

Freedom
from
Anxiety



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***(Pg.18) From the book *Change your brain, change your life* by Daniel Amen Pg.55.**

The Clock Maker

I bought an old cuckoo clock at a flea market a couple of weeks ago. The lady who sold it to me for three dollars said it was missing a few parts. My wife wondered why I bought it because I already have a cuckoo clock that doesn't cuckoo despite my best efforts.

But this new clock is different because it also has a music box which plays the tune of Edelweiss as Bavarian dancers merrily swing their partners around and around on the top. The challenge in fixing this clock is to synchronize the time, with both the number of chimes and cuckoos.



And so, after a good oiling, I hung the clock and gave the pendulum a nudge. It worked! But at the top of the

hour, the dancers and band seemed to be in lockdown and the cuckoo bird refused to leave its nest.

I took the clock off the wall and went inside the box to fix the problem. A simple fix—I had the music and bird on the silent setting. After replacing it back on the wall, and with a nudge of the pendulum, the clock was running again. It worked! But would the music and dancers appear?

The moment of truth came at the top of the hour as I began to hear the music of Edelweiss and see the dancers spin around and around without ceasing. But the music box wasn't shutting off. It kept going and the dancers tirelessly kept dancing until the weight dropped to the floor. Then the bird finally came out and looked at me with a devilish smile tweeting, cuckoo, cuckoo.

Some folks believe that God made this world and then left it and us to our own fate. But like my clock, there are too many faulty-interdependent-moving parts in this world. The music and dancing would have ceased a long time ago had God left us and this world in its present condition.

One of the reasons God created the world in time and space was for mankind's enjoyment. The Garden of

Eden was a place of perfect rest and harmony between God and man, man and woman, and with all the creatures great and small that God had created. It was a place and a time free from fear and anxiety. What more could God possibly give to Adam and Eve to make them enjoy this paradise?

The Bible tells us that Satan came to this couple, speaking through a serpent, tempting them with the same arrogant lie he had developed within himself—*You can become like God.*

Genesis 3:1-7

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

² “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. ³ “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

⁴ “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵ “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

The only stipulation God had placed before Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, was that they could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had warned them that the outcome would bring death.

We ask ourselves, why would they want to have the knowledge of good and evil, even if it meant death? The shrewd serpent tempted them with the idea of “independence” from God while casting doubt upon His love for them and His word of warning.

Genesis 3:8-18

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

¹¹ “Who told you that you were naked?” the LORD God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

¹² The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.” ¹³ Then the LORD God asked the woman, “What have you done?” “The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

¹⁴ Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are cursed
more than all animals, domestic and wild.

You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.

He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶ Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.

And you will desire to control your husband,
but he will rule over you.”

¹⁷ And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you,
though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow
will you have food to eat
until you return to the ground
from which you were made.
For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return.”

Adam and Eve’s sin has resulted in misery for their children and the entire world. God’s judgment of death and suffering has made the world a place of faulty-interdependent-moving parts, with a faulty-independent-human race trying to comprehend and control it all. It’s as if God had given mankind exactly what they desired—independence from God. No wonder we are full of anxiety!

A sign of hope!

If the Bible ended at this point, we would assume that God the “clock-maker” left us in the mess our ancestors

brought upon us. But the Bible, which was written over a period of 1600 years by forty different authors contains a unified message of hope for this world. God hasn't left us, and, in fact, He is in the process of fixing it all.

The very first message of hope for us and the world comes from the first book of the Bible in Genesis 3. God issues a word of judgement against Satan:

*¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you (Satan) and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.
He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.*

Genesis 3:15 foretells of one of Eve's children who will crush Satan's head, mortally wounding him. We discover that Satan isn't even in control of his own destiny! The remaining pages of the Bible will reveal who will crush Satan's head and how that defeat brings peace to a broken world.

Your resignation letter

Imagine you are the CEO of a very large company. The share holders expect you to make a huge profit each year. The bankers expect you to make good on your

debts. Your employees expect you to pay them and ensure a safe working environment. Even the government is on your back with regulations from the EPA, FDA, OSHA, and several other agencies that require compliance. Year after year you struggle to meet all of these demands until finally, on the verge of having a nervous breakdown, you write a resignation letter to the shareholders; *Effective immediately, I resign as CEO of this company.*



On that very first day of being a former CEO, you breathe a huge sigh of relief as that heavy load is now off your back. You gleefully remind yourself, “Its someone else’s burden now.”

What heavy and anxiety-filled load are you carrying on your back? Is it there because no one else is able to take or share that burden? Or, are you carrying it solely because you want or need to be in control? Has Satan

slithered around your feet convincing you that your strength is more than enough to control all of the faulty-interdependent-moving parts in your world?

Listen to your anxiety. It tells a different story.

Reflect

1. Can you relate to the stress and anxiety of the businessman? If so, in what way? Write out all the heavy things you are trying to carry in the space below.

2. If you wrote out a resignation letter as the CEO of your “burden”, who would carry it? Do you think God would carry it if you gave it to Him?

Pretty Rainbows

Tanya was a young mother of a preschool child. Their morning routine was interrupted by the awful news of jets flying into the world trade center. As Tanya watched the all-day coverage, she was so fixated upon the unfolding events she hadn't noticed what her son was doing. They had started coloring pictures of trees and lakes and rainbows before she heard the tragic news.



Finally at noon, the little boy came up to his mother and said, “Mommy, look at the pretty rainbows!” Tanya looked down at her son and hugged him tight. From that day on, her vision of the world changed. Even weeks after 9/11, every time she heard a jet fly over their home she started to panic. Her fears for the safety of her family lingered months and years after that fateful day.

In Tanya's world, beautiful trees, lakes and pretty rainbows were replaced with dark foreboding clouds.

Move ahead in time. Twenty years later, Tanya's son is finishing graduate school. His worldview has been shaped by his mother's anxious over protection and reinforced by the incessant fear mongering on social media. As her son tries to find a job, he's worried about getting out of debt. He even wonders if his generation will be the last to enjoy a world filled with beautiful trees, lakes and pretty rainbows.

Noah's world

As the huge population continued to multiply after the fall of Adam and Eve, the Bible records a time in world history when two cataclysmic events took place which could have destroyed the world and all mankind.

Genesis 6:1-6

Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. ² The sons of God saw the beautiful women and took any they wanted as their wives. ³ Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than

120 years.”⁴ In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.

⁵ The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶ So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart.

This passage from Genesis 6 tells us that faith and love for God soon became extinct, except for Noah and his family. All the inhabitants of the world elevated themselves to such a point that God was nothing more than a distant memory. Satan’s goal to elevate man and diminish God succeeded in a way that’s never been equaled. The end result brought about a race of people so barbaric and dead of conscience that they were named the Nephilites meaning “giants” or “warrior-monsters”. Whatever kindness, love, or peace mankind had once enjoyed was now a thing of the past as evil and unbridled selfishness filled the hearts and imaginations of everyone who lived.

Adolf Hitler was not the first leader to dream of and breed a master race of warriors raised to be monsters. Hitler promised the German people his Third Reich would last a thousand years. God spared the world from Hitler's Third Reich, as He spared the world from the horrific evil that had engulfed the world during the time of Noah. But how did God save the world? That brings us to the second cataclysmic event.

Genesis 6:11-21

¹¹ Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. ¹² God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. ¹³ So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!

¹⁴ "Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. ¹⁵ Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. ¹⁶ Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

¹⁷“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. ¹⁸ But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹ Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. ²⁰ Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹ And be sure to take on board enough food for you and for them.

God in His justice and patience brought about this second world-wide disaster. He cleansed this world from the evil that had permeated every person, except for Noah and his family. This was not a permanent fix—that day is coming. But the Lord is still involved and in control of this world. He even makes a promise to us and to the world.

Genesis 8:21-22, 9:12-15

“I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. ²² As long as the earth remains, there will be

planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

9:12 Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. 13 I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. 14 When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, 15 and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life.

The rainbow is a sign of hope assuring us that God will never send another flood to totally destroy the world, nor will He allow man or anything else in nature to destroy His world. He will not allow atom bombs, asteroids, or even global warming to ruin the world before the day He completely restores all creation.

Reflection

1. Can you relate to Tanya and her son? What cataclysmic event are you fearful of?
2. If God is not only present but involved in this world, how does this challenge my anxiety about the future?

Jacob's A.N.T. Problem

Do you have ants? I don't mean the six-legged kind that sneak into our kitchens and spoil our picnics. The ants I speak of are Automatic Negative Thoughts (A.N.T.s*). We all have them to a certain degree, but some of us have an infestation causing great anxiety. These sneaky critters can quickly invade our minds conjuring up all sorts of unrealistic scenarios. For example, your boss didn't say hello to you in the morning. The ants quickly invade your mind telling you, "*He must be angry with me. What did I do wrong? I better start looking for a new job!*" Or your daughter is 5 minutes late walking home from school. The ants quickly march into your thoughts conjuring up scenes of your daughter being abducted off the sidewalk.

If you have this kind of anxiety, you are not alone. The Bible tells us of a man who struggled with family issues and with A.N.T.s. His name was Jacob, the grandson of Abraham.

God promised Abraham that he would be the father of countless people, and that through one of his descendants, all the nations of the world would be blessed. As it turned out, Abraham and his wife Sarah only had one son whose name was Isaac.

Isaac, in turn had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Both of these sons turned out multiple children. The Bible goes on to trace the 12 children of Jacob who become the 12 tribes of Israel.

As the book of Genesis ends, we are told of Jacob's family issues. Jacob dearly loves his two youngest sons, Joseph, and Benjamin because they came from his wife Rachel. The other 10 sons are particularly jealous of Joseph because their father doted on him and gave him a very colorful robe. Joseph exacerbates their hatred of him by recalling dreams he had of his brothers and father bowing down before him.

They want to rid themselves of Joseph. But how? They sell him to merchants who were heading towards Egypt. To cover up their act, they smear blood on Joseph's robe and tell their father that Joseph was killed by a wild animal.

Meanwhile, Joseph is sold into the home of an Egyptian official by the name of Potiphar. This begins a 20-year adventure for Joseph in Egypt which will ultimately lead him to the palace of the Pharaoh where he will serve as the Prime Minister administering stores of food during a famine.

Exterminate those A.N.T.s!

When the famine Joseph had predicted happened, Egypt was ready because of Joseph's leadership as Prime Minister. Even Palestine, the area where Jacob and his sons lived, faced famine. Jacob promptly sends his sons to Egypt to buy grain, unaware that the man who would sell them grain was Joseph.

The brothers do not recognize Joseph, but Joseph hasn't forgotten them. He eventually sends them home after imprisoning one of the brothers, warning them that unless they bring their youngest brother back with them, the brother would stay in prison, and they would not receive anymore grain. What will Jacob say when they return home?

Genesis 42:29-36

29 When the brothers came to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan, they told him everything that had happened to them. **30** “The man who is governor of the land spoke very harshly to us,” they told him. “He accused us of being spies scouting the land. **31** But we said, ‘We are honest men, not spies. **32** We are twelve brothers, sons of one father. One brother is no longer with us, and the youngest is at home with our father in the land of Canaan.’

33 “Then the man who is governor of the land told us, ‘This is how I will find out if you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take grain for your starving families and go on home. **34** But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. Then I will know you are honest men and not spies. Then I will give you back your brother, and you may trade freely in the land.’”

35 As they emptied out their sacks, there in each man’s sack was the bag of money he had paid for the grain! The brothers and their father were terrified when they saw the bags of money. **36** Jacob exclaimed, “You are robbing me of my children! Joseph is gone! Simeon is gone! And now you want to take Benjamin, too. Everything is going against me!”

Jacob envisions the worst-case scenario for his family, and especially for his beloved son, Benjamin. His case of A.N.T.s causes him to believe that everything, including God, is against him. In reality, the son he believed to be dead is the Prime Minister of Egypt! Far from being against Jacob, a good and loving God is preparing to reunite Jacob with Joseph, moving the entire family to Egypt to live and multiply in the lush area of Goshen. Jacob will even meet Joseph's children. A happy ending, and the end of Jacob's anxiety. But his A.N.T.s could have been avoided.

A.N.T.s can be exterminated! It is a process of engaging your mind with facts and responding to every negative thought and irrational scenario. Jacob could have defused his negative thoughts by reminding himself of how God had helped him in the past. He should have talked back to those A.N.T.s telling them, *God promised me that my descendants will be like the dust of the earth. . . All peoples on earth will be blessed through me. God is for me, not against me!*

Killing these pesky critters demands we not accept every negative thought that comes into our minds because they are often inaccurate. But then, we go on and

replace these thoughts by thinking upon a good God who wants to bless us beyond our imaginations!

Reflection

1. Do you have an A.N.T. problem? If so, what kind of negative scenarios have you experienced lately in your life?
2. Thinking back on your latest negative experiences, how would you “talk back to them” knowing that God is good and in control of all things?
3. Can you remember a time in your life when you felt like everyone, and everything, was against you? In reality, how did it turn out? Was everyone really against you?

The death of Howard Hughes

The man who was flying into Houston for emergency treatment was quickly fading. His emaciated body weighed only 100 pounds—he was little more than a skeleton when the plane landed at the airport. But for Howard Hughes, one of the world's wealthiest men, it was too late. He died on the airplane at the age of 70.

Hughes made his vast fortune after WWII, buying airlines and manufacturing weapons. But when he lost control of his beloved Trans World Airlines (TWA) in 1956, Hughes' life began to spiral downward. For 20 years, Howard Hughes lived as an eccentric secluded in a small bedroom of a penthouse, surviving on drugs and soup. The windows of his room were sealed with black curtains. He touched nothing without using a piece of Kleenex for fear of germs. That little room was the only world he felt safe in because it was totally under his control.



The chief pathologist who performed the autopsy of Hughes' body shocked the world with what he found. Howard Hughes had gray hair that reached to the middle of his back, with toenails two inches long resembling corkscrews. He died of malnutrition and kidney failure. Ironically, Hughes' own foundation had developed the kidney dialysis machine which could have saved his life.

Why did this billionaire live and die as a malnourished recluse? One of his personal aids indicated that it all started when Hughes lost control of TWA. **“All of a sudden he found that he was in a world he couldn't control.”** Even with the money, power, and fame he wielded at that time, the fear of losing it and the anxiety of not being able to control his world brought Hughes down. Anxiety became his executioner.

Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, Hughes believed Satan's lie that we can be like little gods totally in control of our destinies. In reality, we can't control everything in this world. Even something as small as the Covid 19 virus left thousands dead and crippled the world's economy. Living in a fear-filled bubble isn't the

answer. Listening to and believing in the Words of Jesus can begin the process of setting us free.

Birds and lilies . . .

Jesus, the seed of the woman who was promised in the Garden (See page 9), and the One who would bless the entire world (See page 19), is born of Mary in Bethlehem. He begins his three-year ministry healing the sick and teaching God's Truth to a world held in bondage to Satan's lies.

On one occasion, Jesus assembled a great crowd of people on a mountain side. Here he taught them the truth which would set them free from the bondage of sin and a life of anxiety.

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

28 “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, **29** yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. **30** And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

31 “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ **32** These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. **33** Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

34 “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Jesus tells us in this Bible passage that obsessive worrying and anxiety are an absurdity for two reasons. First, if the Lord feeds the birds and clothes the lilies of the field with garments more magnificent than King Solomon’s wardrobe, why should we worry about these things? We are far more important in the eyes of God than birds and lilies. Why should we let our anxious

thoughts dominate our hearts and minds? Will not our Heavenly Father who cares for us provide all we need?

The second thing that makes our anxiety irrational is the fact that we can't add a single day to our lives by worrying. In fact, like Howard Hughes, anxiety actually shortens our lives. Doctors have warned us for years that anxiety raises blood pressure, causes ulcers, and generally wears down our bodies with an overproduction of adrenaline.

Jesus' solution is to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. We can become so entangled with the necessities of everyday life that we miss the purpose of life and the rich blessings of each moment. Instead, we need to ask Him the ultimate questions of life: What is my purpose? What is my destiny? Why would You love and care for me? The answers to these questions put the trivial things we worry about into perspective. Howard Hughes had lost all perspective.

Interestingly, anxiety can serve as a warning in much the same way hunger alerts us to our need for food. There are needs within us and burdens upon us that can only be met by God. Our excessive worry is like an alarm

on an elevator that rings when the load exceeds its weight limit. It signals that the elevator was not designed for such a heavy burden. The same is true for us when we try to carry burdens God never designed for us to lift apart from Him. Burdens meant to be carried one day at a time, with His help.

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

Jesus grew up the son of a carpenter. When carpenters made yokes for oxen, they did so with oxen nearby so they could rightly measure and carve out a perfect-fitting (easy to bear) yoke. The yoke was tailor made just as the burdens Jesus gives to us fit our needs and abilities.

Yes, we all have burdens to carry but Jesus wants us to know that we need not carry them alone. They become much lighter when we ask and trust Him to help us.

Satan's lie that we can live independent from God is a burdensome "yoke" no person is able to carry.

Reflection

1. When do you feel the most anxious?
 - When you lose control of some aspect of your life?
(Health, relationships, plans, finances, etc.)
 - When you compare your life to others?
 - When you are juggling too many things in your life?
 - When you think about the future?
2. When you consider what Jesus taught about worry, do you think your anxious feelings are caused by an obsession over the necessities of life? What was His solution to this problem?
3. If anxiety is like a warning light alerting us to excessive load limits, what should we do to lighten our burdens?

Chicken Little meets Jesus

In 1943, Walt Disney released a short cartoon video called *Chicken Little*. It was billed as an anti-Nazi film depicting the dangers of mass hysteria. While a 2005 Disney remake of this movie depicts Chicken Little as a hero fighting against aliens who come from the sky, the original film depicts the tactics of real-life enemies who deceive and destroy.



The original film begins with a hungry fox who can't get inside the chicken coop because of its high fences. This wily fox turns to a psychology book for advice. The book suggests that the best way to manipulate the masses is to begin with the most gullible. That happens to be Chicken Little.

Following that advice, the fox plants an idea in the chicken's head that the sky is falling as he throws a piece of wood over the fence during a thunderstorm. The

wood lands on Chicken Little's head convincing him that the sky really is falling and that the chickens need to leave their pen and find refuge in a cave—the home of the fox.

At the end of the movie, Chicken Little finally convinces all of the chickens of the impending doom. As the new “Head Chicken” of the flock, he leads the panicked masses away from their protective home to find shelter in the fox's cave.

The final scene shows a very full fox with a toothpick in his mouth as he lines up wishbones. A far cry or “cluck” from the 2005 remake which depicts Chicken Little as the victorious hero against aliens.

It's not hard to feel like Chicken Little in our world today. We are bombarded with 24-hour news from around the world. There is a plethora of podcasts from every conceivable political persuasion, along with countless social media posts communicating doom and gloom on a daily basis. When you include the ever-present marketing world where ideas and products are psychologically packaged to move the masses to buy a product or elect a candidate to “save your life” or to

“save the world”, is it any wonder that people have become fearfully cynical and clinically anxious? The sky seems to be falling every day. So, who can we believe and trust today? And what about the “sky falling” in our own world? A loss of a job, a suspicious lump, or worse, a death in the family, elevates our anxiety about the future. The prospects of our own future destiny, including the dark door of death, haunt us every time we drive by a cemetery, or when we grieve for someone we know and love who has died.

The Overcomer of the World. . .

Jesus continually tried to prepare His disciples for the time when He would suffer and die at the hands of men. Their grief would be mixed with disappointment because they believed Jesus came as the Messiah to deliver them from their Roman oppressors.

So, on the eve of His own crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples: ***I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.*** (John 16:33)

How has Jesus overcome the world? And how can that fact bring us peace? Listen to Jesus' own explanation.

John 19:28-30

²⁸ Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. ³⁰ When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Luke 24:36-48

³⁶ And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ³⁷ But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

³⁸ "Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt? ³⁹ Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do." ⁴⁰ As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

⁴¹ Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to

eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he ate it as they watched.

44 Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46 And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. 47 It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’

Jesus carried the burden of our sins and guilt upon His shoulders through His death on a cross. Before He died, He proclaimed victory by saying, ***It is finished!*** For all who accept this wonderful gift, there is no reason to fear God’s judgment now or a future judgment when we die. Fear and anxiety are replaced with His peace in our hearts. We who had been strangers and enemies of God can now become His little children. In fact, the Lord encourages us to pray to Him as His little children.

Our anxiety and fear of both the present and the future are diminished when we think about the overwhelming

goodness of God, and His overwhelming love for us, His children. Listen to how the Apostle Paul describes it in Romans 8.

Romans 8:31-37

³¹ What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ³² Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? ³³ Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. ³⁴ Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

³⁵ Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? ³⁶ As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep." ³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

The sky may look like it's falling from time to time, but Christ is reigning in heaven and even praying to the Father on our behalf. And since God gave His Son for us, will He not give us all the other things we need as well? But the best is yet to come!

Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

⁵ And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true."

The world as we know it will one day come to an end. But that day will not come until all of the Father's purposes on earth are completed. Christ will then return and destroy all of His enemies, even death itself. He will also restore the world, replacing its faulty-interdependent-moving parts with eternally perfect-God-dependent-moving parts. It will be a paradise free from fear and anxiety.

Reflection

1. What did Jesus mean when He said from the cross, "It is finished"? How does Jesus' death free us from fear?
2. The five steps to freedom from anxiety are:
 - a. Resign your position as CEO of the world.
 - b. Look for God's rainbows of promise.
 - c. Exterminate the A.N.T.s in your life.
 - d. Don't exceed the weight limits of your burdens.
 - e. Become one of His little children. Begin by praying the prayer on the next page.

Dear Jesus, I'm overwhelmed with anxiety and fear and I'm tired of trying to play God. Enter my fearful heart and give me forgiveness and peace through your "finished" work on the cross. Help me to live my life trusting in your daily care and provision as I now carry Your yoke. Amen

We would like to send you another booklet which will encourage you to keep trusting in the Lord Jesus as both your Savior and Provider.



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