

Depression and Anxiety

More and more of us know someone who suffers from depression, or anxiety. They might seem to be materially prosperous in every way, but experience such hopelessness that they seek medication to help. Anxiety can result in physical symptoms such as panic attacks where the body goes numb, the chest tight and the world spins round, and the pills seem to offer no solution.

For a Christian however, the solution can be expected to be found in the Word of God. Christians know that the Bible is just like the instruction manual which comes along with every complicated product produced. Follow the instructions and all goes well. Ignore the instructions and the product will malfunction. In this case, we are the product, God is the manufacturer. He has provided all the instructions to ensure a successful and happy life, but many have ignored those instructions and suffer the malfunctions listed in Deuteronomy 28; from verse 15. If we follow the instructions we gain the success of verses 1-15, but failure to follow them, even through ignorance, can result in, amongst other things, verse 15, *'madness, blindness and astonishment of heart'* ('confusion of mind,' Hebrew), anxiety.

So, what does the Lord require of us? In one verse, Micah 6:8, *"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."*

We suffer malfunction when there is something missing from our lives, and in particular the solution to anxiety which marks so many lives is found in Philippians 4:6-7, (Moffat) *"Never be anxious, but always make your requests known to God in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving; so shall God's peace, that surpasses all our dreams, keep guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* Here, the apostle Paul provided the answer to anxiety: prayer, that recognises our Creator, opens our heart to God, and gives thanks. Let us note that Paul says *"Never be anxious."* The old King James version says *"Be careful for nothing; ..."* Nothing that causes us concern is too inconsequential to take before our God. Matthew 6:34, *"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."* ESV. *'It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.'* Psalm 127:2 ESV.

Prayer is simply communication with God and it is not always done on our knees. That is appropriate but we can also communicate with our Creator as we contemplate His creation, as we lie on our bed at night, or wherever we encounter difficulties in our life.

Notice we make our requests known to God with thanksgiving – that is we praise Him for His constant provision of our needs and for His intervention in our lives by filling in that void from which anxiety can emanate, for when God is with us, who or what can stand against us? Romans 8:31, *"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

Always begin your prayer to God with thanksgiving. See the example Christ gave of how to pattern our prayer in Matthew 6:9, *'After this manner therefore pray: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.....'*

If we will do this we will gain peace of mind that can be obtained no other way. As Christ said in John 14:27, *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."*

This kind of peace guards our minds against attack. Yes, there is one who does attack the minds of

men, Ephesians 6:11-17, *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; **Above all, taking the shield of faith,** wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* Christians should take advantage of the whole armour of God listed here, not forgetting that prayer is vital. Verse 18, *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”*

Problems will come and go in our lives, but if we will follow the instruction manual our maker has provided and maintain contact with Him through prayer, asking in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, we will never become anxious, but face those problems with the quiet confidence and peace of knowing that we will never walk alone!