

Born For The Broken
How The Gospel Inoculates Anxiety
Philippians 4:4-9

Introduction: Have you ever been given a Christmas gift you forgot about; something that years later you found and realized it would have been incredibly useful to you if you had actually used it? Well, that tends to be the way we apply the gift of Christ to our daily lives. For far too many Christians, the knowledge of the Gospel is something in their pocket that they never use; it's the useful Christmas gift that got tossed in the closet while you were trying to get everything cleaned up for the guests coming over for dinner, but then forgot about it as it got shoved further and further back in the closet of things rarely used.

Therefore, this Christmas season we want to help you get the Gospel back out of storage! We want you to be able to experience the daily PEACE the choir of Angels praised God for in front of an audience of shepherds and sheep when they sang,

14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14)

The peace that Jesus established between us and God, is a peace that gives us the opportunity to have peace with one another and with ourselves if we will choose to live our lives in it. If we will actually live our lives according to the truth of what Christ has done for us it will result in a completely different experience than the life offered by this world. Everything the world offers is the corrupted, upside-down version of what God created. Even the good things of this world can't bring the experience of God's life because apart from Christ, the things of the world and the ways of this world, are not only separated from God and His life, they are also at war with God and His life.

For instance, the very way the world tells you to define ourselves; to establish whether our lives matter in this world, is a burden no man can successfully carry!

The world's upside-down system of self-worth depends entirely on what I perform and how well I continue performing it. My performance establishes my value, and my value determines the type and level of acceptance I receive, which in turn, determines the significance of my life.

However, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the right-side up way I'm supposed to define myself.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ declares that God chose me not based on my performance but His love for me (acceptance); that I'm worth so much Jesus willingly suffered the wrath of God on my sin to redeem me (value); and that He has created works for me to experience His fulfillment as opposed to earning my status (performance).

Knowing this truth is the most powerful weapon against the brokenness inherent to this life. Living by this Truth inoculates us against the depression of feeling as if our life is

insignificant, that we have no purpose that matters, that we are unseen and ultimately forgettable.

This truth is also an inoculation against the anxieties of this world. Anxiety manifests itself as fear, nervousness, or dread. For most people it's a short lived quickly fleeting emotional response to whatever circumstance they are particularly prone to initially react to in that manner. However, for other people it's a more frequent response to a much larger list of stimuli, and for some, it's an almost constant state of being for no apparent reason at all. As with depression, there are some people who suffer from clinical anxiety, that is, for no rational reason at all, their brain orders the release of hormones that creates what seems like a constant torture of fear, nervousness or dread.

They feel like they are standing on a tight rope high above a canyon (fear); or like they are getting ready to sing a solo of the national anthem at the Super Bowl (nervous); or are being asked to spend all day long cleaning dirty diapers with a toothpick in a room with no ventilation (dread)! High levels of anxiety can result in all kinds of physical reactions like tunnel vision, extreme levels of alertness, increased heart rate, more rapid breathing, and even dizziness; so, you can imagine, for those suffering with clinical anxiety, the constant presence of these sensations is physically and emotionally exhausting!

There are all kinds of factors that can lead to clinical anxiety, one of which is PTSD. Similarly, like those with clinical depression, people with clinical anxiety need medicine to lower their involuntary hormonal response so that counselors can help them learn new ways of thinking. However, despite the well-intentioned efforts of psychologists and psychiatrists, there is no way of thinking in the world's system that remotely compares to what a Christian Counselor can offer a follower of Jesus.

Millenniums before modern psychology began to offer patients mental tools to combat anxiety, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the church in Philippi and shared how the Gospel of Jesus provided him a way of thinking that inoculated him against understandable reasons for anxiety! Paul was stuck in a Roman prison for preaching the Gospel and he had no idea of when or even if he would ever be free again. He had a huge passion to bring the Gospel to the entire gentile world, a task made significantly more difficult in jail! Everyday he faced the real chance of being beaten or executed. Everyday he faced starvation and the elements. A person who once had all the benefits of one who achieved greatness in the upside-down system of the world, had now lost everything the world offered because of his commitment to the right-side up system of Jesus, but yet counted all he lost as rubbish (Philippians 3:8)! Paul, who was living in utter despair and constant threat said,

12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:12-13)

How was Paul not eaten up with anxiety? How was he not frozen in fear or dread? Given the constant setbacks in his life and ministry, how could he say with such zeal,

14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

How did Paul not live in the constant torture of anxiety always wondering what set back he was going to suffer next? Well, the answer lies in how he chose to think and act. Paul decided he was going to train his brain to see and view the world through the Gospel rather than his circumstances. Paul was going to interpret life through the gift Christ gave us with His life rather than the world around him that was always trying to take from him! This wasn't a victory Paul achieved on accident. He didn't wake up one morning with this ability. Paul said,

11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. (Philippians 4:11)

This was something Paul LEARNED, meaning at some point he didn't know how, but now did! To learn is first and foremost to think. We act and even feel because of how we think, therefore, to learn begins with how we think. Somewhere in Paul's relationship with Christ he learned how to think based on the truth of the Gospel and as a result, it inoculated him against the imprisonment of anxiety! We can't say at what point he finally learned it, but we know what it is he learned because in his letter to the church in Philippi he told them how to do it as well! Paul wrote,

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:4-9)

Paul was not saying this is the way to be saved, in that, if you will do these things then God will be with you as your Father, but if you don't, He won't be your Father. Rather, what Paul was saying is that if you want to EXPERIENCE the PEACE of GOD, the very state of being that is opposite of depression and anxiety, then you need to put the truth of the Gospel to work in this way.

Let's go back through the passage and take a deeper look at the instructions Paul gave us to make God's PEACE our experience.

PROPOSITION: There are four instructions in Philippians 4:4-9 on how to inoculate yourself against anxiety with the Gospel.

Paul's first instruction on how to inoculate yourself against anxiety with the Gospel is,

(1) No matter what, Praise the Lord! (4:4)

- A. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
- B. I may not be able to rejoice about my circumstances, but I can rejoice IN THEM by rejoicing IN the LORD! Everything He is and everything He has done is worth celebrating!
- C. Charles Spurgeon wrote, "**Sometimes, brothers and sisters, you cannot rejoice in anything else, but you can rejoice in the Lord; then, rejoice in Him to the full. Do not rejoice in your temporal prosperity, for riches take to themselves wings, and fly away. Do not rejoice even in your great successes in the work of God. If the Lord be your joy, your joy will never dry up. All other things are but for a season; but God is forever and ever. Make Him your joy, the whole of your joy, and then let this joy absorb your every thought. Be baptized into this joy; plunge into the deeps of this unutterable bliss of joy in God.**"¹
- D. The Gospel reveals all we need to know to rejoice. The Baby born in the manger tells us God is with us! The life and teachings of Jesus show us what joy really looks like. The death of Christ on the cross purchases our access to joy. The empty tomb guarantees us our joy forever. His ascension tells us our joy is represented before the Father. The filling of the Holy Spirit means His joy can abound in us, and His promise to come back assures us that our joy will be completed!
- E. I am a child of God forever because of Jesus and as such I'm an heir of God's Kingdom and His Life! This life and its circumstance may give me very little to have joy in, or it may give me a plethora, but whatever it gives me, none of it compares to what I have been exclusively and forever given in Christ! If I have the gift that comes only in Christ, then I need to rejoice in that! I need to celebrate it no matter what and where I am in this life because no matter what, I still have it and will so forever!
- F. Christians who know what they have in Christ and live rejoicing in that possession, in that relationship; are those who bring joy into every circumstance and life around them. Believers who are utterly convinced of this truth and act on this truth are those who even in the darkest of times, in the midst of grief and sorrow, in the turmoil of war itself, still shine JOY!

¹ Spurgeon, C. (2014). [*Spurgeon Commentary: Philippians*](#). (E. Ritzema, Ed.) (pp. 140–142). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Paul's second instruction on how to inoculate yourself against anxiety with the Gospel is to...

(2) Make sure your actions always reflect the belief that Jesus is coming back. (4:5)

- A. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;**
- B.** When my children were little, I taught them five things they needed to always remember; things that no matter where they found themselves in life they needed to hold on to. I reviewed it with them frequently and even quizzed them on it.
1. God loves you.
 2. Daddy loves you.
 3. Everything is going to be ok.
 4. Always have fun.
 5. Always follow instructions.
- C.** Now some of you might be asking on what grounds I can say number three. On what grounds can I tell my children that everything is going to be ok, because sometimes things are not ok. To those people I say that you are correct, sometimes things are not OK, but they will be if you are in Christ! At the very latest, when Jesus comes back everything will be ok!!! Everything is going to be ok! The Bible says,
- D. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:3-5)**
- E.** Everybody feels some measure of anxiety when they believe things are not going to turn out ok. Dread and fear are the normal response to the belief that whatever situation you're in, or getting ready to be in, isn't going to end well. Therefore, if my eyes are fixated on my circumstances, then my response will be based on what's happening now. But, if my eyes are fixed on how it's going to end, then my response will be based on that!

- F.** In the mid 1990's I went on staff at a children's and youth camp in Altavista, Virginia called The Master's Inn. As a part of the recreation for the kid's camp and the youth camp we had a pond with a thing called "The Blob." In my recollection The Blob was a twenty plus foot long, six foot tall, eight-foot-wide inflatable tube that you jumped on from a 20-foot tower. You then crawled out to the edge and waited for the next person to jump on it. When they landed on it the energy exchange would launch you into the air and into the lake. Every little kid in the camp would find every big kid in the camp to launch them, but the really brave kids found the biggest adult at the camp to launch them! One of my roles at the camp was to be a lifeguard. I first got certified in 1988 and I kept it current for years. All the camp lifeguards took turns at the different stations around the lake while the kids were there. As such, one of us was always at the top of the Blob tower to make sure the kids followed the rules as they jumped. Now understand this, the only way you could get hurt jumping on to that blob was to dive headfirst or try to land on your feet. All you had to do was step off the tower and pick your feet up. Gravity and the giant air filled innertube would take care of everything else. If you fell off, the life jacket would keep you afloat in the lake if you couldn't swim. There was no rational reason to not jump. Yet, in the three straight summers I worked that blob tower, every single week I had to convince people to jump off. Children, teenagers and adults; every age group was represented among those who let anxiety overcome their desire to jump. They had taken the time to put on a life vest, stand in line in the hot sun, and climb twenty feet of steps, but once they got to the edge and had to make the decision to jump, they froze! Their immediate circumstance was the fall, and its normal to feel anxiety about falling, because falling doesn't normally end well! However, when you know for certain that it's going to end with fun and not broken bones, then there's no rational reason not to do it! So, each week I got better and better at coming up with ways to convince people to act on the rational truth and stop acting on their irrational feelings. In their defense, if you believed things weren't going to be ok, then you would be a complete fool to jump. But with the blob there was no logical reason to believe things were going to be anything but ok! It was a lie that that they weren't going to be ok, but it's amazing how we will dwell on the feelings of a lie much quicker than the thoughts of the truth! It had been proven more times than a person could attempt to count, and done so in front of their very own eyes, but in their frozen state, they were choosing to act on the feelings of a lie instead of the knowledge of the truth. The only reasonable response was to jump!
- G.** And this is exactly what Paul is teaching here! Given what we now know through the Gospel, the only logical perspective we can have is that eventually everything will be ok! I can press forward into whatever situation I'm in because no matter what happens everything is going to be ok. Jesus is coming back and when He does He will make all things new! Even if things are never ok for me in this lifetime, the circumstance He has called me in now is a circumstance that He is called me to thrive in by displaying His life and glory. He will right every wrong and He will wipe away every tear. Even if the hard circumstance of my life lasts

my entire lifetime on this earth, it will not be the circumstance of my eternity, which is eternally longer than whatever circumstance God has called me in today to live out His life and display His glory. If I have the end as my focus, then I can be reasonable in my now! If I know for a fact everything is going to be ok, then I can act like it now no matter if it is or isn't, no matter if I feel like it or not!

Paul's third instruction on how to inoculate yourself against anxiety with the Gospel is to ...

(3) **Pray with full knowledge of who you are praying to, and the right you have to pray to Him! (4:6-7)**

- A. **6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**
- B. Before we get into verse seven let's make sure we understand what verse six is telling us to do. Paul is essentially contrasting two different ways of praying. First off, when Paul writes "prayer" he means the conversation we have with God, whatever that might be. However, by adding the word "supplication" he is speaking of those times when we are pleading for God to do something. Putting that together, whether we are coming to God in a casual conversation over casual matters, or coming to God with a heavy heart of an urgent and heavy matter, either way, in both of these we are to come with THANKSGIVING and let him know what it is we want Him to do! We are not to come with anxiety, but with thanksgiving. What does that mean?
- C. Have you ever asked for something but then lost your mind waiting for it? I've shared this story before, but when Keri and I found out we both carry one of the most severe forms of the gene that causes cystic fibrosis, we handled it two totally different ways. I was the first half of the verse and Keri was the second. When Keri got pregnant with our first child, I prayed a ton, but my prayers were from a place of anxiety. My prayers never resulted in peace, but Keri's prayers did—why? My prayers lacked what Keri's possessed.
- D. Keri came pleading with the Lord for the same thing I did, but my prayers were postured from a place of desperation, demand, and a refusal to accept anything other than the outcome I believed was just. My prayers were coming from a place that couldn't imagine life if what I wanted didn't happen. My prayers were rooted in lack a faith that God is Good and that everything is going to be OK no matter what. My prayers were rooted in my anxiety about my circumstances. Every time I prayed, I did so pleading with God for what I wanted while believing my feeling that He really wasn't interested in me, nor cared about what was eating away at my soul. In all of my prayers, it was as if I wasn't praying to God

at all, because as I voiced my prayers, I wasn't doing so with a sincere belief in who the Bible tells me He is and how He treats His children.

- E. On the other hand, Keri's prayers were rooted in praising God. She prayed with THANKSGIVING; thanksgiving that God has saved us and given us eternal life with Him; that heaven is glorious, and that no matter what her circumstances are now, they are not her circumstances forever. In addition, after years of waiting on the Lord, of constantly giving her desire for children to the Lord and never being able to get pregnant, she was now pregnant with our baby. She was too busy praising God for what seemed impossible to be worried about anything else. She was too busy praising God for who HE had declared Himself to be, to be worried about what He may or may not do in the future! Therefore, as she presented her pleading for Ari to be born healthy, she did so grateful for the God who loved her, who sent His Son to die for her and who had adopted her as His daughter forever. She prayed with total confidence that God heard her prayer and that whatever and however He revealed His will, everything would be OK in the end because He promised it would! Keri prayed believing God's Word,
- F. **28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)**
- G. For Keri, it didn't matter if we couldn't explain how in the world the glory of God could be experienced or even seen while watching a child suffer with such a horrible level of a terrible disease. I on the other hand was praying from a place of resentment and anger that we were even having to seek God about such a matter. I was angry at God while Keri was praising God!
- H. As a result, Keri spent the pregnancy and the four days after Ari's birth that it took to tell us if he had CF or not, not worrying at all about the results. She was able to live in the moment of each day with confidence and joy. Keri experienced, "**... the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding**" **(Philippians 4:7)**
- I. I on the other hand was a mess inside. I spent most of her pregnancy and the four days of waiting on the test results after his birth with an elephant sitting on top of my head! In the most joyous moment of his birth there was this terrifying reality standing in the corner. It never left me. I never experienced the peace of God through that entire process. Four days after his birth they called to tell us Ari didn't have CF and he wasn't even a carrier, meaning his children will have zero chance of having the disease. I felt like the world had been lifted off of me when I heard the report. Keri certainly praised the Lord for the results as well, but she had never felt the world on her shoulders because she had refused to allow it to be on her shoulders!
- J. You see, that's the difference between praying from anxiety and praying from thanksgiving! Paul said, if you go to the Lord remembering who He is, believing

what He has said about eternal life, His love for us and His guarantee that all things will work together for good, then you will experience something that makes no sense in your circumstance—GOD’s PEACE! It’s not just any peace, but it is the peace that only comes from God, and as such it is as unexplainable as God is, all while being as real as God is! It is this peace, that like a garrison of soldiers who protect a city, guards our hearts and minds from the desperation, anger, fear, dread, bitterness and hopelessness that our sinful flesh seems to want to run to whenever life appears to be headed in a direction not of our choosing or control!

- K. Hendriksen and Kistemaker wrote, **“The man of trust and prayer has entered that impregnable citadel from which no one can dislodge him; and the name of that fortress is *Christ Jesus*.”**²

Paul’s fourth instruction on how to inoculate yourself against anxiety with the Gospel is to ...

(4) Practice Gospel centered thinking. (4:8-9)

- A. **8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.**
- B. So, in saying “whatever” he literally means anything that fits the description. That is, whatever is:
1. True and as such not false.
 2. Honorable and thus not shameful.
 3. Just and thus not unlawful.
 4. Pure and thus not corrupt.
 5. Lovely and as such not repulsive.
 6. Commendable and not condemnable.
 7. Excellent and thus not mediocre.
 8. Praiseworthy instead of that which is worthy of criticism.

² Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of Philippians*](#) (Vol. 5, pp. 196–197). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

- C. Paul says whatever fits into those categories, practice thinking about those things as opposed to anything else! Remember practice doesn't make perfect, it makes permanent.
- D. In addition, as we talked about last week, our thoughts produce feelings and feelings feed more of the same thoughts. Therefore, if we want to feel differently, we have to think differently. Your feelings will not change until your thoughts do! If you want to stop feeling depressed, anxious, afraid, intimidated, misunderstood, overlooked, and unseen then you need to stop thinking that way! If you want to stop dreading the future then stop thinking on the things you dread and start thinking about whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy.
- E. Verse nine then gives a context to that thinking. He says, "whatever is," but then verse nine says to operate that practice in the context of the Gospel. Let me explain.
- F. The command "think about these things" is a present tense command meaning it needs to be done all the time and without exception. He then expounds on this command in verse nine when he tells them to continually practice all that he has taught them and testified to them over the course of his ministry; all of which had to do with the Gospel of Jesus! This is not to say that thinking about your job or hobbies is somehow a bad thing because he just said if there is any excellence or anything praiseworthy. But if at any moment you start thinking about your job without simultaneously remembering that you are accepted by God because He adopted you as one of His children based solely on His love for you; that you are eternally valuable because Christ paid an eternal price for you; and that God has prepared the works of His life for you to perform in this life, works that He is going to work in and through you no matter what job you have; if at any moment you forgot the Gospel and start thinking about your job outside of that reality, you will in that moment be opening yourself up for doubt, fear, pride, anxiety, greed and all sorts of other things that are the very opposite of what we are told to think on in verse eight.
- G. So, it's not enough to simply think about good things. If you want to avoid the potential of anxiety, we have to practice good thinking inside the sphere of Gospel thinking and living! Everything in this world is corrupt at some level, and by that I don't necessarily mean in some devious way, but rather that at best, everything in this world falls short and ends. Therefore, I need something bigger and better to anchor me than the goodness in this world! Ironically, its only when I'm living in the reality of a genuine relationship with the God who makes all things work together for good, that I can truly glean and experience the goodness that God has left in this world!

Challenge: Identify the mental practices of your life, properly evaluate what they are making permanent, and change what's needed to experience the peace of GOD!

STOP accepting anxiety, depression, fear, and all the other manifestations of this broken world as your emotional reality and take steps toward healing.

STOP finding ways to justify your detrimental emotional norm.

STOP using your unhealthy emotional condition as a way to perform and earn value, that is to get people to prioritize you and make you the center of attention.

BUT INTSEAD, find trusted people that you know love and follow Jesus, that you can confess your emotional reality to, not as a way to get sympathy, attention, or justification; but rather, so that they can help hold you accountable to the kind of thinking that will eventually change your emotional reality and your default way of thinking that keeps you there!

If you don't have trusted friends or family you can talk to, then, today there are pastors in our Next Steps Room that would love to hear what's going on in your life, pray with you and help you form a plan that will encourage you towards experiencing the life of Christ!

If you don't have time to stop in the next steps room, then scan the QR code on the bulletin or visit www.DareToVenture.org and fill out the Next Steps form and one of us will get a hold of you.

If you are at a place you need professional counseling, Venture has a great Biblical Counselor on staff. Her name is Kim Talbert-Kirk and you can reach her via our website or by just calling the church. If you aren't comfortable meeting with Kim then reach out to any of Venture's pastors and we will help you find somebody.

The point is you can't change your emotional reality if you don't stop practicing what's keeping you in it. The truth of the Gospel is completely useless to you if you don't let it define and govern how you think and act! Its why the prophet Isaiah wrote,

3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. (Isaiah 26:3)

Stop making your permanent reality the reality of a broken world and start making steps that will embrace the reality God created for you! If you've never surrendered your life to Jesus, then the first step you need to make is to repent and believe in HIM! You can't step into His life until you've stepped into Him!