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## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

January 19, 2014

When Our Hearts Are Anxious

*“Don’t be anxious about anything;  
rather bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions,  
along with giving thanks.”*

Philippians 4:6 (Common English Bible)

There seems to be no shortage of excruciating stresses, interpersonal struggles and reasons to be anxious. Some are better than others in putting on a brave face but their demeanor hides what we all know is a fact of life – life is difficult. And many days we find it a struggle simply to push through ordinary chores and responsibilities. A heart heavy with anxiety is exhausting.

The careful reader of the Bible will notice that anxiety and worry are mentioned often. This is good news because it says that anxious hearts matter to God. Certainly it is important to the Apostle Paul. He writes in this sentence of scripture that we are not to be anxious about anything. The difficulty, of course, is that saying is one thing. Doing is quite another matter.

Fortunately Paul doesn’t simply slap us on the back, admonish us not to worry and leave it at that. What Paul does is offer an antidote for anxious hearts: *“rather bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks.”* Paul is asking that we make God a partner with everything that weighs so heavily on us. Giving voice to those things that trouble us goes a long way in reducing their grip on our lives. Yet, Paul’s advice is more than simply talking about our problems. Paul tells us additionally to give thanks; to remember in the midst of our anxiety that God has been faithful in the past and to realize that past performance does indicate the promise of continued faithfulness.

Some years ago a pastor in New York City would conclude his prayers by saying *“Help us to lean back into the strong arms of Jesus Christ. Amen.”* Paul is saying the same thing here. Paul is not denying the power of anxiety. There was no shortage of anxious moments in his ministry. What Paul is asking that we do is remember the faithfulness of God in our past and then to lean into that same faithfulness now when our hearts become heavy. There is no promise that our problems will all go away. What Paul promises is God’s peace.

*In my own anxious moments, O Lord, remind me of Your continued love and care for me. Settle my heart and help me to lean back on the strong arms of Jesus. It is in His Name, I pray. Amen.*

Doug Hood