dry while everything around it was wet. Despite realizing that he saw, most likely Jesus Christ face to face—certainly a spirit being he had never seen before—and the miracle of the fire that consumed his offering, the miracle of the fleece being wet and then later of it being dry, we are not done yet. Gideon still needs more reassurance to overcome his anxiety and his fear. So, he gathers 10,000 soldiers to go up against the Midianites and then Yehovah quickly peels it down to 300. Again, showing His might and His power. Now let's go to Judges 7:9 in the New King James version.

**Judges 7:9** *It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. (NKJV)*

Notice the Almighty's compassion.

10) *But if you are afraid [and He knew well that Gideon was afraid] to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant; (NKJV)*

He says I know you are afraid, so I am going to give you a companion—your servant—go down with him. The Father knew Gideon's heart, that he was still anxious and he needed more reassurance and it shows and speaks to the patience that our Father has with us. Instead of being angry with Gideon, He offered him yet another sign when he was in the Midianite camp. Gideon snuck into the Midianite camp, he heard one enemy soldier talking to another enemy soldier about a dream that he had and the dream was a prophetic vision that they would be defeated and Gideon would win. When he overheard the telling of this dream and its interpretation—he finally worshipped God, he overcame his fear and anxiety and Yehovah used Gideon to save all of Israel.

Here's the point; this lengthy passage is there for a reason because our God our Father—Yehovah—wanted the story of Gideon told. Our Father wanted his fear, his anxiety and insecurity to be told and His patient reassurances to Gideon to be told

through those signs. It is preserved for a reason and it is to encourage us when we get into similar circumstances. God does nothing without a reason.

The fact is, closing out point number one, we are not alone. Anxiety is not unique to me, to you or anyone else. It is a common struggle for many in God's church today and for God's people down through history. It was common to the disciples, it was common to David and to Gideon and as we go on, to many others. Yet, Yehovah loved and helped them and He wants to do the same for us. Just remember that; we are not alone when we are anxious.

That leads into point number two.

## **2. How can we get into a constant state of anxiety?**

Many of God's people suffer in a constant state of anxiety. They are always uneasy, always worried, fearful and it's something that doesn't happen because of one thing. It's a constant state, a constant thread through their lives. It is one thing to be anxious for a moment when you are in a crisis, but it is quite another to be anxious all the time; most of the time. This is how it works. When we are faced with a legitimate crisis, a syndrome called the Fight or Flight syndrome kicks in. It is a group of changes that occur in the body, to help us as humans—God designed it that way—to cope with stress. Certain hormones like adrenaline and cortisol are released into the blood, our heart rate goes up, our breathing rate goes up, our blood pressure goes up, all in order to help us deal with the crisis. When the crisis is over, the body should then return to a normal state. We've all had this.

I'll give you an example. You are driving down a residential street in a car and everything is fine and then all of a sudden, a young boy jumps out between two parked cars chasing a ball and you slam on the brakes, screech to a halt and barely miss the child. The car has stopped and the child has run over to get the ball. But your hands are shaking on the steering wheel, your heart is pounding out of your chest, you are breathing heavily. That is the fight or flight syndrome. The fact is, you sit there for a minute and realize the crisis is over, I didn't hit him and the body starts to calm down and after a period of time—two or three minutes, fifteen or twenty minutes or whatever it is—and the body is then, pretty much back to normal.

The problem is, with some people, when they have a crisis and it passes, what they do is elevate the next crisis in their life up to crisis status. For example, let's say you were asked to list the five worst problems you're fighting right now and number one is a big one. But the rest are not so much; they are smaller in relation to the number one. So, when number one passes, then number two is not nearly a crisis but what we can do is elevate it up to the same level of worry as number one even though it doesn't deserve that level of angst or worry. Then the fight or flight syndrome never shuts off. The blood pressure remains elevated, the heart rate remains elevated and it causes long term changes in our body that are not good for us. Of course, Satan is right there stirring that pot, planting emotions, feelings and thoughts, to keep us in a constant state of anxiety.



With all the trouble in the world, watching the news, doing what we do, there is enough to worry about if we let it happen. It seems like it's one wave after another wave and what can happen if we take every wave up to crisis status, we find ourselves over time, being in a constant state of anxiety. Satan is there to provoke that because he can destroy us if he gets us to dance like his puppet on a string and can keep us in a constant state of worry. This is how we can get in a constant state of worry, which leads to the third point.

### **3. How can we break a constant state of worry?**

What can we do? We are going to talk about four ways that we can break a constant state of worry. I know I have talked to many of God's people, particularly since March and many are in that constant state of worry. Point A—I'm going to give four points.

#### **A. Do not catastrophize.**

I had never heard of this word until I started studying this subject. The word "catastrophize" comes from the word catastrophe and it means somebody automatically assumes that the worst possible thing will happen. Not something might happen but will happen. Our minds tend to imagine things to be worse than they really are.

I'll give you a tiny example of how catastrophizing works. I own a Harley motorcycle and I try to keep our cars—I'm kind of obsessive about this—cleaned and polished and especially the motorcycle. After a ride one afternoon, I was backing into the garage and I wasn't paying attention as I was tired and I dinged one of the saddle bags. It was perfect, there wasn't a scratch on that bike and I dinged it. I thought, "oh no". I was so disgusted that I parked it, looked at it once in disgust and walked into the house and beat myself up for the rest of that day. Next morning, I woke up and thought about it and went out and found a ding about the size of my little fingernail. In my mind I had built this thing up. I had built it up into the size of a silver dollar or larger. I thought, "This isn't so bad, I can fix this." But you see how the mind works. It builds something up bigger than it really is. It means that we feel like we believe we are in a worse situation than we really are; catastrophizing does that. In other words, we begin to exaggerate in our minds, the difficulties that we face. We immediately default to a worst-case scenario as the most likely scenario. We just assume that whatever the worst thing that can happen is what is going to happen. We are catastrophizing and building up in ourselves a constant state of anxiety.

What we are going to do under this third point is to look at two biblical examples of this phenomenon. The first is Israel refusing to cross over the Jordan to go into the Promised Land. Remember Moses sent twelve spies, Joshua and Caleb being two of them and then ten others. They came back and ten of the twelve catastrophized. Remember what they said? "The Canaanites are giants; they are going to rip us to pieces. The cities are too well fortified, we can't go up against them, we can't do it, God can't do it, let's turn around and go back."

When you think about that, think about what God did for Israel and what these ten had seen with their own eyes. The ten plagues coming out of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the water from the rock, Manna from heaven, the pillar of fire at night and the cloud by day—they had seen all of that. Now they come into a land, and yes, maybe the guys are pretty big and the cities have walls around them, but after what they have seen with their own eyes, Joshua and Caleb said, “Not a problem, let’s go up right now”. But the rest of these started wringing their hands, thinking about the worst possible thing that could happen—catastrophizing. The miracles weren’t enough and the spies said it’s impossible, “we can’t do this”. They immediately assumed the worst-case scenario and their catastrophizing caused them to be rejected from the Promised Land; not a good idea. They were worried and fearing but Joshua and Caleb were calm. “God did this, and God did that, He can do this easily, let’s go up and take them”.

The second example is one of the most famous men in the Bible catastrophizing—assuming the worst—focusing on everything that could potentially go wrong, filled with anxiety and this one is a little bit more personal as it involves one person. In Acts 7:20 out of the New King James is the account of Stephen addressing the High Priest, recounting the history of Israel. We know he paid with his life for this monologue.

**Acts 7:20** [He is recounting the history of Moses] *At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father s house for three months.*

21) *But when he was set out, Pharaoh s daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.*

22) *And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. (NKJV)*

So, we see from the age of three months until he was forty years old, he had lived in and been raised in Pharaoh’s palace. He was exposed to the best of everything that Egypt had to offer; education, culture and military training. Josephus mentions that Moses was made General of the Egyptian army and he led Egypt over their arch rival Ethiopia in a gigantic victory. Yes indeed, Moses was great in mighty deeds and words.

23) *Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. (NKJV)*

We are not told how it came into his heart to visit or how he even discovered he was of Israelite heritage. My guess is it was probably from his mother, who was his nanny and she told him in private. I wonder who inspired Moses at this moment to visit his brethren? I think we all know.

24) *And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian.*

25) *For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. (NKJV)*

So, it appears from the text, that at age forty, Moses knew that God had a plan for him to deliver Israel. How did that happen? Was it a dream, a vision, did God speak to him at that time, did Yehovah speak to him at that time? We don't know.

26) *And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?*

27) *But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, who made you a ruler and a judge over us?*

28) *Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday? (NKJV)*

Uh-oh, word had gotten out.

29) *Then, at this saying, Moses fled ... (NKJV)*

You do not flee unless you are afraid.

29 continued) *... and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.*

30) *And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. (NKJV)*

And we know about that account. So, between the ages of forty and eighty, Moses went from living in Pharaoh's palace to being a mighty man, a General of the army—mighty in word and deed—to wandering in the desert for forty years, herding sheep. What a contrast.

Recall what we just read earlier, that Moses supposed that his brothers would understand that God was going to use him to deliver the nation of Israel. For forty years he had had a lot of time to reflect on his life in Egypt and what might have been, because he is now out herding sheep.

Now we come to Exodus 3 and Moses is eighty years old. You would think that after all that he had endured—forty years of being on high and then forty years herding sheep—that he might be somewhat of a broken man. Certainly not mighty in word and deed.

**Exodus 3:6** [Yehovah speaking] *Moreover He said, I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” (NKJV)*

If anybody wants to know who is speaking, you just need to go to Acts 3:13, it tells you plainly, among a bunch of other scriptures that we have covered before.

6 continued) *... And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.*  
[Rightly so.]

Continuing in Verse 10.

10) *Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.*” (NKJV)

Now you would think at this moment in time, Moses would say, “This is great news; I’ve been waiting for this for forty years and I’m thankful I can have a part in your plan in saving millions of my brethren. I am so happy”. That isn’t what happened. It is not what scripture says. Instead of thinking of the sufferings of Israelites, he thought of himself. Here comes Moses’ five excuses which we have covered before, we are just going to skip over these. Look at them from the point of Moses catastrophizing; immediately assuming the worst thing is going to happen. The first one in Exodus 3:11 is, I’m not qualified. Moses said, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? I can’t do this thing, I’m not qualified. The second thing, he is supposing they are going to ask, who sent you? Verse 13.

13) *Then Moses said to God, Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they say to me, What is His name? what shall I say to them?*” (NKJV)

As we often do, looking forward we often say, what if this happens or what if that happens? That is exactly what Moses is doing—catastrophizing.

The third excuse is in Exodus 4:1 They will not believe me—he is expecting the worse.

**Exodus 4:1** *Then Moses answered and said, But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, The LORD has not appeared to you.* (NKJV)

Assuming the worst, catastrophizing again. Verse 10.

10) *Then Moses said to the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.*” (NKJV)

Maybe in fairness, because of the forty years in the wilderness, he is probably out of practice—true. But he couldn’t have been a General of the Egyptian army and raised the way he was raised in Pharaoh’s palace and be slow of speech. My guess is, this was more of an excuse than a reason. The fifth, of course, is what we would all say as little kids,

“I don’t want to. I just don’t want to do it.”

In verse 13, he said

“Send somebody else please, I just don’t want to do this.”

Here’s the point: God is telling Moses to do something way out of his comfort zone. He has been herding sheep in a quiet environment, he is married, he has children, he has his own tent and his own flocks and is probably very content. He is eighty years old. God says, here is what I want you to do and it is way out of his comfort zone. Then he

immediately started catastrophizing, immediately started thinking about everything that could possibly go wrong, every worst-case scenario he throws up before God Almighty. He ignores the fact that the most powerful Force in the spiritual and physical realm is right behind him saying,

“I’m going to walk with you, I’m going to help you, I’m going to get you through this”.

The same holds true for us; that same power and force is right beside us. When we are faced with doing something out of our comfort zone, the message is—the record of scripture says—don’t catastrophize, don’t assume the worst possible thing. Remember who is behind you, remember who is inspiring you, remember who you are looking to. Our citizenship is in heaven—Philippians 3:20 tells us that. That is where our focus should be.

The second one:

### **B. Realize that my view of any situation might not be accurate.**

If we are in a crisis and we are looking humanly at a situation, we have to realize that maybe we don’t see everything. Maybe what I think is true, isn’t really true. Let’s stop here and look at our physical senses. Let’s think about what we can see. The human eye sees a range of frequencies in the electromagnetic spectrum called visible light. It is only one and a half percent of the entire electromagnetic spectrum. Below the frequencies we can see, are radio waves, micro waves, infrared waves—IR waves—the waves that power your infrared remote and allow it to go across the room and change the channels. Then comes visible light and then as you go up the electromagnetic scale, we come above what we can see, Ultraviolet light (UV light), X-rays and Gamma rays. The point I am making is, what we see here and what you are looking at right now is one and a half percent of the entire electromagnetic spectrum. Do you think there is something out there that we don’t see? That if we could see as God sees, even on a physical level—there is more out there than we can see.

Now think about hearing—the way we hear. I’m going to quote from a science magazine article in February 28 of this year. It’s about dogs smelling ability verses our smelling ability.

*“Dogs noses just got a bit more amazing. Not only are they up to 100 million times more sensitive than ours*

[can you imagine—we hear 100 millionth of what a dog can smell, they are so much more sensitive]

*but they can sense weak thermal radiation through their noses, the body heat of prey, a new study reveals. The finding helps explain how canines with impaired sight, impaired hearing or impaired smell can still hunt successfully.*

Because through their nose they can sense heat—we can’t do that. The point I’m making is, if I rely on my five senses—especially in times of stress or anxiety—very

likely my perception of reality is not 100 percent accurate. That is just within the physical realm. What if we add the spiritual realm, which we can't see? We have no access to it with our physical senses. What about that?

There is an example in the Bible in 2 Kings 6. Here we break into an account where Syria and Israel are at war and the Syrian king is vexed because the Israelites always seem to be a step ahead of him. Every time he moves, they seem to know where he is going, every plan he has, they seem to know in advance. So, the king of Syria logically assumes that they have a traitor. So, he asks his minions to find the traitor—who is the traitor? The officers say there is no traitor, the problem is Elisha. Elisha's God whispers in his ear what we are saying in private. 2 Kings 6:13.

**2 Kings 6:13** *So he said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him.*" (NKJV)

He was going to kill him of course.

13 continued) ... *And it was told him, saying, Surely he is in Dothan.*" (NKJV)

That is sixty miles north of Jerusalem. It's interesting, Dothan is where Joseph's brothers dug a pit and threw him in it and stole his coat.

14) *Therefore, he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.* (NKJV)

Not good.

15) *And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, Alas, my master! What shall we do?"* (NKJV)

He is wringing his hands, he's worried because he sees this massive army surrounding them.

16) *So, he answered, Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.*" (NKJV)

I'm sure the servant said, "What? You're nuts, what are you thinking? Did you have too much to drink last night? What is going on?"

17) *And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.*" *Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.* (NKJV)

He saw a spiritual army that was previously invisible. The point is, Elisha's servant was using his physical senses to assess their situation and based on what he saw, he panicked. He concluded that they were doomed. He relied on his physical vision which is one and a half percent of the entire electromagnetic spectrum but not even that. The important thing was he lacked the ability to see spiritual reality. When Yehovah opened his eyes to see, the true reality became apparent. The servant realized his vision of reality was nowhere close to what was really going on. There is a powerful lesson for us, in that through our senses, our view of reality is not very accurate. The true reality may be something totally different than we perceive through our senses. That's why we need God's help in perceiving situations and why we are told in Philippians to seek the mind of Christ with his intuition, His instincts, understanding and wisdom.

The third, how to overcome being in constant anxiety.

### **C. Live in the present.**

There is a saying, don't let the past or the future steal your present. We are all guilty of that. It's pretty common for us—I know it is for me—to dwell on my past sins and my past mistakes. We flagellate ourselves; we repent and then we re-repent and re-re-repent and have flashbacks of what we did, over all the things we cannot undo. They are already done. The Apostle Paul had something to say about this. Let's pretend we are Paul and the year is 62 A.D. So, we are in Paul's shoes now and sitting in a prison in Rome and trying to write letters to the churches. If we are in a dungeon in Rome, what would occupy our mind while sitting in a filthy dungeon? If you were Paul, would you be focusing on your past? Would you be thinking of those you murdered—the Christians you murdered, being a good Jew? Would you be thinking of the ones you threw into prison, who died in prison or the families you split up or the beatings you caused? Would you be thinking of that while you were sitting in this filthy jail? Or maybe your focus would be the future, because Paul was likely to be executed very soon. So, sitting in that jail you could focus on the past and you could focus on the future and you would be in constant state of anxiety.

Humanly speaking, if I was Paul it would be easy to focus on the past or dread the future. But what was his focus? Go to Philippians 3:12 and see what his focus was. Paul's focus was not on his past or his future; it was on doing what he needed to do right then. This is out of the New King James.

**Philippians 3:12** *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, [in the present tense, right here, right now] that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*

13) *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind [do not live in the past] and reaching forward [he's talking about the present] to those things which are ahead,*

14) *I press toward [meaning right then, pressing toward my salvation] the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (NKJV)*

Paul is living in the present, he is not living in the past, he is doing what he could do at that moment in time; doing what God our Father wanted him to do. He is not fretting and worrying about the future. He is not worrying about having his head cut off or being tortured or anything like that because we cannot control the future. We do not know what the future holds and Paul is concentrating on what he can do then. He is, as a result, living in his present. He forgot the things that were behind, he didn't stress about the future and he was focusing on what he could do for his Father right then.

That leads us to the last point about how we can overcome constant anxiety. It's a big way.

#### **D. Be thankful for the blessings we do have.**

Be thankful for what is going right in our lives, at this moment. This is an exercise—if you want to be completely grossed out but incredibly thankful at the same time, spend a few minutes—go on google or something—looking at what a mattress was like in the Middle Ages. If you want to be thankful and grateful for something. The mattresses they had were made of straw and all the bugs, all the rodents, all the lice, all the critters took up residence in the mattress. So, you had company every hour you slept. It was filthy, it was full of disease. If you want to be thankful, when you close your eyes tonight, be thankful for the mattress under you and maybe the air conditioning we have, the running water we have, the hot running water we have—the list goes on and on.

In Philippians 4:6 I read just the first five words but we want to see a tie in here. This is out of the NIV. Paul said, as we read earlier, do not be anxious about anything but he ties it in with something that is a key to avoiding being anxious.

**Philippians 4:6** *Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation, by prayer and petition [yes, we make our needs known to our Father] with thanksgiving, present your request to God. (NIV)*

Here, Paul connects not being anxious with thanksgiving. We could spend hours thanking God and thinking about all the blessings we have in this nation, in the modern world, because we live—even in a middle class in a first world country—better than kings and potentates in the Middle Ages; far better. They didn't have toilets, they didn't have hot running water (Japan did, but most didn't). We have so many blessings and when we focus on being grateful and giving thanks, it puts our life situation into perspective. Rather than focusing on what worries us and the next crisis that comes along, we are focusing on the present and what we have and what we should be thankful for.

What I mentioned in the last few minutes, are physical blessings. What about the more important spiritual blessings? We have so much to be thankful for. God has revealed, in these end times, more about Himself and His Son in the record of scripture than has been revealed before. He is revealing new insights into what went on in scripture and who did what and how He and His Son worked together. We see that in ways that have



not been seen since I don't know when—since probably the days of the apostles maybe. We have so much to be thankful for. We in the church have God's spirit to open our minds as we study, to give us power to change our very nature from who we are, to being in the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. To set a Christ like example in our marriages, in our interpersonal relationships and our jobs within our communities. We are so blessed; we have so much to be thankful for. The more time we spend thinking of and thanking God for our spiritual blessings, as well as our physical blessings, the less anxious we will feel. So, the key in point D is to - be thankful.

Let's summarize now. With anxiety, and people who suffer with anxiety and people who suffer from continual anxiety, I don't think there is a light switch that you can just flip and have it gone away. That just doesn't happen, a light switch where you can just throw a switch and it is 100 percent overcome and never to return again. That's not going to happen, but God, our loving Father, has left us principles and examples to help us when we feel anxious, when we feel overwhelmed, when we feel there is just one trial after another, after another, coming our way. He has given us examples and principles in His Word and all of those demonstrate His love for us. If He could do what He did for Gideon, if He could do what He did for Moses, if He could do what He did for David, look what He can do for us.

We have to realize that if anxiety is a challenge for us, we are not alone. Friends, family, church brethren, are right in step with us, because they face the same problems as David, Gideon, Moses and many others did. They are going to be in God's Kingdom and through the power of the Almighty, they made an appeal to Him and He looked after them, He brought them through. He took them by the hand and He led them through their anxiety over the issues they faced.

We have learned that we must not catastrophize. Rarely does a worst-case scenario actually happen. It is often quite a bit less of a concern, or we find out that we didn't need to worry about it at all. It was something that we should not have been concerned about.

We need to practice living in the present. We have to understand that in times of stress, our perception of what is actually going on is not correct. I have learned this so many times. Our perceptions of reality are not correct. We don't know people's heart, we weren't there when something was said or done and we make assumptions, generally catastrophizing and dreaming up the worst thing that could possibly happen. We have to understand that, even on a physical level, our perception of reality is not always accurate. It is almost never accurate on a spiritual level. We don't know the hearts and minds of people. But our Father does, His Son does, and yes, we can ask for that insight. As we draw closer to God Almighty and His Son and become more like Them, we can have their instincts and intuition and Their understanding. Because we now perceive and think more and more like Them, we can begin to grasp that. We have to be really, really careful and realize, that in times of stress, our perception of reality may not be correct.

Finally, we just have to be grateful, because in so many ways, we are the most blessed people on earth. We have comforts and conveniences that were not known a few hundred years ago and we should be thankful for that. Yes, we have our challenges, yes, the new world has brought on many stressors and many problems. But we know, in the World Tomorrow, these will go away. We know we are so blessed.

If we do all the things we have covered, these tools—if we begin to use them and exercise them—then, as Paul said, we can get to the point where we are “anxious for nothing”. We are looking to our Father, looking to His Son and we are beginning to see as They see. We have absolute faith that They are with us and want the absolute best for us. Go to Philippians 4:7 and notice the tie in here, if we are thankful and not anxious.

**Philippians 4:7** *and the peace of God, which passes all understanding [certainly all human understanding], shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* (NKJV)

So, this peace of God does not come from human understanding; it is not humanly logical. Rather, it is a spiritual gift. Whether you are dealing with the death of a family member or you are dealing with maybe, losing your legs or some other very highly stressful situation, to be calm and peaceful in a highly stressful situation is a gift. I have known people in the last throws of cancer and they are at peace, they have no anxiety, they have no fear because they are claiming this gift from God Almighty and His Son.

Let's go to a final scripture and see what Christ said in John 14. This is the night He was betrayed—think about this—this is the night He was betrayed when He said these words. His suffering was about to start. His suffering was going to last fifteen to sixteen hours—continual bleeding, continual pain, continual suffering and abuse. In spite of that, notice what He said.

**John 14:27** *Peace I leave with you [He's talking to His disciples but by extension to us], My peace I give to you; not as the world gives [because the world is physical and can't give this] do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* (NKJV)

It is a gift from the Son of God. It was a gift He had from His Father when He walked this earth. So, when we are in a stressful situation, our focus should not be on the physical, it should be on the spiritual. The big lesson in all of this is, through the love and the power of the Almighty God and His Son, we can have peace in our lives rather than anxiety in our lives.