

Joke: A business man decides to open a bar in small town in Texas. . .

The problem was that in this small quiet town most of the people were God fearing and church going folk that didn't drink.

Nonetheless, the bar began construction on a new building right next store to the one of the towns churches. The church folk of course were shocked and couldn't believe that anyone would do such a thing.

So, they started a campaign to block the bar from opening with petitions and of course prayer. All the church folk began to meet at the church next store to pray that God would do something about the situation.

But work continued right up till the week before the grand opening and the night before the bar was to open lightning struck the bar and it burned to the ground.

All the church folk were quite happy that the bar was no longer standing and that the fire never jumped to their church.

But much to the dismay of the church the bar owner decided to sue them on the grounds that the church was ultimately responsible for the demise of his building.

In court the church people vehemently denied all responsibility to the building's demise. They declared in front of the judge that they did not have anything to do with it and they are not liable in any way for the outcome. It was a lightning strike and nothing else.

The judge looked over the paperwork and noticed the prayer meetings that the church was having throughout the whole building process and said at the hearing, "Okay, I don't know right now how I'm going to decide this case, but it appears to me, that we have a bar owner who believes in the power of prayer, and an entire church congregation that doesn't."

We're in a message series called Me. . .worry?

We started last week with, "When you've had enough." Today I want to talk about "Praying Through the Battle."

We're looking at Philippians chapter 4 but before we dive into the text today I want to just say that. . .

Oftentimes the biggest battles that we're going through are battles that other people don't see.

Talk about last week at work with towel rod.

So often the battles that we're fighting are battles in our own minds. We may, on the outside look confident while on the inside, we're secretly insecure or struggling.

There are times we may look like we're strong but the truth of the matter is, we feel weak.

We can put on our happy face at church. We can praise the Lord, worship, all of that.

And hear this church we need to learn to praise through the battle. That last thing you want to do when your battling with worry or anxiety or anything for that matter is push God aside.

Scripture tells us. . .

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (NIV): Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

I want you to notice what this verse doesn't say. . .it doesn't say give thanks for all circumstances it says give thanks in all and there is a big distinction between the two.

But the truth is we put on our Facebook self at church but oftentimes we go home, and we feel anxious, we feel worried, we feel a weight, a burden.

There's a heaviness, there's an insecurity, there's a fear, there's a dread. What do we do when we find ourselves battling with anxiety?

Well, our text that's driving us through this message series is found Philippians chapter 4.

I want to read it to you again today and I want to remind you as we experience the power of God's Word that this was the Apostle Paul writing inspired by the Holy Spirit to his friends in Philippi.

But he was writing from a Roman prison. He was chained up 24 hours a day to Roman guards and he was awaiting trial. He didn't know what was going to happen to him. He didn't know if he was going to live or die. It didn't know if he was going to be locked up to those guards for a few days or a few years.

And if there was anyone anywhere who had the right to be anxious, it was the Apostle Paul for what he was going through.

And under that type of duress, here's the words of power and truth that he penned.

He said this. . .

Philippians 4:4–7 (NIV): Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

If you remember from last week, we talked about sometimes God whispers and He does that because He is near. He whispers because He's close. Verse 5 told us the Lord is near.

In verse 6 Paul writes. . .Do not be anxious about anything, but in what? In every situation.

No matter what you're facing. If you're worried about your job, if you're worried about the economy, if your teenagers are freaking you out, no matter what you're going through, in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, here's what we are to do.

We present our requests to God and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In every situation, by prayer and petition, we present our requests to God.

And so let's do that right now.

Father, I ask that the presence of Your Spirit would speak to us today.

Papa, those who are anxious, send Your peace. We ask this in the name of Jesus. And everybody said?

What is anxiety?

Truth is there is no easy answer. The answer is actually quite complicated. What causes anxiety is different for each individual.

And anxiety can be physiological. It can be emotional. It can be situational. I propose that many times it's spiritual.

And today I want to focus wholly and completely on the spiritual side.

What is anxiety? I gave you the Oxford Dictionary definition last week but I'll try to explain it this way.

How many of you ever have had one of the annoying red lights come on your car that indicates there's trouble? Any of you ever have that?

And if it's that red one it can cause a bunch of anxiety. Because that red light means you need to pull over call someone and not drive any further. There's a problem that demands your immediate attention. **(Talk about Cora's oil issue)**

But then there's the check engine light. It's not red it's more yellow. I think the proper color techs call it is amber. The check engine light is not the problem. The check engine light signals that there's a problem somewhere else. And it could be a number of issues that made it come on.

The signal indicates that you should take it to the one who knows how to fix it. The light is not the problem but rather the light is a signal indicating you should take it to someone who knows how to address the issue.

So, what is anxiety? Among many things, anxiety is the signal alerting you that it's time to pray.

Let me say it again. It's the signal, it's the alert, it's the indicator that something else is not right, and that you would be wise to go to the manufacturer, go to your Creator, go to the One who made you. The one that knows how to fix it.

Anxiety is the signal alerting you that it's time to pray.

See here's the thing if you have something going on that's big enough to worry about, it's big enough to pray about. Listen if it's on your mind, it's on God's heart.

God cares about you that's why He says to cast all your cares upon Him.

Paul said, be anxious about nothing but in every situation take your request to God.

If you're worried about your upcoming doctor's appointment, pray about it. If you're worried about a decision that you need to make, pray about it. If you're worried about how to pay that bill, pray about it.

Take your request to God.

Here's something I've learned as I've matured in the faith.

When people would ask me what they should do I would give them the pastor answer. Any idea what that was?

I would just say "pray about it."

But then I realized that a lot of people were just like me when I first heard that phrase.

See the problem with that Christianize answer is that for years I was like the disciples asking, Lord teach me to pray. Because I just didn't know how.

I didn't know if there was some kind of prayer rules. I didn't know if there was a certain way to address God. Do I need to call him Father or is Papa ok?

Does it need to be that King James Version prayer. You know the kind. . .Deareth Lordeth, I struggleth and needeth Youeth. Please come helpeth meeth.

And then after I get done praying how do I sign off. Do I just say bye, thanks, amen, do I need to say in Jesus name, or in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

And If I don't get it quite right will God get mad or offended. And if He does get mad or offended am I sent to the corner and He won't listen until I learn how to do it right? Until I learn my lesson.

I mean I don't know if you have ever been around some of those incredible prayer warriors but I have been, you know those people that have a spiritual gift of prayer.

It's like when they pray God looks down and says wow that was an awesome prayer. Well done thy good and faithful son or

daughter. I mean their praying and quoting Scripture not just quoting it but even know where it's at as well.

Their praying, God you said in Your Word in Isaiah 54 verse 17 that no weapon formed against me shall prosper. **(Continue on that prayer)**

And listen that is awesome if you can do that I think we do need to pray the word that's one reason why we read the word so that we can know it.

And by praying Scripture we are agreeing with what God said and we know that all God's promises are yes in Christ Jesus.

And it's important to know the Word so that when the enemy comes with his twisted word we know what God said and can fight off the lies.

But, what if you really don't know it like those prayer warriors. What if you can't recall that Scripture that will encourage you in your battle?

Well, here's the good news you don't have to.

God is a relational God and He will meet you right where you are at. All He really longs for is us to spend time with Him.

Here's what Scripture tells us. . .

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV): Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

And then John picks up on that theme of confidence he says this. . .

1 John 5:14–15 (NIV): This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

And James continues to tell us where sometimes are prayers don't seem to get a response.

James 4:2–3 (NIV): You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

And then Paul said in verse 6 of Philippians 4 that we read earlier he said:

Philippians 4:6 (NIV): Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

That is probably a little more formal than it is in the Greek. What it is basically saying is: let your needs be known. That's what it's saying.

It's, present your requests to God. It's, let your needs be known.

How do we do that? It's really quite simple. Are you ready to hear how? Anybody? Listen church this is profound. . .

You. . .get ready for it. . .you let your needs be known. You talk to God in your way.

It doesn't have to be in my way. Just in your way.

Listen I have four kids and when they were younger and at home if they had a need, a want, or a desire whatever it was and they came to me for that, they didn't always approach me the same way as their brothers or sister did.

Each one was different how they approached me. And when they came to me, and I'm not talking about if they did it with an attitude, but when they came to me I listened and responded to each one even though they came to me in their own way.

And that's how it is with God.

You can ask Him. You can write your prayer requests to Him. You can sing your prayer requests to Him. He knows your heart. You can shout with joy, and you can shout with anger. Wait what?

Trust me, He's big enough to handle your temper tantrum.

And here's what I want you to understand, as an earthly father, I like when my children come to me and ask of me.

And God your Heavenly Father who loves you more than you may ever realize, He loves for you to come to Him and let your needs be known.

In every situation, with prayer and petition, let your needs be known to God.

What is anxiety? It's a signal alerting you to go to the One who loves you, go to the One who created you, go to the One who can help you.

It's a signal, alerting you it's time to pray.

I love the way that Peter talked about how to handle anxiety.

Peter's a guy that probably had anxiety, if you look at the way he lived his life it would certainly seem so.

And this is what he said to do when you're anxious.

He said in 1 Peter 5:6-7, he said,

1 Peter 5:6–7 (NIV): Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Focus on God's mighty hand, what He can do in your situation. How he can interrupt the circumstances.

After all He is Omnipotent. By the way for those that don't know that word means He has unlimited power.

And then if you feel heavy in your spirit cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

What do you do? You humble yourselves and you pray.

If you remember when I started this message I said, oftentimes the biggest battles that we're going through are battles that other people don't see.

See the truth is everybody's got their stuff. We all do. My world's not harder, it's just different.

Do you feel down? Do you feel depleted? Do you feel like there's too much and you're sinking?

Peter said, Humble yourself, therefore, under God's mighty hand,

Why? That He might lift you up.

That will mean so much more to you when you understand who was writing this.

It was Peter writing this.

Peter the same one who was in a boat with all the other disciples and had the audacity to believe that he could get out of the boat and walk on the water toward Jesus.

Which in case your unfamiliar with the story he did.

And as he's walking on water he saw the wind and the waves, and the anxiety took over. He took his eyes off Jesus, focused more on the storm and he started to sink and then what did Jesus do?

Jesus didn't say, "Dude not good, faithless Peter."

No, Jesus reached out His hand. Humble yourselves under His mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time when you go before God in prayer.

If you're sinking, perhaps the problem isn't that you're not in reach, it might be that you're more focused on the storm and not reaching out to the hand that is there for you.

If you reach out to Him, He will lift you up in due time.

And let me just say this before I tell you what you need to do, although what I'm going to share is very much related and I will sharing more in next weeks message.

But, do you know why I for one raise my hands during worship?

The angels do it. The angels lift their wings that has to be more difficult than my hands.

See, here's the thing, the angels worship him for who He is. I get to worship Him for what He's done.

So I lift my hands in worship because not only does it say to do so in Scripture, but if you really think about it what does lifted hands symbolize?

They symbolize victory and/or they symbolize surrender.

And the moment that we surrender, we will experience a victory that God is with us, that He cares for us, that He's comforting us, that He's strengthening us, that He is for us.

And I have learned that it is important to praise before my breakthrough.

I might be one song from my victory. One hand raise over my worry.

So, what do we need to do? Along with worship. . .

If you're battling with anxiety and worry you need to understand that there's a cycle. The cycle looks like this. You feel anxious, you feel a weight, you feel a dread, you feel worried, so you try to do what I try to do. You try to take control. I'll make this happen, I'll get her into shape, I'll fix him, I'll control that. I, I, I I will. . .and you try to take control.

But the problem is, the more we try to control, the more we fear losing control and the more we fear losing control, the more we try to control and the more we try to control, the more anxiety we start to feel.

What do we do? We recognize the truth that you don't always have the power to control, but you always have the power to surrender.

You can't always fix everything.

I have some news for you and it may shock some of you, but here it goes. . . you're not the Savior. You can't change everything. Medicine won't always fix it, counseling won't always fix it, changing of circumstances won't always fix it. We can't always fix everything, but we can surrender anything that is a burden, and we can surrender every situation, every circumstance, every storm to God.

We can take it to God.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

Cast, in the Greek, means to throw. It means to release. It means to surrender, to let it go.

In other words, we're not gonna just say, God, here I am, I give you fill in the blank to You. And then it's been like 12 minutes, sorry God I'm taking it back.

No no no no no no. It needs to be God, You are sovereign. You are always good. Your ways are perfect, Your ways are higher than my ways.

God, You're working in all things to bring about good to those who love You, and are called according to Your purpose. We believe, God, that no weapon formed against us will prosper.

God, we believe that the devil is a liar. We believe, God, You're going before us and that You are working in us. That we are more than conquerors.

God, we cast our cares upon You. And we leave them there. Because I know You will lift me up in due time.

What's weighing on you? What burden are you carrying? What are you anxious about?

Your future? Your job? Your finances? Your marriage? Your children, what they're doing, what other people will think. Maybe it's your health.

Anxiety. It's a signal alerting you that it's time to pray.

Don't be anxious about anything, but in every situation, with prayer and petition, we let our needs be known. We present our requests to God. And the peace from heaven, the peace of God.

Notice what it says, it's the peace of God. It's not your peace. So many have peace when life is going well but. . .

Listen to me. It's not a peace from this world. It's not something that this world gives.

Therefore you can have peace that passes all understanding in every circumstance, in the midst of every storm, in the middle of your worry and this world can't take His peace away from you.

This peace we find in and through God will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Prayer