

Remnant Life Church  
December 10, 2023  
**Christmas 2023:**  
**Preparing Myself for the King**  
Pt 2  
Philippians 4:4-7

Over these December Sundays leading to our Christmas service on the 24<sup>th</sup> we are looking at three ways that we can prepare our lives for the coming of the King

- More specifically, how do we deal with the struggles of daily life that often seem to rob our joy, steal our gratitude, and cause us to act in ways that do not honor God or show the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives?
- Last Sunday we talked about forgiveness and letting go of the past
  - The past of our sin, our failures, and the pain of being hurt
  - We must accept the forgiveness for our sins given as a gift from God through the person of Jesus Christ and then extend or offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us
  - And btw, that is not a suggestion, it is a command given by Jesus
- It is an incredible blessing to be set free of the chains that keep us bound to the past
  - A past that has been covered by the blood of Jesus
  - A past that does not define who I am today
  - As a child of God, your focus should never be about who you were, but who you are now and who you are becoming because of God's great love.

This morning I want to turn our attention to something that cripples millions of people every day. It is the presence of intense anxiety and depression.

- Globally, more than 264 million suffer from anxiety disorders and 322 million people suffer from depression — many of whom live with both conditions.
- A study by the World Health Organization found that such disorders cost the global economy over \$1 trillion in lost productivity each year.
  - But financial loss is just the tip of the iceberg of what is impacted when these two fierce emotions are damaging lives
  - It robs us of physical health
    - Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide
    - And is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease.
  - Families are divided
  - Jobs are lost
  - Substances are abused in an effort to find relief
  - And friendships are dissolved
- Depressive disorders are characterized by intense sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness, and poor concentration.
  - Depression can be long-lasting or recurrent
  - It will significantly deter an individual's ability to function at work or school or cope with daily life.

- Anxiety disorders are characterized by feelings of anxiousness and fear, including generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder, phobias, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
  - The duration of the experience can be mere hours or extend to days, weeks, or months.
- The risk of becoming depressed is increased by poverty, unemployment, life events such as the death of a loved one or a relationship break-up, physical illness and problems caused by alcohol and drug use.
- Now feelings of sadness or lack of energy are not uncommon in most people and for a variety of reasons
  - It is not wise to believe when you are having a melancholy day that you are sliding into a depressed state – even though we may use that word freely
  - Everyone struggles with down days or feeling blue
  - But if it lasts for many days or weeks on end or it manifests itself on a frequent basis it should not be ignored
- We also must recognize that for some, these difficult emotions are due more with physiological issues or chemical imbalances
- In my reading I have also found those who said that most often feelings of anxiousness or depression are the result of unrealized or unconfessed sin
  - I do not think that is true and the Bible does not support that explanation
  - That is not to say that sin does not have an impact on our lives – especially unrepentant sin
    - In **Psalms 32:2-4** David writes about that very thing
    - *Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent (about his sin) my bones wasted away through groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer*
    - The emotional strain of sin unconfessed sapped his strength and caused his bones to groan all day – IOW, depression
  - We are emotional by God's creative hand and while anxiety and depression are always negative, they are not always the result of sin
- Godly people can experience depression although I do believe that is something that we should aggressively attempt to come out of and not just accept
  - Even great preachers such as Charles Spurgeon experienced the woes of depression. He explained, *I find myself frequently depressed – perhaps more so than any other person here. And I find no better cure for that depression than to trust in the Lord with all my heart and seek to realize afresh the power of the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, and His infinite love in dying upon the cross to put away all my transgressions.*

What I want you to understand this morning is that anxiety and depression do not need to become a permanent part of your life as God is the healer of all physical and emotional pain.

- It is not easy
- There are a multitude of factors that contribute

- And each person is unique in what they are dealing with

### READ – Phil 4:4-7

There are those who throughout the Bible who dealt with anxiety and even depression

- Moses – the great leader of the Hebrew nation handpicked by God Himself
  - **Numb 11:4-5** - *I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin.*
  - The anxiety we so intense he did not want to live
- Joshua – Israel’s first great general again handpicked by God to lead the people after Moses died became intensely despondent after their defeat at the hands of the tiny nation of Ai
  - **Josh 7:6, 8-9** - *Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening... What can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies? The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?*
  - Joshua was overwrought with despair at what had just happened and right on the heels of the greatest military victory he had ever led – conquering the great walled city of Jericho
- Elijah ran into a cave to hide and asked God to take his life
  - It took a personal appearance by God to the Father to snap him out of it
- And how would we classify what Jesus was experiencing less than 24 hours before His crucifixion?
  - **Matthew 26:37-38** - *He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*
  - **Luke 22:44** - *And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground*

The Bible gives us an amazing glimpse into the soul of Jesus the night before he was crucified. Look at the way Jesus fought his strategic battle against despondency or depression.

1. He chose some close friends to be with him. *Taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee* (**Matthew 26:37**).
  - a. Isolation in times of anxiety or confronted with depression is exactly what satan wants you to do
  - b. You should never remove yourself from the very people God has in your life to love and encourage you
2. He opened his soul to them. He said to them, *My soul is very sorrowful, even to death* (**Matthew 26:38**).
  - a. Again, it is still about isolation
  - b. To share with others what you are dealing with provides multiple benefits
    - i. It removes the weight of bearing something alone

- ii. It presents an opportunity for a different perspective
  - iii. It brings others into a posture of specific and directed prayer
- 3. He asked for their intercession and partnership in the battle. *Remain here, and watch with me* (**Matthew 26:38**).
- a. Prayer should always be your request
  - b. It shows that you recognize, in humility, your need for others to walk with you
- 4. He poured out his heart to his Father in prayer. *My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me* (**Matthew 26:39**).
- a. Prayer is the most powerful weapon against anxiety and depression
  - b. Yes, talking with others is an important part of the process but nothing replaces the power of prayer
  - c. See what Paul wrote again from our reading earlier in **Phil 4:6-7** - *Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends (or bypasses) all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
    - i. This peace is an inner tranquility mediated and present through the Holy Spirit
    - ii. It is a firm conviction that Jesus is near and that God's love will be active in your life for your good
    - iii. When we lay our troubles before God in prayer, this peace will stand guard at the door of our hearts and minds, preventing the cares and heartaches of life from undermining our hope and trust in Christ.
    - iv. And if the anxiety returns prayer is always there at the ready to, once again, place us under the peace of God's love
- 5. He rested his soul in the sovereign wisdom of God. *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will* (**Matthew 26:39**).
- a. I believe that this single sentence is the foundation of every prayer prayed by a Christian
  - b. I ask, I entreat, I have my way of wanting something done, but it is always under the authority of God's will
  - c. Not my will, but your will be done
- 6. He fixed his eye on the glorious future grace that awaited him on the other side of the cross.
  - a. *For the joy that was set before him [He] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God* (**Hebrews 12:2**).
  - b. Jesus knew that the cross was not the end
  - c. He knew that it come and then it would pass
  - d. We too must realize that what we are dealing with is only a small segment of the life that God has given to us

Anxiety and depression are real

- Moses, Joshua and Elijah dealt with it
- Jesus experienced the intensity of anguish in the Garden

Experiencing anxiety or depression is not a sin

- Jesus, of course, did not sin in his emotionally intense experience

Those who say these things are a result of sin...

- They must recognize that Jesus was completely righteous and therefore what He was experiencing was certainly not because of sin
- Nor would that necessarily be true for us although, again, unrepentant sin does negatively impact our lives

The key is not whether those times occur but how we respond

- Do we go to God in prayer?
- Do we ask others to pray with us?
- Do we admit our struggles or perhaps acknowledge an ongoing weakness that triggers that response?

Anxiety can become a part of each and every one of our lives

- It is not a question of whether it will become present in your life
- But what you will do when it does, how you will respond, and what steps are you willing to take to minimize its impact in your life?