



OVERCOMING ANXIETY

By Dr Cecil Stewart OBE

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Anxiety means to be uneasy, troubled or stressed. According to a report on www.telegraph.co.uk more than eight million people in Britain suffer from anxiety disorders caused by the pressures of modern life, costing the country nearly £10 billion a year. But Jesus came to give us peace and to take away our anxieties.

In **Acts chapter 16 v 16 – 30** we see two people, Paul and Silas, who had every reason to be anxious. They were wrongfully accused and imprisoned, rejected by the multitudes, severely beaten and cast into a dungeon! They had been doing good but bad things happened to them!

Paul and Silas had set a girl free from demon possession in the name of Jesus. When the evil spirit was cast out she could no longer tell fortunes, which made her masters very angry because their income was diminished. So the girls'

masters brought Paul and Silas before the judges and accused them of breaking the law and made false accusations against them. As a result they were publicly beaten, isolated and bound in a dungeon, away from their friends and families.

Paul and Silas had every reason to be anxious, but at midnight they sang praises to God so loud that the prisoners heard them. The devil thought he had silenced them and that they would become anxious, worried and full of complaints, but throughout their adversity they praised and sang to God. Their backs were sore and bleeding but they continued to sing praises.

Suddenly God's almighty power came down, shaking the prison so hard that all the doors were opened and everyone's bands were loosed. The noise awoke the prison guard and fearing that all the prisoners had escaped, he was going to kill himself, but Paul said 'do yourself no harm, we are all here'.

Everybody's chains fell off! That is what happens when there is a divine encounter! When we exercise our faith it brings God on the scene; chains are broken, unscriptural boundaries and restrictions are removed and people are set free from all kinds of life controlling problems.

Temporary trouble

Your trials need only be short term. Paul and Silas refused to be anxious because their faith

“ Suddenly God's almighty power came down ... ”



was in God and they knew their future was in His hands and their trouble was temporary.

When we sing praises even in the darkest hour, even though it seems there is no reason to be thankful, obstacles in your life will be removed and your anxieties will be overcome.

We as believers should not live by how things look or by how we feel!

We are not restricted by our circumstances because our faith is in God almighty and we know He is with us, even at the midnight hour, even in the dungeons of life. When life has lost its light, God is there, there is no need to be anxious, see **1 John chapter 1 v 7**.

We must not let circumstances rule our lives but by the grace of God we can overcome every obstacle, every anxiety and reach our objectives. Every test is temporary. Every trial will pass but God's word will abide forever, see **Psalm chapter 119 v 89** and **1 John 2 v 16 – 17**.

“... *but by the grace of God we can overcome every obstacle ...*”

See things as God sees them!

God calls things which do not exist as though they did, see **Romans chapter 4 v 17 – 21**. You may feel like you're in a dungeon today. You may have had bad news. You may have been unjustly treated, but God sees you as blessed and you can overcome through speaking the word. See **Revelation chapter 12 v 11**.

Proverbs chapter 18 v 21 says 'death and life are in the power of the tongue'.

As far as Paul and Silas were concerned they were already out of that prison. They saw by faith their mighty deliverance and that is why they were not silenced. That is why they were singing and rejoicing. We need to call into being the things we need, through speaking God's word and walking in agreement with it.

Study and speak out the following scriptures; **1 Peter chapter 2 v 24, Romans chapter 8 v 17, 2 Peter chapter 1 v 3, Matthew chapter 8 v 17, Isaiah chapter 54 v 17 and Isaiah chapter 40 v 30 – 31**.

Spread the Good News

Do like Paul and Silas did -

Put off anxiety and use your faith
Keep singing praises to God so others
can hear you and be encouraged

Continue to be a witness even in the worst of times, when you are hurting

I heard a story about a young couple who were planning to marry. The young man had a call on his life to go into the mission field, so he said to his fiancée 'the call of God must come first in our lives and I feel called to go to the mission field'. His fiancée replied 'No! I don't want to go to the mission field and I won't marry you if you do, so you can count the relationship as over'.

The young man was so disappointed but he knew he had to fulfil God's plan for his life. So he said to his fiancée 'please pray and consider changing your mind. Then write me a letter and let me know your final decision'. So they agreed to separate for the short term. Weeks passed with no communication. The young lady prayed and God spoke to her, she had a change of heart and decided it was right for her to marry and go with him to the mission field.

She sat down and wrote a letter and was about to post

“When we keep silent and let circumstances control us; lives and destinies are ruined.”

it to her future husband, but there was a very bad storm in the area so she said to her younger brother 'would you mind taking this letter and posting it? I don't want to go out in the storm'. Her brother said 'I surely will', so she gave him the letter. Weeks passed, then months, then years before they discovered that the brother had decided not to go out in the storm to post the letter. He had disregarded it and the message never reached the young man so the good news that they were to marry was never shared.

This is what happens when we do not deliver the good news with our families and those we can influence, when we don't share the gospel! When we keep silent and let circumstances control us lives and destinies are ruined.

2 Corinthians chapter 4 v 3, 'But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost'.

Faith in action

Hebrews chapter 4 v 2 talks about people who heard the word, who were told how to overcome their circumstances but it did not profit them because it was not mixed with faith. It was not accompanied by corresponding action.

If we are serious about overcoming anxiety then we must put our faith into action and change

our thinking. **1 John chapter 5 v 4**, 'for whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith'.

We must act on what we believe! **James chapter 2 v 17** states that 'even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone'. We must step out in faith and do what God has called us!

Hebrews chapter 11 v 33 – 34 talks about people of faith, who subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions and out of weakness were made strong. They became valiant in battle and defeated their enemies, all because they used their faith and refused to be controlled by their feelings or circumstances.

Faith often contradicts what your natural mind tells you!

When we compromise faith and do what we feel, rather than what God says to do then anxiety comes and we are rendered ineffective. This also applies to relationship problems and unforgiveness.

“We must act on what we believe!”

What does anxiety do?

It magnifies the problem
It drains us of energy
It ignores God's promises
It destroys creativity
It robs us of the power to change our circumstances

Anxiety comes when we allow thoughts to develop that are negative and contrary to God's word. We can meditate on the promises rather than the problems and overcome anxiety.

Anxiety brings stress, worry and negative emotions of fear, suspicion, hopelessness and division. These negative emotions can damage our health and wellbeing, often leading to depression and disease.

If we don't overcome anxiety, anxiety will overcome us!

I know what being anxious is like. As a young man I made the mistake of allowing anxiety into my mind when I was stricken with TB and depression. The more I thought about the situation the more anxious I became. Then I realised the bible teaches how to overcome anxiety by changing my attitude, my focus, my thinking and my speaking.

So I got out of bed and started to walk the floor. Yes, the pain was still in my left lung but I kept praising anyway. I began to fight the fight of faith. I began to declare what God says rather

than what I felt. The more I praised Him the greater the release. Over a period of months I was totally set free from TB and the terrible depression and anxiety became less and less.

Be anxious for nothing!

Don't give worry any place, refuse frustration and be in peace, see **Philippians chapter 4 v 6**. Peace will put you in a place of power.

Anxiety will only make you a victim, so stay in peace. Anxiety or worry cannot bring any answers. It will not advance you in any area of your life; see **Luke chapter 12 v 22 – 28**.

Consider the following key points.

1. Anxiety is an act of disobedience

When we surrender to anxiety and become more and more worried we are contradicting our maker's handbook, the bible. It is an act of disobedience, for God says 'do not be anxious'. This is because anxiety will destroy our faith and prevent us from reaching our full potential.

John chapter 14 v 27 says 'do not let your heart be troubled'. That is a command and when God commands us to do something we as believers should obey immediately because it is always for our own good.

When you come to Christ in true repentance, you become a new creature. All your anxieties, all your past failures and all your sins are forgiven. You are a new person. You no longer have to tolerate anxiety. **2 Corinthians chapter 5 v 17** says 'if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new'.

I heard a story about a man who borrowed his neighbour's car. As he was travelling he noticed the fuel getting very low. He pulled into a petrol station and filled it with petrol, not realising it was a diesel car. When he pulled out to go down the road the car stopped and he discovered his mistake, he had put in the wrong fuel!

When we accept anxiety into our lives we are accepting the wrong fuel! It will arrest our progress and hinder us from reaching our potential.

You won't change what you are prepared to tolerate, but you don't have to deal with

“ Don't give worry any place, refuse frustration and be in peace ... ”

your worries and anxieties alone, you can exchange them for God's peace!

Matthew chapter 11 v 28 – 30 says 'come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light'.

1 Peter chapter 5 v 7 tells us to cast all our cares on Jesus because He cares for us.

Give Him all your cares, not just some of them. Give Him every anxiety, every upsetting thing, every fear. Give it all to Jesus and don't take it back again. Commit the situation whole heartedly to God and then He can intervene and guide you. See **Psalm chapter 37 v 3 – 9**.

Trouble is inevitable but misery is optional!

In **2 Corinthians chapter 4 v 8** we see how Paul and his friends were troubled on every side, but they were not in despair. You may have trouble all around you but you don't have to let it into your spirit. Just because you have trouble doesn't mean you have to be miserable and anxious. Give it over to Jesus and He will solve it and

“ *Give Him all your cares, not just some of them.* ”

enable you to overcome. **Proverbs chapter 11 v 8** states 'the righteous shall be delivered out of trouble'.

Worry and anxiety will never solve a problem!

Anxiety and cares of this life choke the word of God, so that it cannot bring forth fruit, see **Mark chapter 4 v 19**. It hinders your harvest and prevents you from getting answers, but walking in faith and love creates the right climate for seed to grow and produce a harvest.

In **Luke chapter 10 v 41 – 42** Jesus spoke to Martha saying 'you are troubled about many things, but one thing is needful'. Listen to the word that will overcome your anxiety.

Today we have a decision to make, we can refuse anxiety, or we can continue to let anxiety run rampant in our lives and bring ruin.

2. Anxiety opens the door to the enemy

When we drift into anxiety and away from God in attitude, thought and talk, we take ourselves out of the light and into satan's arena where we are weakened and influenced by unbelief. Thoughts can be agents of satan and if spoken, we give them a place.

This is why we are urged to resist the devil. See **Ephesians chapter 4 v 27**, 'do not give place to the devil'. **John chapter 10 v 10**, 'the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy.' **James chapter 4 v 7**, 'resist the devil and he will flee from you'. **2 Corinthians chapter 2 v 11**, 'lest satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices'.

Shutting the door to anxiety will keep the devil out, so refuse the fiery darts of anxiety, worry and fear. **Ephesians chapter 6 v 16** states 'above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked'.

When we make God our source of supply we will come through in victory. **Philippians chapter 4 v 19** says 'God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus'.

Anxiety cannot take root when we have a lifestyle of praise and thanksgiving. In **1 Peter chapter 5 v 8** it tells us that the devil is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. This means he cannot devour everybody, but

those that live in anxiety and worry leave themselves open to the attacks of the devil. He cannot devour us when we walk in faith and refuse negativity, when we feed our faith instead of fear and act in love and forgiveness instead of strife.

Satan has no answer to the word when we speak it and live by it; see **Mark chapter 11 v 23 – 25**.

3. Overcome anxiety through praise, worship and prayer

Psalms chapter 95 v 6, 'Oh come let us worship and bow down'.

Be like Paul and Silas, they prayed and sang in their darkest hour. Yes, their backs were bleeding and they had every reason to be anxious, but they decided to pray and sing praises. This is a lesson for us all!

You may feel anxious and fearful but;
Don't accommodate it
Don't walk with it
Don't confess it
Lift your voice like Paul and Silas did
Thank God for the gift of life

Continue to thank Him for the many blessings you have received and for the fact that He is in

“ When we make God our source of supply we will come through in victory. ”

charge of your future. Commit your ways to Him daily. See **Proverbs chapter 3 v 5 – 6**, ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path’.

What a wonderful thing it is to have God directing your path, guiding you every day, helping you understand His will for your life. All you have to do to experience this is turn your back on anxiety and trust in the Lord.

2 Corinthians chapter 10 v 5 – 6 tells us that it is our responsibility to cast down wrong thoughts, false imagination and everything that contradicts God’s word. We need to bring those thoughts captive, speak the word and use our faith to overcome through praise and worship.

We have more power than we think!

Hebrews chapter 13 v 15, ‘Let us offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually’.

Speak it out, be a thanksgiver, be one who praises the Lord! That is key to overcoming.

“ *... the Father is looking for worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth.* ”

Psalms chapter 100 v 4 tells us to ‘enter His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise’.

Think life giving thoughts!
Speak life giving words!
Show a life giving attitude!
Make life giving plans!
And develop life giving relationships, and then anxiety will have no place in your life!

We need to be like David, see **Psalms chapter 34 v 1**, ‘I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth’. This kind of lifestyle of praise and worship creates an atmosphere for God to work!

The bible says in **John chapter 4 v 23** that the Father is looking for worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. If you’re a worshipper you will enjoy the presence of Jesus, where no depression or anxiety can take root.

4. Overcome anxiety with joy and rejoicing

We must develop an atmosphere of rejoicing because it scatters the clouds of anxiety, just like the sunrise scatters the darkness. Rejoicing will bring you strength; see



Nehemiah chapter 8 v 10,
'the joy of the Lord is your strength'.

We should shout for joy because He defends us, goes before us, works on our behalf and has our best interests at heart.

There are many scriptures that encourage us to rejoice;

1 Thessalonians chapter 5 v 16 – 17 'Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing.'

Isaiah chapter 61 v 10 'I will greatly rejoice'

Philippians chapter 4 v 4
'Rejoice in the Lord always'

1 Peter chapter 1 v 8
'Rejoice with joy unspeakable'

Deuteronomy chapter 26 v 11 'Rejoice in every good thing'

Deuteronomy chapter 12 v 7 'Rejoice in all that you put your hand to'

Psalm chapter 5 v 11 'Let all that put their trust in Thee rejoice'

Psalm chapter 33 v 1 'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous'

If you are right with God rejoice because you have been redeemed for all eternity, saved from a lost hell and given a life of purpose! You have everything to rejoice for, so refuse anxiety and fear and be a worshipper.

We can develop an attitude of gratitude and be thankful because when we do we will rise like an eagle. An eagle has the ability to see further than any other bird, they soar high above the storm.

We need to be declaring the good news of the gospel with rejoicing. See **Psalm chapter 107 v 22**, 'Declare His works with rejoicing'.

Let us say 'no' to anxiety, negative thinking, and a critical attitude. Let us develop a good attitude and bring life everywhere we go and anxiety will have no place in our lives!

Other hope builders available include:

- Sights, Sounds & Seasons
- The Transforming Power of Thanksgiving
- Give It Over & Get On
- Followers Who Finish
- Healing Environment
- It's Not Over
- Overcoming Offence
- Accelerate
- Change & Choice

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