

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>Special Messages</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Text:</b>	<b>Psalms 2:1-12</b>		Gary L. W. Johnson
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### THE BLESSEDNESS OF TRUSTING GOD

Over the last two months our Scripture memory has focused on Philippians 4:6-9 and 1 Peter 5:6, 7. Both texts deal with the theme of anxiety. David Powlison, who edits the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, is on staff at The Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, and lectures in practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, recently addressed the subject, and I want to reproduce what he had to say before turning our attention to our text.

**“Anxiety Is Universal.** We have a lot of words in English for anxiety: stress, preoccupation, being burdened, feeling pressured, being obsessed . . . it is a human experience that everybody knows on some level. I’d say a couple of things to someone who is experiencing anxiety.

**“Anxiety Is Understandable.** First, we have really good reasons to be anxious. We live in a world facing forces way bigger than us. We’re all mortal. We cannot control the most important things about life and death. If you have children, you can’t guarantee the outcome of their life or if they’ll live or die. You have many responsibilities as a parent, but many more reasons you could be a nervous wreck. There’s actually something comforting in the truth that we have good reason to be anxious. It normalizes the experience. You’re not just a nut with a diagnosis.

**“Don’t Be Afraid, God Is with You.** Second, it’s striking that the most frequent command in the entire Bible is to not be afraid. Don’t fear. Don’t be anxious. And it’s a very unusual command because it doesn’t say, ‘Repent,’ or ‘Try harder.’ It’s a command, but then the next thing said is a promise: ‘I will be with you. Don’t be afraid.’ It’s said in a tone of voice that has no sternness in it. It’s not, ‘don’t be afraid, you lousy so-and-so.’ It’s ‘Don’t be afraid, I’m with you.’ The script gets rewritten as to how Scripture approaches this issue.

**“How to Move Forward.** So first, we’re able to normalize the experience, then we hear a tender promise at the heart of the solution, and then we’re given very specific guidelines about how to go forward. The whole thing is summarized very well in Philippians 4. It starts out by saying, ‘The Lord is near’ – there’s the promise. ‘Don’t be anxious about anything’ – there’s the command. ‘But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.’ Recognize who he is. Express thankfulness that he is near. Let him know what’s on our hearts and minds. It’s a picture that has attached to it a further promise that God’s peace will attend us. I think that anxiety is an everyday, every-person, human struggle that can also be one of the most fruitful opportunities for real sanctification.”<sup>1</sup>

In both Phil. 4:6-9 and 1 Peter 5:6-7, trusting in God is highlighted. Leighton points to the word *confidence* in the thought behind the expression *casting your cares upon God*. He writes, “There is a faculty in it that all persons have not: though they would do thus with it, they cannot; it lies on them, and they are not able to cast it on God. The way is, doubtless, by praying and believing:

these are the hands by which the soul can turn over to God what itself cannot bear: all cares, the whole bundle, is most dexterously transferred thus. *Be careful in nothing.* Phil. iv. 6. A great word! Oh, but how shall it be? Why thus, says he, *In all things make your requests known unto God*, and in a confident, cheerful way, *supplication* mixed with *thanksgiving*; so shall it be the more lively and active to carry forth and carry up thy cares, and discharge thee of them, and lay them on God.”<sup>2</sup>

This is called a “royal Psalm” (cf. also Ps. 18, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132) because of its prophetic portrayals of the Davidic Messiah. In Ps. 2, the Messiah is the Son of God appointed to subdue all nations and to bring *shalom* to the people of God.<sup>3</sup> Acts 4:25 declares this to be a psalm of David.<sup>4</sup> It opens with a description of the nations in rebellion against the Lord and His King. Note how this is stated in question form. Conditions have not changed. The world today is in rebellion against the Almighty – and this is madness, for *who* can stand against God (cf. Rom. 9:19c)? There is a limit to God’s forbearance – what are rebels to do?

- I. **DIVINE PRONOUNCEMENT.** To study this Psalm carefully, we must first of all discover the speakers in its various portions.<sup>5</sup>
  - A. *God the Father Speaks* (vv. 1-6).
  - B. *God the Son Speaks* (vv. 7-9).
  - C. *God the Spirit Speaks* (vv. 10-12).
  
- II. **THE DIVISION OF MANKIND.** Note how these are distinguished: *heathen, people, kings, rulers, judges* (vv. 1, 2, 10). Note how their actions are described:
  - A. *Their Preparation* (v. 2a).
  - B. *Their Plotting* (v. 1).
  - C. *Their Proposal* (v. 3).
  
- III. **THE DERISION OF GOD (v. 4).** The verbs here are present tense: *laughs, scoffs, rebukes*. Human language is used here to describe God’s attitude and actions.<sup>6</sup>
  
- IV. **THE DEFENSE OF BELIEVERS (v. 12).**
  - A. *Submission* to the Son is the only hope, the only way to escape divine wrath.

**NOTE:** The expression “kiss the Son” was the mark of subjection and respect in the East of the time. This kiss, writes E. W. Hengstenberg, “was given for the most part not upon the mouth, but upon the kisser’s own garment, or upon the hand of the person kissed”<sup>7</sup> (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1; 1 Kings 19:18; Job 31:27; Hos. 13:2).

- B. *Blessedness.* Only those who seek shelter (cf. Heb. 6:18) in the Son are safe. This text stresses the divine nature and dignity of the Anointed King, esp. when compared with Ps. 118:9 and 146:3. “Scripture constantly admonishes us to place our confidence in the Lord alone; on which account the verb (v. 12) before us is in a manner consecrated and set apart; and also warns us against confiding in earthly kings.”<sup>8</sup> Throughout the Psalm *trust* is often linked with *taking refuge* in God (Ps. 40:4; 55:22, 23; 56:3, 4; 62:8, 10, compare with Ps. 49:13).

**CONCLUSION:** This Psalm is cited in Acts 2:30-33, 13:33, and Heb. 1:5, 5:5. The Scripture pronounces a blessing on all who will trust the Son. Trust in Christ supposes that He has manifested in some way a willingness to save us --- and indeed this is the case. Therefore we find the gospel full of invitations and gracious promises to all who will come unto the Son and receive salvation as a free gift. Os Guinness rightly observes that *faith*, in order to be Biblical, must be a

*living faith* (as opposed to dead faith that James deals with in James 2:14-26). What does this mean? “To put faith to work. To stretch it, to put it on the line, to prove it in the crucible of experience, and so to let it deepen and grow with the testing of life. This doubt is not in need of comfort but challenge. The problem is not that faith is untrue but that it is untried. As Martin Luther pointed out, ‘The true, living faith, which the Holy Spirit instills into the heart, simply cannot be idle.’ Or as George Whitefield, the great eighteenth-century preacher whose life was a blazing torch in God’s hand, wrote in his diary, ‘I am never better than when I am on the full stretch for God.’ We all face this challenge. Faith must go on being exercised. Faith must mean everything today or in some tomorrow it may mean nothing. Yesterday’s experiences, insights, answers to prayer, ways of putting things were completely legitimate and satisfying yesterday, but today is another day. God’s truth and God’s love will always be fresh, but will the same be said of our response? Will our faith and our love for him be as fresh? Paul’s question to the Christians in Corinth is a question for us all: ‘Examine yourselves: are you living the life of faith? Put yourselves to the test.’ Doubt from an unused faith is widespread. We could point to several factors to explain it. The continuation of state churches in post-Christian cultures, the equation of Christian values and cultural norms, the presence of Christian ghettos and the insulated pipeline of Christian education, the concentration on faith in conversion rather than faith in living, the preoccupation with evangelism at the expense of ethics – these are all features of faith today that discourage faith from being stretched and applied. And therefore foster doubt.”<sup>9</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> <https://corechristianity.com/resource-library/articles/3-things-to-remember-when-youre-anxious>.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Leighton, *Commentary on First Peter* (rpt. Kregel, 1972), p. 486.

<sup>3</sup> W. Van Gemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation From Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 215, 456.

<sup>4</sup> A. F. Kirkpatrick points out that the name “David in the N.T. may mean no more than the Psalter” (Heb. 4:7) or “a Psalmist.” *The Book of Psalms* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> G. Campbell-Morgan, *Notes On the Psalms* (New York: Revell, 1947), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> This is called Anthropopathism – the attribution of human emotions or feelings to God (cf. Exod. 4:14; Ps. 51:16 and Rom. 11:22). F. B. Huey and Bruce Corley, *A Student’s Dictionary for Biblical and Theological Studies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> *The Works of Hengstenberg: The Psalms V* (rpt. Cherry Hill: Mack Publishing, n.d.), p. 35. The same Heb. word, *nashaq*, is translated “brushing against” (Ezk. 3:13). Some ancient versions do not have “kiss” but “lay hold of (or receive) instruction;” or “worship in purity.” In any case the thought is the same, of paying homage. Cf. J. Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 1814.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> Os Guinness, *God In The Dark: The Assurance of Faith Beyond a Shadow of Doubt* (Crossway, 1996), p. 120.