**YOU RAISE ME UP**

Can I be perfectly honest with you regarding two statements given by Peter and Paul (I left out Mary – I know, I know… that’s a joke only baby boomers would understand). First hear Paul, then Peter.

“*Do not be* ***anxious*** *about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus*.” – Phil. 4:6-7 (NKJV)

“*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your* ***anxiety*** *upon him, for he cares for you*.” – I Pet. 5:6-7 (NAS, ESV)

Anxiety is the Greek word *MERIMNA*. It is defined as “to be anxious, troubled with cares.” *J. B. Phillips NT* has a unique way to translate Peter’s words: “*You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern*.” It is found in other scriptures like the parable of the sower when Jesus said of the thorny soil, “*and the care (anxieties) of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and it becomes unfruitful*” (Matt. 13:22). Anxiety chokes out God’s word from our heart. Now that’s serious. Anxiety has to be dealt with, and now!

Christians in Philippi who heard Paul, and Christians in the Dispersion who heard Peter, were all living under the threat of both Rome and militant Jews. They were all living in troubling times. At any moment they could be arrested, exiled, or even martyred. Spiritually speaking they were living on the San Andreas Fault. They were fearful that “The Big One” might soon shake their life. It was very anxious times.

How did they, and how do we, “*not be anxious about anything*” and “*throw the whole weight of your anxieties*” off? I’m guessing everyone who now reads this is like me, struggling with anxiety in your heart. The weight on your shoulders feels like a 500 pound gorilla. Our world has been shaken as these uncertain days are upon us. Let us take to heart what Paul and Peter, who were no strangers to anxiety, told us to do in moments like this. In our texts read for yourself the answer to anxiety.

Paul: “… *but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God…”*

Peter: “… *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God…”*

Perhaps to some of you that sounds like theory, not fact. Well, Darwin had a theory, but evolution flew in the face of fact (“*In the beginning God created*…” – Gen. 1:1). Einstein had a theory, but a static universe flew in the face of God’s expanding space (“*He who sits above the circle of the earth… Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in*” – Isa. 40:22). God debunks theories.

Paul did not give us theory to deal with our anxieties. He gave us fact. God has spoken, and in that inspired revelation has told us to speak back – in prayer. We are to be “*anxious in nothing*” by “*everything in prayer*” telling it to God. He then gives us “*the peace of God*” we cannot put into words because we cannot fully understand it.

For example, I don’t understand how eating broccoli, spinach, carrots and (wait, hold your nose…Brussels sprouts - yuck!) can through digestion lead to nutritional health to my eyes, heart and brain. But it does. Can’t explain it, I just eat it. Why? It works.

So does prayer. God’s promises, which He has always kept through my almost seven decades of life, have convinced me that I will “*receive mercy and find grace to help*” in my time of need (Heb. 4:16). Can’t explain it, I just pray it. Why? It works.

Peter did not give us theory to deal with our anxieties. He gave us fact. By revelation he promised that if we “*humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God*” by simply “*casting all your anxiety upon Him*,” He would in turn “*exalt you in due time*.” This is again a call to prayer. To “cast” my burdens on God implies throwing them, all of them, into the lap of God Almighty. He who can move mountains can easily lift a 500 pound gorilla. It will seem but a pebble to El Shaddai. And when you act in faith and take your burdens to God, He exalts you. He lifts you up.

I have always loved the Brendan Graham lyrics of *You Raise Me Up* when sung by Josh Groban. I get goose bumps when I hear him sing it in that incredible tenor voice (while fantasizing that it is me hitting the high notes). But as I sing it I’m not addressing any person, even my best friend Benita (although she has been the wind beneath my wings). I sing it to God. Read the words and combine them with Peter’s promise and you will soon feel your fears lifted.

 **You Raise Me Up**

When I am down, and, oh, my soul, so weary,
When troubles come, and my heart burdened be,
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence,
Until you come and sit awhile with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains,
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas,
I am strong when I am on your shoulders,
You raise me up to more than I can be.

There is no life – no life without its hunger;
Each restless heart beats so imperfectly;
But when you come and I am filled with wonder,
Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity.

Are you down? Are you weary? Are anxieties burdening you? Take it to a waiting God who sits in silence for you to come and sit awhile with Him. He will raise you to stand on mountains and walk on stormy seas. He will do for you what my daddy used to do for me, what I did for my children, and what they now do for theirs – raise you up on their strong shoulders. My restless heart will soon be filled with wonder and I will glimpse eternity. Go ahead, cast all your burdens upon Him. He’s waiting. Bow your head and lift your voice. He hears you.

Until tomorrow… *throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern*.

I love you. Rick