ANXIOUS *for*

NOTHING

FINDING CALM *in a* CHAOTIC WORLD

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**Meditate on These Things**

 Read Philippians 4:4-9

OPENING REFLECTION

**"The challenges are great. But our God is greater."**

Friends. We find ourselves in a sober moment. These are uncertain times around the world and fears are rising. People who have never felt anxious before are suddenly weighed down with worry and are not sure what to do next.

Do you need encouragement right about now? Are you feeling anxious and uncertain? Do you find yourself in a season of isolation as events cancel, schools shift online, and churches close their doors to large gatherings?

When I need to stay calm, I turn to this Scripture: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:4-9, NIV).

**Less Fret, More Faith.**

 God’s Peace, Your Peace

*You may be facing the perfect storm,*

*But Jesus offers the perfect peace.*

Confront the Chaos

1. Have you ever walked through a season in which it seemed you would never make it out alive?

Are you walking through such a season now?

How was—or is – that season different from other hard circumstances in your life?

1. Flannery O’Connor, a southern writer who lived in the nineteen hundreds wrote, “All human nature vigorously resists grace because grace changes us and the change is painful.” Pain ful experiences in life are often amplified by the fact that they change or disrupt life as we know it and leave scars of change on us.

Has the hardest season of your life changed you? If so how?

If you are walking through the “perfect” storm now, do you feel yourself changing, either positively or negatively? Explain.

Are you able to see those changes as a form of grace? Why or why not?

1. Sometimes our actions ignite the storms of life, and sometimes the storms seem capricious and random.

Is there something you need to confess before you can cling to the grace of God in this storm?

Is part of what you are experiencing a consequence of not listening to God’s warnings?

Or, if your season of trial feels capricious, is something keeping you from accepting the peace that God wants to offer?

1. Times of despair and anxiety are not one-night storms; they can last for years. Tragedy does not adhere to the rules of convenience. Following are two lines from the famous hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”:

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing:

Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.

 Martin Luther (the writer of this hymn), Paul Daniel, and countless others knew the only way to survive a “perfect storm,” a season that throws change at your from every direction, is by having a bulwark.

 What is your bulwark? Do you have anything to hold on to during this season of change and insecurity when you hardly recognize yourself?

Are there certain pillars you have turned to in the past that have crumbled under your weight?

Choose Calm

1. Followers of Jesus know that he is their bulwark, but even more specifically the peace of God is a bulwark. It is steady and sure and a promise for those who believe in him.

What might the peace of God feel like in your situation?

Have your ever experienced it? If not, what do you think is the barrier to your peace?

If you have not experienced it, do you still believe the peace of God exists?

1. Asking and not receiving can feel like rejection, and rejection on top of a tragic experience can seem unbearable. Can you relate to any of these questions?

Have your prayers been met with a silent sky?

Have you prayed and heard nothing?

Are you floundering in the land between an offered and an answered prayer?

Do you feel the press of Satan’s mortar and pestle?

If so, are you willing to continue pursuing answers in Christ?

Consider the options. Is there any other way that seems more hopeful?

1. Read Isaiah 40:31.

What might it mean to wait on the Lord in your situation?

If the wait renewed your strength, would the wait be worth it?

1. “Lead with worship. Go first to your Father in prayer and praise. Confess to him your fears. Gather with his people. Set your face toward God. Fast. Cry out for help. Admit your weakness. Then, once God moves, you move too. Expect to see the God of ages fight for you. He is near, as near as your next breath.”

List the action items in this quote.

Are you expecting God to move but not asking him to do so?

Are you drowning in your depression without crying to him for help?

How can you expect more of God in your situation?

What do you need in order to be confident in his ownership of every second of our life?

Think and remind yourself of testimonies or stories of how God helped others hold back the storm. The Bible is a great resource of stories of how God worked with his people. Do you think the characters in those stories were confident that their stories would end the way that they did?

Make a point to remind yourself of a different story each day of this week.

Meditation

“When you have Him you have all; but you have also lost all when you lose Him. *Stay with Christ,* although your eyes do not see Him and your reason does not grasp Him.”

 Martin Luther, emphasis added

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:7

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? Hebrews 1:14

Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. Daniel 10:12

I will contend with those who contend with you, Isaiah 49:25

but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;
    they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
    they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

For he will command his angels concerning you
    to guard you in all your ways; Psalm 91:11

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— John 10:14

So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. Galatians 4:7

For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, Acts 27:23

all the days ordained for me were written in your book
    before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:16

 In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. 2 Chronicles 20:15

When you pass through the waters,
    I will be with you; Isaiah 43:2a

GOD BLESS YOU!