**The Power of Faith in Coping with Anxiety and Panic**

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No one who experiences anxiety and panic will agree that such conditions are easy to handle. On the contrary, they pull and tug at the spirit, draining its power to remain strong. I am not writing this from the perspective of being an outsider who has a casual interest in the matter but as one who is intimately familiar with both anxiety and panic. I am writing this as an encouragement to those similarly situated. I am opening myself in doing this because I want to share the involvement of God in my life. I am not ashamed of the sharing. Since the late 1950’s, I have experienced these things. Add to this the trauma of being wounded twice in a war in March and June of 1968 (the second time required medical evacuation from Vietnam to Japan for extensive surgery and around the clock medical attention), and the problem compounds. But by the grace of God, I have lived to see fifty years beyond the war in better condition than many of my military brothers the same age. God’s great mercy is the reason. I will go into greater detail as I move along in this piece of writing.

In the first place, while faith is an absolute essential, it works with the professionals in the mental health world. Those professionals, who are trained in the field (some in the field because they have experienced in the past what they are now helping people to deal with), are part of the faith structure. That is to say that our prayers to find relief from those episodes of anxiety are answered in part when we get help from these professionals. Prayer for the relief of a broken bone is answered when an orthopedic surgeon sets the break. Prayers for help with a cardiac crisis are answered through the help of a cardiac medical team. Prayers for help in a legal matter when you have been wrongly accused are answered when a competent attorney represents you. So, when mental pressures bring you to the point of anxiety, competent mental health professionals are needful in helping you navigate through the anxiety.

Having talked about the need for professional involvement, I will now try to show the importance of faith in the process. The Book of Psalms is my delight and my counselor. I often listen to the Psalms on my phone so that through the course of the day, I will hold in memory what I have heard. For example, I will consider Psalms 3:5 when night falls and I have had an anxious day. ***“I can lie down to rest and know that I will wake up, because the Lord covers and protects me.”*** I rely on this text because I know how critical it is to my thinking. I say this because too often I overthink! This text lets me know that I do not control my breathing. God has that automatically taken care of. I do not control my heart rate; the same is true as the breathing. I do not command the forces inside me that fight against the germs and bacteria. The white cells and the internal defenses are God’s doing. I do not control the depth of sleep and the power to awaken. It is God’s vigilance and Fatherly love that watches over me while I sleep. So, you see that providence is at work. One may argue that the 3rd psalm was in place because Absalom was pursuing his father because he wanted the throne, and David was fleeing from his son and the son’s forces. That, of course, is true. What is also true is that the 5th verse speaks volumes of the providential care of God. Even in the midst of the ordeal David was going through, God watched over him and protected him. He did not leave nor forsake him. ***“I can lie down to rest and know that I will wake up, because the Lord covers and protects me.”*** Says David in Psalms 127:2, **“*It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.”***

The 27th Psalm is a powerful prescription for anxiety. It has been called a psalm for life’s storms. Consider the first verse. **The Lord is my Light and my Salvation—whom shall I fear or dread? The Lord is the Refuge and Stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?**

*1. This courage is founded on confidence in God. When the soul feels God with it, it becomes invincible.*

*2. It is heightened by memories of past deliverance. Recollection of past mercies strengthens our faith in future supplies.*

*3. It defies all future enemies, and faces the mysterious future with a jubilant soul*

*(Homilist).*

That much is said of just the first verse! But let me say this with all confidence and boldness. It is absolutely essential to seriously study the word of God! I cannot overemphasize this point. As eating and drinking is necessary to the physical man’s well-being, studying the word of God and applying it to one’s life is so to the inner man. Who would dare look at a plate of food without eating and declare to be full! Hunger would result and the physical body would lack the nutrients needed for survival. Without study and application of the word of God, the inner man would grievously suffer. Faith would suffer! It would weaken to the point of near non-belief. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews11:6).

The last two verses of the 27th psalm, are just as powerful as the first.

*[What, what would have become of me] had I not believed that I would see the Lord’s goodness in the land of the living!**Wait and hope for and expect the Lord; be brave and of good courage and let your heart be stout and enduring. Yes, wait for and hope for and expect the Lord.*

J.M. Campbell says of the 13th verse of Psalms 27,

*FAITH AWAKENS FORTITUDE. It gives strength of heart and hope; inspires courage; lights the eye; nerves the impotent arm; plucks victory from defeat.*

*III. FAITH LEADS TO FIDELITY. Those who are full of faith are characterized by faithfulness; they can be depended upon to do their duty, for they have an abiding principle of obedience within their hearts. So long as we are in the world, we must needs battle against adverse circumstances, but let us see to it that over against every evil we put the Heaven-provided antidote; that over against worldly trouble we put Divine comfort; that over against painful discipline we put the Divine purpose; that over against the world's sin we put the world's Saviour.*

The 14th verse of Psalms 27 says, *Wait and hope for and expect the Lord; be brave and of good courage and let your heart be stout and enduring. Yes, wait for and hope for and expect the Lord.* Look at the language of the text! **Wait for, hope for, expect, be brave and of good courage, be stout and enduring.** One cannot expect to be these things unless a power far greater than their own is at work in their behalf. The apostle Peter, in his first letter, wrote something of tremendous encouragement. ***Casting the [***[***c***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=I+peter+5&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30471c)***]whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, [***[***d***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=I+peter+5&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30471d)***]once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you [***[***e***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=I+peter+5&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-30471e)***]watchfully (I Peter 5:7).*** How can God’s care and watchfulness be measured in a manner that we can understand? Consider the words of Jesus.

***Are not two [***[***j***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+10&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-23447j)***]little sparrows sold for a penny? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father’s leave (consent) and notice.***

***But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.***

***Fear not, then; you are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29, 30).***

Science has determined (in approximate numbers) that there are between 90,000 and 200,000 strands of hair on the human head. **(infomory.com/numbers/number-of-hairs-on-a-human-head)**. The intimate knowledge which God has of each of us far exceeds our ability to fully comprehend. Therefore, faith in Him is essential!

I view my anxiety as a cross to bear, and I am alright with that. At the present, it has become very manageable, and at times it becomes prodigal for long periods. I really thank God for my wife who has been my Godsend for the past 44 years. Her encouragements and presence are true riches indeed. It takes a strong woman to work with a man who overthinks, and therefore, many times, tries to see things more deeply than he ought. David’s advice is most excellent when he says, “**I am not concerned with great matters or with subjects too difficult for me.”** She makes me aware of these things when I try to do them. **I have found favor with the Lord of a certainty! She keeps me in check!** The scriptures say, **“*He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord. “***

Anxiety keeps me close to God because it strips away haughtiness and godless pride. It destroys boasting and self-reliance. When I say, “Thank God” for my doing this or that, these are not empty words. God has shown me that without Him, even the tiniest of actions would not happen. Anxiety has been a hard and demanding teacher. Its examinations have been long and difficult. But by God’s grace I have passed many of them. It has taught me to let perseverance have its mature and complete work. I am living testimony that faith works in helping to deal with anxiety. I understand what Paul was writing and what Jesus was saying in 2 Corinthians 12:9. I believe I often refer to this passage because of my anxiety. It affords me almost instant relief!

*But He said to me, My grace (My favor and loving-kindness and mercy) is enough for you [sufficient against any danger and enables you to bear the trouble manfully]; for My strength and power are made perfect (fulfilled and completed) and [*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+corinthians+12&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-29030b)*]show themselves most effective in [your] weakness. Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ (the Messiah) may rest (yes, may [*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+corinthians+12&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-29030c)*]pitch a tent over and dwell) upon me.*

To any who suffer the pangs of anxiety and panic attack, God will truly help! Remember the outside help of professionals, the inside help of people similarly situated who can be a support group, and faith in the great promises of our God.