**THINK ON THESE THINGS (#1)**

***Conquering Anxious Thoughts***

“You are what you eat” is a famous saying that dates back to 1826 to the French author Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. His exact words were: “Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are.” His point was that food controls a person’s physical health. Generally speaking, if you eat healthy foods you will live a healthy life. That makes sense.

Long before Mr. Brillat-Savarin coined that phrase which helped create the health-food craze, there lived a man named Solomon who wrote these inspired words from God: “*For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he*” (Prov. 23:7). While I believe it is important to *eat* healthy, taking care to treat the body God has given us as a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19-20), I believe just as strongly that it is critically important to ***think*** healthy. The wise Solomon put it this way: “*Keep your heart* (i.e. mind) *with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life*” (Prov. 4:23). Paul put it this way:

*“casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Cor. 10:5).

If “*every thought*” is critical to our standing with God, then it is absolutely necessary that we give top priority to our pattern of thinking from the moment we wake up each morning to the moment we finally fall asleep at night.

Anxious, worrisome thinking springs from a divided heart. The word anxiety comes from the Greek word *MERIZO*, which is defined as “to divide or draw in different directions.” When you are in a tug-of-war between the concerns of the world and the things of heaven you become paralyzed by this divided thinking. Jesus said, “*You cannot serve God and mammon*” (“things” or “stuff” of earth – Matt. 6:24). It’s not a coincidence that the very next verse Jesus said, “*Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life*…” (Matt. 6:25). You cannot serve God and think on things above while fretting over things on earth.

David was once so troubled and anxious that he said, *“Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. So I said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest”* (Psa. 55:5-6). The American poet Walt Whitman once said, “I envy the cattle that graze contentedly in the meadow because they never worry or dwell on troublesome thoughts.” We might wish we were a bird to fly away and be at rest, or a cow to be ignorant of the world’s problems, but a bird or cow never raised her head toward heaven to meditate on high and holy things either. I’ll gladly accept moments of anxiety in exchange for the joy to “*set your minds on things above, not on the things of the earth*” (Col. 3:2). I’ll take the heartaches of living in this broken world in exchange for the opportunity to “*let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 2:5).

Those brilliant early pioneers of the computer age coined a phrase regarding the data you get from a computer is only as good as the data you put into it. They called it GIGO. ***G***arbage ***I***n ***G***arbage ***O***ut. Programming was obviously critical to the success or failure of the computer world. It is also crucial to the success or failure of the Christian’s life.

In our present world anxiety is at an all-time high. Psychologists and Psychiatrists are booked for months into the future with patients begging for help with their thinking. Suicide is reaching epidemic proportions due to anxiety disorders. The CDC (Center for Disease Control) recently reported that 40% of Americans reported struggling with mental health or substance use. 31% were claiming depression symptoms, 26% were feeling stressed out, 13% increased substance use, and 11% felt suicidal tendencies.

What are we to do about this trend if we are thinking such anxious thoughts ourselves? As Christians we are not exempt from these statistics, so it is imperative that we find a Biblical solution to this problem. The Word claims this great promise to all believers:

*“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:2-3).*

With that promise we can know God has the answer to our stinkin’ thinkin’. It’s found in the great text of Philippians 4:6-9.

*6 Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are* ***true****, whatever things are* ***noble****, whatever things are* ***just****, whatever things are* ***pure****, whatever things are* ***lovely****, whatever things are of* ***good report****, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praise-worthy — meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*

The solution to anxiety is summed up in the actions of prayer and meditation. Note that “*the peace of God*” (vs. 7) and “*the God of peace*” (vs. 9) come to those who pray and think godly thoughts. Without these action items you will remain anxious and fearful. Therefore this week I would love to spend time breaking down this powerful text in order for all of us to find *the peace of God* from *the God of peace*.

Let us focus our hearts and minds on things that are True, Noble, Just, Pure, Lovely, and of Good Report. Start today by memorizing this passage. Trust me (because God said it), you will soon “*be anxious for nothing*.”

You are what you think. So, what are you?

Shalom. – Rick