

Remember This Until the Storm Passes By

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources; several points were taken from a lesson by Gary Henry.)

Introduction:

- A. Worrying is one of the most counterproductive things we can do
 - 1. Worry is like a rocking chair; it will give us something to do, but it won't get us anywhere
- B. Everyone finds themselves in the center of a storm at some point.
 - 1. Why is it that some handle it calmly, while others fall to pieces?
 - 2. Are they specially blessed with strength God has not given to others?
 - 3. Are those who crumble under pressure just naturally more sensitive, vulnerable, or weak?
- C. Handling pressure and anxiety is a matter of training
 - 1. God gives us the tools, the ability to learn to use them, and the power to overcome - 1Cor. 10:13
 - 2. It is up to us to take the tools, learn to use them, and discipline ourselves to remain calm in the middle of the storm
- D. Jesus slept through the same storm that the disciples thought would kill them.
 - 1. Mark 4:35-41 - He had the power to handle the storm
 - 2. Through the help of God, we have the power to handle our storms
 - 3. We may not be able to send the wind away, but we can control what the wind does to us
 - 4. Do we believe this?

I. WHAT ARE WE AFRAID OF?

- A. Is it the storm, or what the storm can do, or what we are afraid it might do?
 - 1. Anxiety is distress about future uncertainties, characterized by mental agitation and uneasiness; it may be mild or severe
 - 2. It primarily has to do with what may happen in the future, either near or distant, and often concerns matters over which one has little or no power or influence
- B. What causes anxiety?
 - 1. Anxiety is caused by real or imagined threats to our well-being
 - a. We feel vulnerable and inadequately protected against these threats: social rejection, physical injury or disease, poverty, death
 - 2. Anxiety has three main elements...
 - a. Insecurity: something bad is going to happen
 - b. Helplessness: there is nothing I can do
 - c. Isolation: there is no one to help me
 - 3. Emotionally, they cause just as much harm as if what was imagined was actually real

II. WHAT TO REMEMBER IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

- A. Trust God
 - 1. The best remedy is to deal with the cause, not just the symptoms
 - 2. What is the truth about the Christian's anxieties and fears?

- a. While Christians may feel insecure, the reality is that we are very secure - Prov. 3:21-26; Heb. 4:16
 - b. While Christians may feel helpless, the reality is that we have great help - Rom. 8:31; Psalm 27:5
 - c. While Christians may feel isolated, the reality is that God is always at our side - Psalm 23:4; Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6
 - d. Ascidia, one of the so called seven deadly sins, is a Latin term for the sin of despair, the feeling that everything is going wrong and nothing will ever be good
 - e. Strong feelings of insecurity, helplessness, and isolation are indicators of a loss of faith and confidence in God
 - f. Illustration: "Don't you know that worrying like that is a sin?"
"Yes, and that's what worries me the most!"
 - g. In Christ and by faith, you stand on solid, secure ground, you are not helpless, and you are not alone!
3. The remedy for anxiety is to develop complete trust and confidence in God's ability to help us deal with anything that threatens us
- a. Isa. 40:31; John 14:1; Phil. 4:13; Deut. 31:7-8
 - b. The more we learn about God, the more we know His infinite power and His interest in our well being - 1Peter 5:6-7
 - c. The avenue of prayer is open to Christians to request God's help - 1John 5:14
 - d. God has promised peace of mind to us if we are willing to give our anxieties to Him - John 16:33; Phil. 4:6-7; 1Peter 4:19
- B. Take these practical steps:
1. Read the Bible
 - a. Committing ourselves to God's safekeeping requires that we grow in our knowledge of God, which will lead us to trust Him, which will lead us to love Him
 - b. Thus, the most important thing we can do to bring this about is study the Scriptures, pray, and meditate on God's promises to His faithful people - Rom. 15:4; 2Peter 1:3-4
 2. Be realistic
 - a. Peace of mind does not depend on solving all problems, righting all wrongs, removing all imperfections, or getting all we want - Ecc. 8:16-17
 - b. Some things will not change and we need to be realistic enough to accept that:
 - 1) There are problems that have no solutions
 - 2) There are situations that must simply be lived through
 - 3) "The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook." (William James) - Prov. 19:11
 - c. Realistic knowledge of our own limitations ought to cause us to relax and slow down
 - 1) "Besides the noble art of getting things done is the noble art of leaving things undone." (Lin Yutang)
 - 2) "The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of nonessentials." (William E. Gladstone)

- d. We must learn to let go of some problems and allow the Lord to be in charge of them - 1Peter 5:7; Prov. 3:5-6
3. Be flexible
 - a. Change is inevitable; we have got to be resilient, adaptable, adjustable - Phil. 4:11-12
 - b. Under stress, if we can't bend, we will surely break
 - c. Our faith must be in Him who changes not, and not in our ability to hold both ends together again the middle.
 - d. There are some changes we ought to resist without compromise; wisdom can tell us when to change and when to hold our ground
 4. Focus on the good concerns, minimize the unnecessary cares
 - a. In the Bible, cares can be either good or bad
 - 1) Good - 1Cor. 12:25; 2Cor. 11:28; Phil. 2:20
 - 2) Bad - Matt. 13:22; Luke 10:41
 - b. We tend to become distracted by many relatively unimportant cares, and overlook the truly significant things
 - c. When our minds are distracted by many matters, it gets very little benefit from any of them
 - d. Only one thing is of primary concern; everything else is subsidiary - Matt. 6:33-34
 5. Learn to live one day at a time
 - a. Proper use of today diminishes anxiety about tomorrow
 - 1) Matt. 6:34
 - 2) Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its worries and sorrows; it only empties today of its strength and peace.
 - 3) Worry is the interest paid on trouble before it falls due.
 - b. Many, if not most, of our fears will turn out to be unfounded
 - 1) "I remember the old man who said he had known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened."
(James A. Garfield in 1881 when he was told that as the new President of the US, he had a lot of problems ahead)
 - 2) "In headaches and in worry vaguely life leaks away, and Time will have his fancy tomorrow or today" (W. H. Auden)
 - 3) "There is nothing so wretched or foolish as to anticipate misfortunes. What madness it is in expecting evil before it arrives!" (Seneca Younger, Epistolae Ad Lucilium. XCVIII)
 6. Stay busy - Prov. 16:3
 - a. Anxiety and idleness often go hand-in-hand
 - 1) "Blessed is the person who is too busy to worry in the daytime, and too sleepy to worry at night." (Leo Aikman)
 - b. Much good can be accomplished, even in adverse circumstances, if we will quit concentrating on what cannot be done and do what CAN be done
 - 1) "Our great business in life is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand" (Thomas Carlyle)

- c. There is no tranquilizer as effective as the knowledge that we have done our best and there is no pillow as soft as a good conscience
 - 1) "Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake." (Victor Hugo)

7. Learn contentment

a. A lesson Paul had learned - Phil. 4:11-13

- 1) We need to be able to rejoice in the Lord, which we can do if we continually count our blessings - Phil. 4:4-9
 - a) Vs 4 - Know that God expects you to rejoice
 - b) Vs 6 - Stop dwelling on anxieties and start thanking God for blessings
 - c) Vs 8 - Deliberately direct thoughts to positive things
 - d) Vs 9 - Start imitating people who are successful in being content
- 2) The Christian ought to be able to see the silver lining in the darkest cloud

b. The discontented Christian may lose his soul over discontent

- 1) 1Tim. 6:6-8; Heb. 13:5-6
- 2) Anxiety often comes from having too much, rather than too little - Ecc. 5:12
- 3) Our wealth depends not so much on what we have, as what we can do without - Ecc. 4:6

c. When a problem produces anxiety within us, the very best thing we can do, rather than remain immersed in the problem, deliberately shift our attention to two things: reverence and gratitude toward God

Conclusion:

A. Peace of mind until the storm passes by

- 1. Trusting God
- 2. Reading the Bible
- 3. Being realistic
- 4. Being flexible
- 5. Focusing on important matters and minimizing attention on unimportant ones
- 6. Learning to live one day at a time
- 7. Staying busy
- 8. Accepting our lot in life (learning contentment)

B. Psalm 23