

Christians Dealing With Panic Attacks and Anxiety

by Tim Conway

Okay, so I announced on Sunday that I hoped to deal with panic attacks, or anxiety attacks. There are definite similarities between panic and anxiety, and depression. Lots of connections. Look, I don't know all the lingo, I don't stay up with all the current [research]. Kenny actually said that he's got a 3-hour lecture that he's got to sit through tomorrow. Where are you brother? What's the actual title of the class? "It's Advanced Mental Health." And you're going to hear three hours on what topic? "Mood Disorders and Anxiety." So he's going to go hear the secular take on all this tomorrow. And so we're going to try to give a Christian and a scriptural take on it tonight; maybe Kenny can come back next week and tell us how different the medical world and the psychiatric world approaches these things.

Now, Anxiety, Panic. I can tell you right off that obviously I am limited in experiences. I certainly am not a professional in dealing with these things. I am not an authority. Obviously there is a lot more that could be said, but as with everything, my authority to teach doesn't come from the latest psychiatric journals. The guy that's going to lecture to Kenny tomorrow, where does he get what he is going to say? Well, he is going to get it probably from the latest authorities. Basically, I'm going to go back to the same thing that Christians have been going back to for 2,000 years. I am under a mandate - not to preach the latest medical journals - I am under a mandate to preach the Word of God. Look, I think one of the questions you have to ask if you are experiencing anxiety, anxiety attacks, panic attacks; one of the questions that you have to settle is this: "Is Scripture sufficient to help you deal with the problem or isn't it?" That really has to be answered right from the beginning.

Is Scripture sufficient to handle panic attacks in Christians? And I emphasize the "in Christians", because listen, I am not going to speak (I mean, very little) on panic and anxiety in unsaved people. That is not what I'm here to deal with. Undoubtedly, when Kenny sits through his 3-hour lecture tomorrow, they're not even going to come at it from any kind of Christian standpoint. They don't care if people are Christians or not. They're just looking for people with panic attacks. They're looking for anxiety. They want to give names and categories to everything, and they want to figure out, and they want to diagnose, and they want to give it a name. And then they want to medicate it by that name: "What's the latest medications that go along with treating that certain syndrome or that disease?" They want to tag everything. Craig was telling me right now that pedophilia is now

a disease. And, undoubtedly, as soon as something is diagnosed as a disease, then it's treated not as though it's your fault; now you're a victim, and on and on it goes. So, as we're getting started, let's pray.

Father, I ask You to help us and guide us. I know this is a sensitive issue. I know that it's a real issue. And I pray, Father, that You would allow that the words that would be said here in this place tonight would be helpful. We want it to align with your Word, we want it to be pleasing to You. I pray all this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Okay, if you have your Bibles you can open them up to Matthew 6. Again, I am not even trying to make it a point to know all the lingo, but I'm assuming that what used to be known as a Nervous Breakdown is actually what today is called an Anxiety Attack or a Panic Attack. I'm just making that assumption. I don't hear that word used much anymore, but I'm assuming that it's probably the same thing. When we're talking about depression, anxiety, something that's very interesting is, often the same drugs medically are used if people have depression or if they have anxiety. So, obviously, the doctors are treating them the same way. Are there relationships? I think there are; although, obviously, anxiety is not exactly the same as being depressed or being in despair. They may be linked, and I think there's lots of parallels. And I think dealing with them, the remedy, is very much to be found in the same place. So whether it's a nervous breakdown... I would even bring various mental disorders into this.

But panic attacks: what are we talking? How many here have experienced any thing that you would call an anxiety attack, a panic attack, depression? [Pause]. What happened to Kath? [Audience]: Sitting on the floor. [Tim]: Oh okay, I just didn't see the hand. Okay, so a fair number of people here. Look, there can be circumstances, there can be reasons, there can be things happening in your life that contribute to this. I want to come back to this again: listen, I want to deal tonight with Christians. I'm not talking about somebody that said a prayer and they're saying they're saved, and there's no real indications. Look, if you don't know the Lord, you've got every reason to be depressed, in despair, and panicking; because your situation is really bad, because hell is real, and God's wrath is real, and your time is short. And so, what we're dealing with is Christians. You see, that is so important, because as soon as you're dealing with a Christian, you're now dealing with a category of people, that, when the truth is known, they don't really have a reason to be depressed, no matter what the circumstance is. They don't have a reason to be panicked or anxiety-filled when the truth about their condition is known.

The truth – haven't we heard this, don't we hear this – the truth shall set you free. Now you can examine that and say, "Well, what's the context and what

does He mean there? Set us free, how?" But I can tell you this, He doesn't give us a lot of exact particulars there. But it sets free. The truth sets you free. And what does it set you free from? Well, the truth sets us free from all sorts of slaveries and bondages. It sets us free from all manner of things. And one of the things that it certainly sets us free from is hopelessness. It sets us free from having to be filled with the anxiety over the things that the world is full of anxiety over. You see, the thing is, that as soon as we're dealing with a Christian and we talk about any fears or anxieties that that person has, they're unfounded. Underline that. Unfounded. You see, when I talk about unfounded fears, that's such an important connection. People's fears and anxieties are very founded when they're lost. But if they're not lost, if a person is saved, all their anxieties are unfounded. That doesn't mean that there aren't scary things out there; but your fear of them is unfounded.

You think about it, somebody can kill your body – I mean, think about the scariest guy that might torture you for a long time – and yet doesn't Jesus say your fear of him is unfounded, because after he kills your body there's nothing more he can do. In fact, He says, "Don't fear him." You see, the reality is, the scariest things in this world, your fear of it is unfounded. Why? "He that is with us is greater than he that is in the world." Even if the devil himself is standing outside the doorway of your bedroom; and even though that, in and of itself, is kind of a scary scenario, He that's with you inside the bedroom is greater than he that's standing at the door. You see, your fears are unfounded. He even said, "I'll never leave you or forsake you." Didn't He say that? You see, the truth sets us free from these things.

So, unfounded. Panic attacks, anxiety attacks, or even depression, which is a little bit different, they're based on unfounded factors, unfounded fears. But they are fears and anxieties nevertheless. The person is gripped by them. Even though the reasons are unfounded, they grip the person, they affect the person. And how do they affect the person? Well, sometimes people hyperventilate, sometimes the heart palpitates, sometimes they break out into a cold sweat – they're seized, they're gripped by a fear that sometimes is paralyzing. I know a pastor friend that was telling me that years ago when he was younger, he could barely go to the post office and just deliver mail or whatever. Sometimes it's a real panic of going out into public, being exposed to people, because that all the more compounds it, because you're in the midst of people and it's embarrassing, and that tends to make you panic all the more. And so, crowds often set these things off. But what happens is, basically, whether we're talking about depression, whether we're talking about these anxiety attacks, it presses the person to the point where they feel like they just cannot cope with that moment, like they just gotta get out of there. They're unable to deal with what's happening.

And I do think it's interesting, I was just trying to think through Scripture. Do we have any examples in Scripture of people who... you know, sometimes you hear in Scripture the idea of people trembling. But let me ask you, how often in your life have you ever really got to the point where you were so affected by something that you literally trembled? Or that your legs almost gave out? Or that your mouth got so dry that you couldn't talk, you thought your legs might not hold you, or you began to break out and perspire and literally tremble? I mean, I think that it's not real common. In fact, some people probably feel like... maybe I'm not exactly certain what that is. But just going through Scripture, you don't have to turn to these, I want you just to sit there in Matthew 6.

Job, in Job 3:26, he says, "I'm not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, but trouble comes." And obviously, those troubles were real. The devil was bringing real troubles in his life. He's a man that is just not at rest. He was definitely a man that was in turmoil. He was a man that said, the things that he feared they came upon him. Now we might look at that and say, "Well, is that an unfounded fear? The things that came upon him were real." Well, again, I would say if a person knows the Lord... and see, you know the rest of the story. In fact, that's one of the problems. One of the problems is, we don't know the rest of the story. And so we become gripped by fear over things because we're deathly afraid of what might happen. It's nice when you know the end of the story. You see, if we could just see ourselves there before the Lord, and every tear wiped away, and full of eternal joy... But you see, the thing is, we can see that by faith, even if we can't see it with the literal eye. And that's the issue. This battle really becomes a battle between fear and faith, back and forth.

Eliphaz - this is one of job's friends - he said this: "Amid thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, dread came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake." Now this seems like he might have had a demonic experience. And you know what? That may be one of the very real factors involved in depression or involved in anxiety attacks. The devil is real. We're just playing around right here at the tip of the iceberg.

Listen to this in Psalm 53:5, "There they are, in great terror - this is interesting - where there is no terror." Scripture describes that kind of situation. "There they are, in great terror, where there is no terror." Or you have a proverb that's similar: "The wicked flee when no one pursues." (Prov. 28:1). People are afraid. I know that's speaking specifically about a wicked person, not about a Christian. But the reality is, Scripture talks about people who are afraid when no one is there; people who are running when no one is pursuing; people who are in great terror when there's no terror. Or you have the psalmist, David (James touched on this several weeks back) in Psalm 55, "Fear and trembling come upon

me, and horror overwhelms me." You get this reality in Scripture. Are these guys just being hyperbolic? Is this hyperbole? Are they just exaggerating when they talk about trembling? I don't think so. And there's no reason to believe that. "Fear and trembling [come upon me], and horror overwhelms me." I don't think they're just exaggerating. Paul says, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling." Think about that, the apostle Paul. I mean, there's a man of faith, and yet he's in much trembling? I mean, he was put through circumstances that pushed him. Undoubtedly, of all the people on the face of the earth, you've got to know that the devil was probably really targeting Paul. Trembling.

Now here's something that I think if you just think about; and I've got numerous verses here that I think touch on this; but think with me here. If you fall into depression, or have a nervous breakdown, or have an anxiety attack, whatever your condition, (and I recognize, everybody may be different), one of the things is this: In the little bit of time that we have here, we obviously can't deal with every single scenario. The truth is, every situation has to be taken separately, but there's some general things that are true all the way around. Think with me here. When a person goes through these kind of ordeals, sometimes there's physical aspects to it. There's something organic, or chemical, sometimes. But any time, every time, all the time, when people go through situations like this, it's spiritual.

Now follow that. Physical things may play in sometimes, but spiritual things come into play all the time. You can't get away from it. If you're dealing with fears, if you're dealing with anxieties, you're dealing with the mind, you're dealing with thinking, you're in the realm of the spiritual. If you're suffering depression or anxiety, it has to do with the soul or with the spirit of man, with the mind of man, every single time. You can't get away from that reality. Why is that important? Because that means that every single time we're dealing with this, even if it is a thyroid gland, or postpartum depression; even if it is a chemical imbalance; even if mental - you've got some kind of brain damage and it's coming into play in this - even if that's the fact, even if there is some identifiable physical factor; every situation, whether it's physical or not, is a spiritual event. And that means that there is a place in every single situation for the Word of God to be applied to the soul of that person. That's critical. And you know, we have to come to this conclusion like I said before: either Scripture is sufficient, or it's not. Because if you say, "Look, I've gone to Scripture, and I've got a form of anxiety that is not addressed there, and there's no answer to it there," then I would say you're an unbeliever, because a believer is going to find something from God's Word. And I have that based on the authority of God's Word.

Just think about this. I'm going to go back to, "Every situation is a spiritual situation." Just think of this, Proverbs 4:23; these are off-handed verses, but just

see how they collectively build together: "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." Everything in your life flows out of - what does it say? - the heart. As soon as we are talking about the heart or the mind, we're talking about spiritual issues, issues that have to do with the spirit. I mean, when you talk about cleansing yourself from every defilement of body and spirit, well, where is that? where are the defilements of the spirit? The spirit is the inanimate part of man, right? The thinking part. It's not necessarily a specific organ that you can find; the heart of the man. And we can say this: from the heart flow the springs of life. Everything. Everything is flowing out of there.

Or I just think of this: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." Now just think about that. Every single thing that you do, is something that has a spring or an association with that part of you that grumbles, or complains, or disputes. , "The spiritual person judges all things." The spiritual person judges all things. And I'm just saying, everything has a spiritual angle. We know that for those who love God, all things work together. You see, every single aspect of the life of the Christian is a spiritual aspect. It's a spiritual reality. It has spiritual implications. It comes back to faith, it comes back to thinking, it comes back to the mind, it comes back to the heart of man. Everything.

I Corinthians 4:5, "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart." I'm just thinking about Judgment Day. What happens on Judgment Day? Every purpose of your heart is disclosed. Every purpose; everything that you do; everything you think; everything that you apply your will to; everything with purpose is going to come under the examination of God. What category does that put everything in? It puts it in the spiritual category. This is my point: You may have physical aspects; I think when you have somebody that's experiencing depression or panic attacks, should you look there? Yes. Is there maybe even a place to visit a doctor? Yeah. There can be physical aspects undoubtedly. You may find that something is physically wrong with the person. You may find that something is wrong with their sleep pattern, something is wrong with their eating; something is wrong somewhere. That can be very real. But you know what? There are times when there doesn't need to be anything physical, but it's still spiritual. Everything is spiritual. Everything comes back to that. And if it comes back to that, then we need to recognize this: Scripture has something to say to it.

Listen to 2 Peter: "May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us ALL things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him." And where does that knowledge come from? There's only one place - Scripture. You

know 2 Timothy 3, it gives us this reality that "all scripture is breathed out by God, profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete (or the woman of God complete) equipped for every good work." Scripture does that. Scripture has an answer. "How can a young man keep his way pure (or a young woman)?" Whether you have panic attacks or not, how can you keep your way pure? "By guarding it according to Your Word." (Psalm 119:9).

Or, "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul." It's perfect, it's complete, for reviving the soul. This is critical, because if you get to the place where it's like, "Nah, Scripture doesn't answer," then you know where you're gonna go? You're gonna go to men's opinions. That's where you're gonna go. And men are idiots without the help of God. Oh they can tell you how far away certain galaxies are, but then they believe it came from a Big Bang, and they wipe God out of the equation altogether. And listen, I'm not the one who made that up. God says, "Wanting to be wise, they became fools." (Rom. 1:22). And if you want to listen to men, you're gonna end up with the opinion of fools. The doctors are fools. All you have to do is look at the history. Look at what the doctors were saying ten years ago: it's entirely different than what they're saying now. They change their minds all the time. They don't have answers. They want to take things that are sin and they want to make them diseases, because they're lost, and because they're in the power of the evil one, and the evil one wants to destroy people. He is the father of lies. He doesn't want people to recognize that they are guilty sinners before a holy God, and to repent, and to seek salvation in Christ. He wants people to think that they can figure it all out on their own, and they don't need God, and they don't need His Truth, and they don't need His Word, and they can figure it out, and they're wise enough; and they want to put their confidence in the arm of the flesh. And that's just the reality.

And if you think there's no answer in Scripture... see, I don't think that. What I think is, that every single spiritual problem that man can ever have is addressed in the Word of God. I believe that. And if you don't believe that, you're gonna end up in big trouble. This is the only safe place. And you have to ask this. Everybody has to ask this. Now look, I would not say that I have experienced panic attacks. When I was lost, nothing like that. It didn't run in my family; I didn't know anybody that suffered from depression; I didn't know anybody that had panic attacks. I mean, we were just a bunch of drunk foul-mouthed Irish. And then when I got saved, the first ten years, I didn't know anything about that. I mean, unmoved assurance. Every day, Christianity was just a total joy. It wasn't till I became a pastor that I actually began to experience aspects of spiritual warfare that kind of pushed me a lot closer to the edge than ever before. There were some real battles

in the soul, and battles to not fall into depression, not so much anxiety. I mean, I just had some times when it felt like I was in a vice. I mean, sometimes I remember Whitfield talking about feeling like the devil was pressing on his chest. I used to feel that on a regular basis. It felt like I was in some all-out battle.

But I can tell you this: In all the things that I had to go through, I was absolutely persuaded of this - the answer to my struggles is in Scripture. I was absolutely convinced of that. And as Christians we have to be absolutely convinced that if you want to be made complete, and if you want to be made perfect, and if you want to have your heart revived, and if we're gonna be granted all things that pertain to life and godliness; it's going to come through that knowledge of Him, it's going to come through His Word, it's going to come through His promises.

Now here's the thing: When you come to Scripture, the most saturated area of Scripture concerning anxiety is to be found on the Sermon on the Mount. Hands down. Matthew chapter 6, and that's where I had you turn. And we want to look at this, because the term "anxious" between Matthew 6:25 and 6:34, those ten verses, we find the word "anxious". It shows up in verse 25. It shows up in verse 27, verse 28. It shows up in verse 31, and it shows up twice in verse 34. Anxiety - here it is, the most saturated portion of Scripture dealing with this topic. And so, look, Jesus is the authority. If He's going to talk to us about anxiety, we do really well to listen, because He's a master at it, and He hits all sorts of aspects that have to do with it, that are well worth pointing out.

So, anxious. The idea of the word "anxious" is the idea of being distracted or pulled apart. It's being distracted by these apprehensions about possible dangers, distracting cares, concerns, worries. Look, the truth is, it's a form of fear. And you see it right here in this text, because if you look; well, actually, we're gonna see it in the parallel passage in Luke. But it's the idea of the what-ifs. It's looking at tomorrow like, "Oh no!" - foreboding all the time - "What's gonna happen? This is gonna happen. I fear this is gonna happen." And it's just living in the shadow all the time. Or, "If I go over there, what's gonna happen?" You may be being bombarded by feelings of inability and the sense of being overwhelmed. It's like I was talking about this pastor friend; it can be like where even going to the post office is like climbing the Himalayas. I mean, it's just like you've got to go over this hurdle. And if you think about it in a time when you don't have any of those fears or things; I mean, driving to the post office; it's like, you could listen to the radio or you could sing a hymn or you could enjoy the sunrise. And you can go over there and come back, and it could be just an enjoyable time away. But something clouds the mind, something fills us with this fear. "Oh, what if this happens? what if that happens?"

And if you look at the parallel passage, you don't have to go over there, I want you just to stay here in Matthew 6. But over in Luke 12, He said to His

disciples in Luke 12:22, "I tell you, do not be anxious." Then He comes back in verse , "Do not be worried." And then He comes back in Luke , and He says, "Fear not." You see that? "Don't be anxious; don't worry; don't fear." It's all kind of synonymous language, because that's exactly what happens. If you talk to somebody that's having a panic attack, and you say, "Are you full of anxiety?" "Yes." "Are you full of worries?" "Yes." "Are you afraid?" "Yes." And those are three of the words that He hits on right off there. I mean, the daily concerns of life can turn into these overwhelming worries: "What if this happens? What if...?" and there's this foreboding. And it paralyzes, because instead of going on with life and confronting our present circumstances, which is what Jesus is saying; He says, "Quit worrying about the future, today has enough worries for itself." That's how He ends there in Matthew 6. Stop worrying about tomorrow; you may not even be alive. None of us may be alive.

But the thing is, we come back to this if you're a Christian. If you're a Christian, and even if the devil was let loose on you like he was let loose on Job, where's Job right now? I mean, Job is in glory. Job was a righteous man. He's with the Lord. He's walking with the Lord. Paul adequately sums it up: what does he call what we have to endure right now? "Momentary, light" - that's what he calls it - "afflictions." The worst thing that could happen; now look, who was he talking to? He was talking to early Christians twenty centuries ago. I mean, what if the Romans came in and they threw your whole family out to the lions? Is that pretty bad? Even if they did that. What if they put you on the rack and they tortured you? Some were sawn in two, do you ever read that? I mean, that's kind of a bad day when you're getting sawn in half. But momentary, light? Listen, if we really understand what heaven is, and what it is Christ has purchased for His people, it is such a glory that is coming. But you see, when the anxiety comes you lose sight of that. Anxiety causes you to forget. It causes you to shut down as far as remembering God's faithfulness, remembering God's promises, remembering who God is. The remembering function is that which has to be kicked back into high gear. It shuts down. And it's not good, it's not healthy.

So, what we have to do is, we have to take all these fears, all these anxieties, all these thoughts that are going to the mind, and we have to submit them and subject them to Scripture; and let the Scripture control, let the truth set us free. We have to go back to that again. Thinking, thinking, thinking. The mind. Listen, Scripture says this, (you need to think about this): concerning sin, it says, "You need to consider yourselves dead to sin." Why do I hit that text? Because when Paul says in Romans 6:11 that as a Christian you must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God, he is saying, "You need to consider in your mind certain things to be true." When Scripture says, "Set your mind on things above," do you know

what Scripture is assuming? Listen, one of the descriptions in Romans , is that a person that's a Christian, they have a mind set on the things of the Spirit. Or James went through Philippians; Philippians 4: 8, what does it say we need to think on? Things that are what? Just tell me one of the words.

[Audience]: True. Excellent. Worthy of praise.

[Tim]: Okay, what do all those verses indicate? They indicate that you have the ability to think on what you want to think on. Some people have this idea, "Well, I can't control what I think about." The authors of Scripture certainly think you can. When you're told to set your mind on things above, what is that? That is telling you, that just like I can set this cup... you know, if I'm sitting here drinking this, and my wife yells from the bedroom over there, "Set that cup down," I set it down. That cup, I've got the ability to put that thing down there. Scripture is saying, just like you can set that cup, it's telling you, "Set your brain on certain things. Set your mind there." This is key, because I'll tell you what happens to people who fall into depression and people who fall into anxiety: Oftentimes, the people that are most able to help them are the people that help them get their minds back on what they need to get their minds on. That's what needs to happen. We need to think right. We need to think about the things that we need to be thinking about.

Now, let's actually look at Matthew 6. "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life." (v 25). Now let's just start right here: "Do not be anxious." If Jesus tells us not to be anxious and we are, we're not keeping His commandments. I'll tell you right off. When Jesus says do not be anxious, if we are anxious we need to recognize this for what it is. You see, this is the medical community today: "Anxiety is alcoholism. Now pedophilia. It's not your fault, it's a disease." As soon as you say that, you are a victim - just like you'd be a victim if you got cancer, or smallpox, or meningitis. It's not true. Jesus says, "Do not be anxious." If you are anxious, you are defying Christ. You're going against Him. It's sin. We need to call anxiety what it is. It is based on fears that God does not want us to have. We need to be clear on that. He says, "Do not be anxious." We need to recognize that. Jesus says to us, "Don't be anxious."

Paul tells us to "rejoice in the Lord always." Listen, if you fall into depression, it's sin. To be "not rejoicing in the Lord" is to be going against the specific instruction of Scripture. Now look, there may be factors that are present in a person's life that are applying enormous pressure to be anxious, or to be fearful, or to be depressed. But do you know, no matter what circumstance any person ever faces, sin is never justifiable. Never. Not once.

Worry: look at verse 25, "I tell you, do not be anxious about your life." Go to verse 31, "Therefore do not be anxious." Verse 34, "Therefore do not be anxious

about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself." Do you know what Peter tells us? We used to sing this; we still do: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your cares (or anxieties) upon Him; for He cares for you." (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

"Humble yourselves." Listen, when you don't cast your fears and anxieties on the Lord, it's a mark of pride. Peter says, "Humble yourselves and unload those things on the Lord." What's pride? You see, pride is thinking too much of self and too little of God. And how is that thinking too little of God? "Well, I'm just afraid to commit these things because I don't really think the Lord can take care of it. I'm scared to death something may happen to one of my children, and I just don't think I can entrust Him with this. I'm scared to death something may happen to one of my relatives, or a person I dearly love, and I cannot commit them to Him; and I'm just worried all the time; and I cannot trust God to do what I want God to do, because I know God, I know the God of Scripture, He may let them die." You know what? He might. But Scripture still says it's all working out for our good, and He still says that He'll not leave us or forsake us. And we can trust Him. We can trust Him to do right. The Judge of all the earth will do right, and we can trust Him to do it. And the thing is, we have to remember this: "For He careth for you. He careth for you." That's how that ends - He cares for you. You see, we're not dealing with a God who is a tyrant and is angry at us. Not as Christians. If you're lost, yes He is angry with you. But the thing is, if we're Christians He cares for us.

It is a manifestation of pride. And here's the thing: It's much more comfortable to be a victim. It's much more comfortable to say, "Oh, woe is me; I get these anxiety attacks," and to come off as though, "It's not my sin. I'm a victim." You know why it's more comfortable? Because victims get pity. But if you fess up and say, "It's my unbelief. It's my unfounded, unwarranted fears, because I just see God as being way too little. I dishonor God when I don't trust Him." You see, when you admit that, it's not so comfortable. To be guilty, to be blameworthy, to have to admit fears, anxieties, depressions, worries, are our fault, it's more difficult.

Matthew 6:25, He says, "I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink." And I recognize, in a world where lots of people were trying to survive day to day, where they didn't have an abundance, their anxieties may have surfaced in other areas. We live in a wealthy society. Nobody here is worrying about whether we're going to eat tomorrow. Our anxieties tend to crop up in different places. But nevertheless, you notice the anxieties here are about things in this life, and the same principles that have to do with our food, our drink, our body, it has to do with everything else. "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" And here is what you want to get at: He is going to tell us about the character of God. You see, this is the key. This

is always the key. We have to remember who God is and what He has promised. He says, "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet - notice - 'your'." He's talking to Christians. He would never talk this way to lost people, because lost people should mourn and wail. Scripture says that. He's telling them, as children of the Father, "Your heavenly Father feeds them (the birds). Are you not of more value than they?" Of more value to who? To the Father. Obviously. He's hitting the tenderness. God is your Father. He's your heavenly Father.

This is like Peter saying, "He cares for you." You see, a little child doesn't have to run around being anxious about where their next meal is coming from. They don't have to run around being anxious about anything. Why? Because they trust mommy and daddy are gonna take care of it. Little children don't even worry about those things. You don't start worrying about those things till you get to be older. Why? Because the child just knows mommy and daddy are gonna take care of it. And He is saying, these animals get cared for, all the time. And in the sight of your Father in heaven, you are of much greater value. You see, one of the things that comes with all these fears, is we feel like we're alone. We feel like God has abdicated, He has vacated us, He's not there. We feel like He really has forsaken. We feel like Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" There's this sense; but He hasn't. He's saying, He cares for you, He loves you.

And then verse 27, "Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" What a thing to say! You go into depression, you curl up in a ball, and you lay in bed. What good are you going to bring of anything? You're full of anxiety and you have a panic attack; and so you basically go into hiding, and you just feed all this anxiety. Can you change anything by all your worrying? You can get an ulcer, but by all your worrying can you change what's going to happen? Can you change it? You can't change it. You can't change any of the future. So here's the thing about it: People that are going through panic attacks, what are they accomplishing by it? The panic and the anxieties, the worries, the fears, are not changing anything. It's kind of like jealousy. It hurts the person, but it doesn't really do any good. It just rots the person, it decays the person, it destroys the person, but it doesn't help.

"And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, - notice the 'much more' - will He not much more [clothe you]?" You see, He's concerned, He's watching, He knows. "O you of little faith." You see that? Faith versus fear - that's the issue. "You of little faith." Is it faith? Is it fear? That's what He said to them in

the parallel passage - "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good..." Are you gonna fear, are you gonna be full of anxiety? or is there gonna be faith? He says, "O you of little faith." This is a little faith issue. You are not trusting God when you are full of anxieties. Why? What did David say? He said, "I can go against a troop!" Not only can I make it to the post office, not only can I overcome my fears of being in a crowd and make it to church, I can go against a troop if God is with me.

"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' - now notice this, this is good - For the Gentiles..." What's the Gentile? The Gentile is just a good picture of lost people. That's what He means when He uses it here. The Gentiles; in other words, they worry about all these things. They're troubled. And He says, "Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all." I mean, so much we need to remember about who our Father is. But just focus in on the 'Gentiles' right there. I mean, you just think about that - "the Gentiles seek after all these things." You know what? We can understand why the world is stressed out. We can understand that. We can understand why they're anxious and why they're full of worries. I mean, I think about it. I'm 53 years old. I think about what life would be like if I was getting older and older, and didn't know the Lord, and death was coming closer and closer. It's like, when you're young, you feel like you have some breathing room; but as you get older and older and older, it's like you become more and more hedged in, and death is coming.

We can understand, the world, the things that they want to hold on to, they just go through their fingers like sand. They want to hold on to their money; they want to hold on to their financial stability and security; they want to hold on to their youthfulness, and they want to hold on to their health, and they want to hold on to this world. They're worried about all of it, and yet the thing is, it's all going to be taken away. Everything they are worried about: they're worried about their children, it's gonna be taken away; they're worried about their wealth, it's gonna be taken away; they're worried about their possessions, how they get so bent out of shape - this little thing gets a dent, or that thing over there gets scraped - it's all gonna be taken away. Everything. We can totally understand why Gentiles, who are lost, would be in a panic about all sorts of things.

I heard like 23 or million Americans supposedly deal with panic attacks right now. I mean, can you imagine, you're lost, you're facing [eternity]. The scientists are trying to tell you there's a Big Bang, "What? Am I headed to nothingness? What is this life? Just some random thing and I'm facing eternity?" You know what the problem is? Scripture says eternity is written on our hearts. No matter what the scientists tell us, we've got a conscience. And it tells you, "Judgment Day, Judgment Day, Judgment Day. You are headed towards a God that you have to give an account to." And there is something in there, no matter how

much we try to suppress it and block it out, it just keeps speaking, accusing us, accusing us. And it's like, you can imagine why people, their conscience is accusing.

I know where I'd be. If I wasn't dead already by drinking myself into oblivion, that's where I'd be. I mean, the bottle would be to my lips; because you can't deal with it. It's like, "I don't want to think about it." You're either gonna medicate it, you're gonna run to the doctor and say, "I've got panic attacks! Give me the drugs!" And have you ever seen the drugs? Sometimes, we go over to Papa's house in the evenings, and oftentimes it's right about when the news comes; and we're gonna go out to eat with him. But when they're running the evening news, they run all those medication commercials for old people. And they've got ones for depression and for panic. And it's like, "Now the side-effects here are: they may cause suicide; they may cause feelings of depression; they may cause feelings of anxiety." And you're like, "Wait! That's what they're supposed to treat!" It's like, they don't even have an answer. It's almost like they're saying, "Yeah, take these medicines, we want to sell you billions of dollars of these."

The truth is, we live in an age of just rampant idolatry. People just wanting stuff, and fighting, and madly reaching, and retirement, and saving. And they're just gonna lose it all. The problem is, we live in this age where Jesus says, "Don't lay it up here." Why? "You've got moths, and you've got thieves, and you've got rust." And that's the problem - we live in an age of decay. Why? Because everything is cursed. We live in a cursed universe where everything is decaying, including our own lives. Everything is running out. Everything is wearing out. And so we can't lay hold on anything, we can't keep a grasp. And then we've got a medical community with all of its drugs, wanting to drug everybody up for everything.

Look, I'm not gonna say that there aren't some things that can legitimately be medicated. But you know as well as I do, that our medical community has run wild, and they are prescribing drugs for things that are biblically defined as nothing but sin. And people don't need drugs, they need to repent. That's the real issue in so much of this stuff. And the psychiatric people, they're gonna try to convince our brother Kenny tomorrow, that it's all syndromes and diseases. But when you go down through this, you know what's interesting? He says, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of them all."

There was a time I was really wrestling, really struggling. I mean, I just felt like I was under a massive barrage and attack, it was driving me crazy. And it drove me to pray; I was much in prayer. And you know what? No matter how much I prayed, I just felt like God had given the devil license to put me under a barrage. And in the midst of it, I knew this: I could come to this solid conclusion: "Father, I'm praying to You, and I know You hear me, and I know You're in control. And so, if I've prayed that this thing be taken away and it's not being taken away, and

You're in control, I trust You. You want this to be happening, and You're wanting to accomplish something through it. I just need You to show me," which I believe He did. But we need to have that rock-solid [conclusion]. This is what Jesus is driving at: You need to know who your Father is in the midst of all these anxieties. He is a Father who cares for you. He's your Father. Look, if He cares for all the birds and all the flowers around you, and He values you so much more, don't you think He's going to take care of you? And the thing is, He knows what you need before you ask.

And when you look over at the parallel passages in Luke, you have this glorious reality: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." In other words, when it comes to the stuff here that you're anxious about, He's got you covered and He knows your needs. And if you seek first the kingdom of heaven, all these things are going to be added unto you. And what about beyond? "Fear not, little flock. Don't have anxieties about that either, because the kingdom is reserved for you." You don't have to be all uptight. You don't have to be up in arms.

Listen, we are the only people on the face of the earth that really have a right to walk around with no anxieties and with no fears. Oh, a healthy fear of God, yes; but not these kinds of fears that are based on all these anxieties. Because, listen, think about it, you work backwards; this is typically the way that you want to work through it. What does Jesus do? Jesus identifies the anxiety, and then He works back from it. "You're gonna be anxious about this thing? Well, don't be anxious about that thing," and then He works back and He hits the character of God, "Here's why you don't want to be anxious about that, because God is like this." And if we work back on all of our anxieties and all of our fears, what are they? What is it we're really afraid of? You know what you'll be able to put your finger on every single time? That you're failing to believe God, and you're failing to see God as the God that He is. You're failing to take God for who He says He is in Scripture, and you're failing to lay hold on the promises that He gives. Listen, that is behind every true Christian's depression, behind their panics, behind their anxieties, behind their fears. What's happening? They are forgetting who God is. And it's never excusable, no matter if you're under the most vicious attacks of Satan.

Listen, let me tell you, I think it was Pergamum. To the church at Pergamum, Jesus says, "I know where you are; you are where Satan dwells. Yet I have these things against you." Now just think about that. What does that say? It doesn't matter if you're in the hottest climate when it comes to spiritual warfare. Jesus still had those things against them, and did not dismiss their wrongs because of the intensity of the battle. He still said, "I have this against you." Or think with me here - Asa. Asa was diseased in his feet, and yet he was faulted because he did

not go to God, he went to the doctors. You say, "Well, come on, the man was in pain, the man was in turmoil. Why in the world would you fault him?" No! Even though it's true his feet were diseased, and undoubtedly he was in immense amount of pain, he was faulted for that. Why? Because, again, it's forgetting. "Is there no God in Israel that you go running off over there first?" You have to remember who God is. No matter what the situation, no matter if there's disease, no matter if there's some kind of physical issue, sin is not excused. You find this throughout Scripture that this is the reality.

I think I had some other example. Well, I would just say this, one that I mentioned already, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." I mean, hear what's being said: "Don't fear those who kill the body." If we have fear of man, it's idolatry. It's idolatry in the fact that we're fearing man more than we're fearing God, but then it's idolatry in the sense that we're creating a small god out of the true God. Look, there's something in the character of God to answer every single fear, every anxiety, and every depression, that the true Christian goes through. There's an answer in the person of God. And that's where Jesus takes us. He says, "Look, your anxieties, they don't do anything for you anyway; but you need to remember who God is." "O you of little faith" - you suffer from anxieties like this, it's a small faith. And remember, faith always has an object. What He is saying is, "You're of little faith in who your Father in heaven is. He is in control, He is powerful, and He cares for you; and He's your heavenly Father.

I mean, have you heard the promises? I was just telling one of the ladies at the Grace House this last week, that oftentimes when we're in the midst of these things, if we can just lay hold on one promise-- believers don't need to believe every promise that God has ever given all at once. The fighting the good fight of faith, in the midst of the battle, is often clinging to one promise. If you can just cling to one that you know is true, and you sink your teeth into and you will not let go of it. God promises. I mean, there's that wonderful promise there in Isaiah 43: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you." Remember the promises of God.

In Pilgrim's Progress, what happened? Pilgrim and his friend ended up in Doubting Castle. Giant Despair. Here's depression, here's despair; full of doubts. And, in the end, what was it that Pilgrim found in his pocket? He found a key. Remember what the key was? Promise. You see, he saw, that in the Christian battle, it was just latching on to a promise. And I would say that to anybody, any Christian, that is fighting, because the reality is, look, we have an enemy. And he will try to trip us up; and he will lie. And we heard about it on Sunday, what is he trying to do? He tries to slander God to us. And he will make us think that God

doesn't like us; he'll make us think that God has abandoned us; he'll come at us with all manner of lies. And that's where the battle often is. And when we're under this attack, and those attacks may be real, you know, Paul faced a thorn in the flesh. Sometimes people think that that was physical, but there's really nothing from the passage there in 2 Corinthians 12 that indicates the thorn in the flesh was physical. Anybody recall what that thorn in the flesh was called? The messenger of Satan. And it seems like it probably was more like a demonic attack. There's really nothing from the passage that seems to indicate that it was physical necessarily. These things are real. I mean, I've experienced these things being in the ministry.

Is it true that people can have chemical imbalances? Is it true? Yes, all those things are true, but they never justify sin. A panic attack does not justify sin any more than a heart attack justifies sin. There's never a time when it is right to rebel against God. You remember what happened to Jesus? Jesus, it says in Hebrews , "He learned obedience." What does that mean? It certainly doesn't mean that He ever disobeyed. But it says He learned obedience through what He suffered. In other words, the greater His suffering got, the more He was taught, the more He learned to obey in the fire. And that's where we're at. We're not justified because we're under attack or because there is even: "I got a thyroid issue, or I got a chemical imbalance, that makes me feel cranky or somehow fills me full of fears." You know, it's often said that people that are getting dementia, and certain kinds of fears grip people. I mean, there's never a time in Scripture that we are told that a sin is justifiable. At all. And anxiety is being of little faith. It's fearing, and it's not regarding God for who He is. It's doubting Him. That's really what's behind these things: doubting Him and not taking Him at his promises.

Listen, the battle can be fierce. But this is what we're called to do: fight the good fight of faith. Fighting the good fight of faith. Our faith is never tested when life is easy; it's tested when it's hard. It's tested when the storm clouds are overhead. It's tested when you're in the furnace, and you're crying out for God, and you're wondering where He is. It's tested when you're praying and He's not answering immediately. It's tested when His providence in your life seems like a "frowning providence," like in the song we sing. But those things ripen fast, and it bursts forth on our head with all manner of good things. But we have to trust Him. And I know, that's where I've come back to when I personally have been in the fire and been in the midst of these battles. It's really coming to set the mind squarely on, "Who is God? Who is He? What has He promised?", and stay there, and cling to that reality that I know my God is in control. And in light of that, we live. I mean, that's faith - when I'm not walking by sight. I'm walking by this God who has revealed Himself in the Word, and by the truths that He has given, and that the truth will set me free. But who is He? And I know this, He's in control. And I know

this: if I am experiencing unearthly levels of anxiety, He has allowed this to happen. He is putting me through the fire; He is testing me. And whenever we're tested, you know this, He always gives a way out (I Corinthians 10). There is always a way of escape without sinning.

If we let these fears, if we let these anxieties, if we let these depressions grip us and take us down, you know what happens? We will not be fruitful; we will not be involved in the lives of others the way we should be; we will not be involved in relationships the way we ought to be. And the thing is, there are many things that God would have us to do with our lives that we will not do. Why? because we shut down. You become paralyzed. I mean, if you can't leave the house, how is Jesus gonna say to you, "I was in prison and you visited Me"? Well, it's not gonna happen, because you basically shut down. And all these ways that we're supposed to be involved in the lives of others, and use our spiritual gifts to profit others, we will fail to do. We will fail to love others as we ought, because you just become crippled. But remembering what the Lord has said. And I mean, there is so much to be said for going to the Word of God, and in whatever condition you find yourself, you go to Scripture; and it's just pleading with the Lord, "Lord, just give me one promise. Just let me find one promise." Many of these Christians of old, I think of Bunyan actually, who wrote about Doubting Castle. I mean, he talks about many of the trials that he faced early on, just horrible attacks, and full of all sorts of potential anxieties and despair. And he would often search Scripture, sometimes for months on end, simply to find one promise that he could just hold on to, that would carry him through. That's what you got to do. That's fighting this good fight of faith. It's going to the truth of God's Word. It's planting yourself on God's promises, and then striving. It's learning obedience in the midst of the suffering - that's following the path of Jesus.

James, I know you were looking at the topic too. What do you have to add to that?

[James] I guess 1 Corinthians , you referenced that. You pointed this out years ago: Paul says there, it's not just the way of escape, but that you may endure it. And you kind of emphasized that word "endure", because it's not a promise to be instantly delivered, it's a promise that in the midst of the fire, the Lord will help you endure it. And sometimes, yeah, these things don't go away in the blink of an eye, but you've got to keep trusting the Lord and endure it.

[Tim] Yeah, the way out is not necessarily the way out of the trial. The way out is the way out of "not sinning". That is where there's always a way out. Yeah, the trial actually may last the rest of your life. Look, I can't guarantee that. Now, that's not always the case - there's many trials we entered into, and the Lord cuts it short. We're not given promises that we won't die. We're not given promises that

we won't get a disease that will be with us for the rest of our days. None of those things are promised. In fact, what we are promised is "through much tribulation." And so, finding Christians that get lambasted by temptations to distrust, or fear, or be full of anxiety, or to be in despair, or to fall into depression, that ought not to surprise us. The issue is, what's the remedy? And Jesus gives us the remedy: Remember who your God is, and remember what He has promised. And you've got to set your mind. Listen, the thing to do is what we always are called to do when we are in sin. You are called to repent. Listen, the worst way forward is to say, "I'm having a panic attack. It's not my fault. I got an excuse. Other people just don't know, they don't know what I'm going through. If they knew, then they would excuse my sin or they would excuse my conduct." That's not the way out.

The thing to do is to look, and if we recognize, "Lord, it's true. I have not trusted You. I have thought of You as being way too small and my problems way too big. I haven't trusted You. I haven't been able to cast my cares upon You and leave them there." The best place is to admit it. The best place is to confess it and plead to the Lord for help, and seek to lay your faith into the promises; being honest. Being honest is by far the best way forward. Being dishonest, trying to ignore it or not take responsibility for it [is not the way forward], because anxiety and fears, worries, despair, depression, they are our fault. When Scripture is clearly calling us to not be that way, it's our fault. And the best thing to do is not to try to see the right doctor, who is going to convince us we're victims. The best thing to do is go to Scripture and recognize, Scripture is telling us very specifically [it's our fault].

You get people who have panic attacks or something, and I recognize some well-meaning Christians could be very insensitive, and they come up to somebody and they have no idea what these attacks are like, or even maybe they doubt the legitimacy of them or whatever; and they're just saying, "It's just sin, you just need to repent." Well, okay, you could say it like that, and the person feels like, "That person didn't really help me." But the truth is that some people will feel like, if you tell them it's their sin, they'll tell you, "Well, that's not helpful." Well, that person may not feel that it's helpful because they may not want to admit the truth. But really, there's no wiggle room here. Scripture is pretty clear that anxiety and worries like this are just an indication of an ungodly fear, and they're an indication of being of little faith. And the remedy, O the remedy is to see how big God is, to see how faithful He is, to see how kind He is, how much He loves us. Listen, if you see God for who He is, you're not gonna be traumatized by worry and anxiety all the time, because He's good. He's good, and He's gonna do good. And the truth is, even if He takes your children, He's good. And you don't want to live in light of the what-ifs, because the truth is, the thing that most people worry about don't come

to pass. And the thing is, if you worry that much about it, it's probably an idol to you. And God may decide to come take it away from you because He actually has promised to cleanse us from all of our idols. Look, when you worry about something so much and you can't commit it to the Lord, you can believe that there's some serious idolatry happening there, as well as pride; and it's unhealthy.

Panic attacks are real. Depression is real. Some people genetically are more given to it. And I would say this because sometimes you see it in whole family lines. I think of Brainerd. I think his brother, his father, it was there. People, for whatever reasons, can genetically be more inclined to certain things. That's a reality. There can be different factors. We don't downplay any of those. And until you've been in somebody else's place, you don't want to downplay the trial that they're facing, and you don't want to try to tell them that these things are figments of their imagination. I guarantee you, they are not. But what you can tell them and encourage them is: no matter how difficult the suffering is, no matter how intense the onslaught may be, no matter how demonic it may be, or whatever organic chemical realities may be happening with your body that are contributing to this, still sin is not a viable option. But trust in the Lord. No matter how intense the trial gets, trust the Lord. He always is going to give you a way out. Always, He is going to. Sin is never a 'must' option. And no matter the trial, we have to press people on in the path of righteousness. And God says, "I won't leave you." And even when Paul said, "Oh Lord, please take this away." "No, Paul." "Please." "No." "Please." "My grace is sufficient." That, we have to rest on. His grace is sufficient.

You see, the thing I was involved with, and some of you know this, but there was a time (you may think this is crazy, but I'll tell you this, when you're in the midst of it, it is not crazy). I had the biggest tree in my yard right out here in front. And I was sitting in my office one day, and it came like a bolt of lightning: "You need to cut that tree down, it's an idol to you." And, I mean, it might seem foolish but it was all-out hellish war. And I pleaded with the Lord; and in the end I was not at rest. I could not pray, I could not go into... I mean, it was turning me into a mess. And you might think, "Over that?" Well, I went out and I chopped that tree down. And I hoisted it up, and I said, "Lord, no tree is gonna stand between You and me."

Somebody at the Men's Retreat said, "Was that God or was that the devil?" And Charles answered for me, and he said "Yes" to both. And I think that's right. It's much like Job, where God is in control, but He allows the devil to do things. And He's in control. And I had to come to that: "Lord, I'm asking You to take this away - this battle, this fierce thing that's happening in my brain - I mean, I was in turmoil." He wouldn't take it away. And so I just had to conclude, God's not taking it away, so He wants me to give in to this. I don't know. But I'll tell you what, it was real. And there's been other seasons, not with trees, but there's been other seasons very

similar. Total battles. These things are very real. And it's not been since I've been a pastor that I've actually had seasons where clouds, and it's like the temptation to depression. I mean, one of the elders up in Kirksville, he was telling me about traveling overseas. And he was traveling with a preacher. And they said they found that preacher curled up in a fetal position in the corner of his hotel room. These kind of battles are very real. Spurgeon would sit out back of his house there, and he'd just weep. These battles are very real.

Many of you know the story of William Cowper. I almost wouldn't recommend to people that are having problems that they listen to it, because I'm afraid it'd throw you even deeper into your problems. I've never found great amounts of encouragement, although he's written some glorious songs that we sing. These battles are very real and we don't want to minimize them, we don't want to tell people they're not experiencing them. But we do want to insist that the Bible has answers. And in the Scripture what we find is a knowledge of the true God. And it's Him and His promises that we've got to seek to get people to latch on to. And like I say, Scripture just doesn't give us a wiggle room on this. You will not find the passage that says anxiety... Listen, if it's concern, like Paul talks about the anxiety for the churches, where it's loving concern, that's another thing. I mean, where somebody is actually thinking and praying all the time about their children or about churches, and they are concerned for the purity. When the term 'anxiety' is used that way, where a loving concern is involved, that is obviously a good thing. Or where fear is used, like a genuine, good, healthy, godly fear of God, that's a good thing. When we're talking about the anxieties where we are fretting - the kind of fretting that doesn't do any good, the kind of fretting that is calling into question the very character of God - it's very unhealthy.

Well, any other comments on this?

[Sister] When does a concern turn into an anxiety, and how do you test that?

Well, I would say this, it would be when you're paralyzed or crippled from doing the things that you know God wants you to do. It would be when you're not able to commit those cares to God. It would be when you so fret over those things and are not trusting the Lord, because you're not taking Him at His word, or you're seeing Him as too small, or incompetent, or not trustworthy to take these concerns. I mean, if you have the kind of care or concern that Paul had for the churches, and it made you think about those churches all the time and pray about them all the time, but you were able in your prayers to commit them to the Lord, and then to come out of praying and be able to sing and rejoice in the Lord, I think that's probably a good indication. When you can couple a loving concern for others with an ability to rejoice in the Lord and praise Him, and see Him as big and sovereign

and trustworthy, you know you've got a healthy concern. Because, typically, when a concern is sinful, and it's anxiety, and it's full of fear, it's gonna zap your joy, it's gonna zap your rejoicing in the Lord (you won't be able to sing, you won't be feeling full of praise) because you won't be seeing God big and trustworthy, you're gonna see your problems big and worry-worthy. I think that's a good test.

[Sister] So someone who is trusting in the Lord, like you said, trusting in His character, is not gonna look like somebody curled up into a little ball. Does that make sense? Like, somebody who is going through a big trial, practically speaking...

[Tim] Well, if you're curled up in a fetal position and not wanting to get out of bed, I mean, you're basically feeling like, "I can't do this." And the Lord is saying to us that: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." And even though that's speaking money-wise there, I think that's a reality obviously that applies to all of them. "Without Christ I can't do anything; and with Him I can do anything." And it's not trusting Him. Basically, why are you curled up that way and staying in bed? Well, it's because you feel overwhelmed by whatever problems or by whatever situation that you're up against. I mean, you're basically being crippled and not rising up out of bed, and going forth with your life to do the things that God calls you to do, because you're just feeling overwhelmed, you're feeling like, "I can't do this." And whenever a Christian gets to the place where they just say, "I can't do it," that really is making a statement about God, who says, "With My help you can."

So, I mean, we have to be very careful. When we say, "I can't do it," and God is saying, "I am the God of the impossible." When God is saying He is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond what we ask or think; when God is presenting Himself as Big, and Able, and with us, and not going to forsake us... You see, here's the thing: When we live like the world, you see, this is what the Gentiles do: When we basically live our life no different than the Gentiles, basically what we're saying is, "Our God is no different from their god." That's really what we're saying. If we're gonna say we're Christians and we've got the true and living God with us; you see, this is the problem: When Israel would act like the other nations, sometimes the prophets would come to them and say, "Is there no God in Israel?" I mean, you're doing this, you're doing this, you're doing this - you're hiring out foreign militias; you're seeking other gods, or you're seeking witches, or you're seeking... I mean, these guys would do different things, and it's like they're acting just like the nations. That's what we don't want to do. I mean, Jesus is like, "Okay, all your worrying doesn't do any good. And when you act like that, when you fret over those things, you're acting just like the Gentiles do."

Well, again, I don't have any problem with a lost person curling up in a little ball and staying in bed, because I recognize they are up against overwhelming

realities and they have nobody for them. God isn't for them, God isn't with them, God isn't helping them. God has made no promise to them other than destruction, because they're in rebellion against His Son. And so I recognize, yes, curl up. I mean, isn't this what Paul says, "Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Or, "Roll up and stay in your bed, for tomorrow we die." I mean, it's no different. What's the difference? Do one or the other, you're gonna die. But when we've got God as our God and we curl up in a little ball... look, I'm not gonna say Satan can't throw some fierce fiery darts at us that can knock us to the ground and put a guy over there in the corner curled up in a little ball. I suspect that that very man, by the very next day, was not curled up in a little ball. He was probably standing in a pulpit, and people were being wonderfully converted under his preaching. It just happened to be he was under an attack like that right at the moment.

I mean, there was another time he was walking up some stairs, and he just collapsed. And some of the spiritual battles and warfare that come upon us... and look, I'm not saying that any of us are even gonna weather these kind of attacks perfectly. We're still in transition. We're still works-in-progress. We're still being sanctified. We see the example of Jesus, who, through all of His sufferings, He was learning obedience; and he did that perfect. Well, we're supposed to be imitating that, but of course, there's still imperfections hanging on to us. I recognize that. We're gonna have our times of failure and we're gonna have our times of falling, but we have to come back. The way you fight through these things is setting the mind. It can become so much a matter of, you've got to start with that confidence that the answers are in here (the Bible). And Lord, I'm gonna go in your Word. I've been there before. In some of the battles that I faced in the Christian life, it's been, "Lord, I just need a word. I don't need a lot of words, I don't need ten words. I need one promise. I need you to give me something." And He has. He's been faithful.

It's just something you can, whatever you're being faced with, something you can just lay hold of, that gives you some solidity to your situation. It puts some foundation under you. Something that gets you through. Something that, no matter how quick those fiery darts are coming, what do you raise up? The shield of faith - faith in that word, faith in those promises, faith in the character of God, faith in His faithfulness - you raise up. That's how we defend ourselves. And those darts can come in hailstorms, and sometimes the mind is just totally... I mean, you can't hardly think straight. There's just a barrage, and there's confusion. But if, in that confusion and darkness, you can see that one bit of light where you can reach out and lay hold of that one promise, and hang on to it like Jacob hung on to that angel (tried to buck him off); and you're just gonna hang on to that truth no matter what storms come against you. I mean, this is fighting the good fight of faith. And it's a fight. Listen, God would not have called it that unless it was truly a fight. Hanging

on to Christ, and hanging on to His promises, and hanging on to the Word of God. Satan... it's almost like, could God have taken Satan out at the beginning? He could have. Why is he here? The devil is God's devil, and he is here to accomplish God's purposes. And I have to believe that one of the primary purposes that the devil has, is that God is using the devil to make us stronger and to test our faith.

I mean, you think about Paul. This messenger of Satan, what did it do for Paul? It destroyed his pride. When you come against onslaughts that want to send you into anxiety attacks and whatever, if anything, you're made very aware of your weakness. And Paul said, "I'll boast in this, because when I'm weak He's strong." See, there was the confidence. He can be tore apart in these things and he can be a weakling; and he can plead and pray, and God didn't take it away; and yet he could still boast in it, because he could still see the strength of Christ working through his life. That's really where we want to get in the midst of these things. And you can pray, "Lord, please take this away, take this depression away, take these factors. Lord, I'm trying to cling to promises, I'm looking at your character. I believe..." But you're feeling this barrage. And look, undoubtedly, some people, that may be where the battle is. Every day they get out of bed, they have to fight that battle all over again.

I mean, I heard John Piper say one time, he basically has to get saved every day all over again. You have to understand what he means by that. Basically, he said, every morning when he rose up, he needed to lock on to gospel promises all over again. Every day. Because the battle was gonna be real, it was gonna be intense, and his faith was being tested. And so, he just felt like every day he had to be saved all over, just latching back on to the promises of the gospel. If you're given to anxieties, I mean, look, there may be some seasons where God gives you a little bit of respite, because He's merciful that way. He'll give us some seasons. But often, we start having little seasons of vacation from the things that we were dealing with, and we're feeling like, "Oh, well maybe they're gone for good." Well, it just was a little vacation the Lord gave us to rest, but here it comes again. And, oftentimes, the things that we're susceptible to, we're susceptible to, our whole Christian life.

Sometimes there's seasons where we go through certain things, and we come out, and we never go through that again. But, oftentimes, the places we're most vulnerable, and where Satan seeks to attack - he feels our weaknesses out. And if you have an inclination towards anxiety, don't be surprised if he attacks you right there the whole rest of your life. If you have a disposition towards depression, don't be surprised if he doesn't attack you right there for the rest of your life. Look, through much tribulation. Every one of us are fighting some battles sometimes, many times, many ways, many places, as we're striving to reach the

end here and endure to the end. And some people, it's in this category. And some, not so much, but it's other things.

[Brother] You said that pastor, they went over there curled up in a fetal position, you know, and then he went the next day in a pulpit. I'm sure he preached a good sermon.

[Tim] Well, this guy was a missionary, and he was out on the front lines.

[James] It wasn't anxiety he had then...

[Tim] No, I would not say that was necessarily anxiety. I mean, it may have to do with some kind of feeling deep darkness or depression on the soul. I would just say this, that as far as dealing with it, you basically want to find out, What are people afraid of? I mean, that would be the first place. You want to work backwards through the situation. Talk to people. The way to deal with it, and everybody's gonna be different; so when you find somebody that's struggling, you want to find out, What is it they fear? What is creating the anxiety? And then try to work back from that, in the sense of trying to pinpoint what is it that that anxiety or that fear, where is it that they're not trusting God or seeing God for who He is? And try to really pinpoint that.

Well, let's pray. *Father, I know that we all think too smally, too little, too small of thought. None of us have rightly estimated Your power, Your glory, Your love for us. Scripture says You care for us. Lord, I know we have not rightly estimated the care that You have for us. Lord, we have not rightly estimated just how much unbelief we have, how much little faith. But we get a little bit of a feel, maybe a lot of feel, from our Lord's words, that You are to be trusted. And if You do what You do for the flowers, and You do what You do for the birds, and if we're of much more value to You than they are, how much more will You take care of us. And You know our needs before we ask for them. We don't want to be like the Gentiles. Help us to not be like them, who fret and worry, and are concerned and paralyzed, who are without hope. We don't want to live like those without hope. We don't want to live like those who are perishing, but like those who have a Savior, those who have a future, those who have the true and the living God as our God. You are our God. Lord, help us, increase our faith. We don't want to be of little faith. We don't want to be full of anxieties. Lord, give us grace to cast all our cares upon You. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.*