

These are my notes from my sharing — April 2008 — Owen Brock

THE CHRISTIAN AND ANXIETY

“Our course of our present lives is significantly determined by our future.” Dr. Victor Frankl, a holocaust camp survivor observing the death and survival of fellow prisoners. *Mans’ Search for Meaning*

MY STORY

About 5 years ago something began to slowly happen to me at the place I had worked for almost 15 years. It happened slowly at first, and then as these things tend to do it gathered momentum, lots of momentum. **After 911 the economy went in the tank.** It took a while for this to reach us where I worked but it did inevitably reach us, and by the time it arrived it was a tidal wave. I had just had my best year ever and we had six months earlier taken out a **\$35k loan** to remodel the back half of our house. 2002 started with a **60% pay cut** which lasted all year, then 2003 a slight increase to a 40% pay cut, 2004 was just slightly better. But by this time we were in trouble. Sandie and I were sinking deeper in deeper in debt, borrowing money to keep our heads above water. Now trying to cover my student loans plus both of kids student loans, **borrowing against our credit line**, maxing out our credit cards. Work was almost none existent, and what did come in was **often uninspiring**. By now I was **depressed**, wanting to change careers and not know what else to do, uninspired about just about everything. **I was submerged and I was immobilized.** I could not stay, but I had lost the power to leave as I was **immobilized by fear**. Fear of the unknown, what would I do, what if it got worse, etc. etc.

Finally in the late spring, early summer of 2005, after almost three years, things **began to pick up**. I flew out to **Dallas to bid** on a huge project, which we did not get but it felt great to be asked to sit at the table again. Then a number of projects came in and we were suddenly busy again. As I got caught up in the momentum I of course felt so relieved—a **decent paycheck** again.

But something else occurred that would change my life. I looked over my shoulder and said to God. “I know how this works, **no skipping grades right?**” As I looked over my shoulder I saw lots of bitter complaining at my circumstances, lots and lots of **fear and resentment**. I had essentially **complained and lamented** my way through the last 3 years, caught up in a dark web of fear for our future.

I asked the Lord, in what may be the best questions to ever come out of my mouth, (except **“Sandie will you marry me?”**) “Lord, will you in your infinite mercy, **show me what that season was about**, because it would be easy for me to just get busy now. Would you help me to be a better person the next time around?”

Within weeks he led me to two books, **Victor Frankl’s “Man’s Search for Meaning”** and a more theologically oriented book written by a **German theologian called Hans Urs von Balthasar entitled “The Christian and an Anxiety”**. That summer through a combination of reading, revelation and prayer I believe I came to better understand the **source of my anxiety**. I began to see why it was that I **loved risk**, would jump out of airplanes, run marathons, and travel to strange places overseas, the stranger the better the experience—but when it came to **finances—fear**. And finally I believe I was healed. But I would not know that for sure until later.

Four months later the economy tanked again. Worked dried up to nothing and for about 4 months I earned about **\$250 a month**. But something different happened this time. I was not anxious. Oh sure I was concerned. I said I thought I was healed, I didn’t say anything about having a **lobotomy**. I was what I would call, **appropriately concerned**, I knew I needed to do something. I woke up one day and said, “Why not leave and **start my own business**, this would be a perfect time, I have **nothing to lose**. I am not making any money anyway.” Now you have to understand, this had always been an option. An option I was terrified of making. But now I was excited! I saw this moment as a gift of sorts. Know what I call that? I call it being **healed**. Can you say Amen?

And you know what else happened? **I came alive**, my work got more creative, and I doubled my salary being on my own. God has been and continues to be very, very, very, good.

ANXIETY AND FEAR IN THE FIRST COVENANT

Let's see what the God has to say about Fear and Anxiety. Two pictures are offered to us under the First Covenant and a third under the Second.

The Wicked

Our first picture is painted in dark tones. It is a portrait of the lost. **Pg. 44** *The Christian and Anxiety: (quotation from the **The Book of Wisdom**) Apocrypha*. Here we have a portrait of total anxiety, with **A Lord of the Rings** sense of immensity.

The Godly

But the writer also alludes to "But for thy holy ones there was very great light". The story of those who dwell with God is painted in a different fashion.

The Shepherd

The duties of a shepherd in an unenclosed country like Palestine were very onerous. "In early morning he led forth the flock from the fold, marching at its head to the spot where they were to be pastured. Here he **watched them all day**, taking care that none of the sheep strayed, and if any for a time eluded his watch and wandered away from the rest, **seeking diligently till he found** and brought it back. In those lands sheep require to be **supplied regularly with water**, and the shepherd for this purpose has to guide them either to some running stream or to wells dug in the wilderness and furnished with troughs. At night he brought **the flock home to the fold, counting them** as they passed under the rod at the door to assure himself that none were missing. Nor did his labours always end with sunset. Often he had to **guard the fold through the dark hours** from the attack of wild beasts, or the wily attempts of the prowling thief (see 1 Sam. 17:34)." – *Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary*

Isaiah 41:10. 10 Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Psalms 118:6. 6 The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Psalms 46. 1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

Psalms 23. 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalms 27. 1 The LORD is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?

Apparently the Godly are not suppose to be afraid like the lost. In fact the Godly are commanded NOT to fear. There seems to be only one fear the godly are allowed—**the fear of God**, which is meant to prioritize or order our lives. In a lost world, this reverence is like a beacon if you will, drawing us to seek that which matters the most, to be exposed to our Creator's mercy.

ANXIETY AND FEAR IN THE SECOND COVENANT

The Temptation of Jesus

We are told that the incarnation of God in Jesus, meant that he was both **fully God and fully human**.

Hebrews 2:14. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death....for this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

So just like us, Jesus wrestled with fear and anxiety, as waves of his **impending death** begin to wash over him. He brushes against the world of the dead, with **his friend Lazarus**. Then we see him his way to Jerusalem weighted down for what he knows is certain death. **“Get behind me Satan”** he says to Peter when, his friend tells him there must be an easier way. Finally at the Mount of Olives Jesus faces an overwhelming anxiety as he faces the decision to **shoulder the weight of every sin**. And then on the cross, for one who had only every known intimacy with the Father, the resulting abandonment and **separation from God**. **“My God. My God, why have you forsaken me?”**

What does this mean for us?

“Behold I make all things new” from *The Passion of the Christ*.

Colossians 1: 19 For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, **20** and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled **22** in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight **23** if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard...

P4. 81. The first thing that must be said, and which cannot be said powerfully and triumphantly enough, **is that human fear has been completely and definitively conquered by the Cross**. Anxiety is one of the authorities, powers and dominions over which the Lord triumphs on the Cross, and which he carried off captive and placed in chains. Pg 83 John knows this most profoundly: **“even though our hearts condemn us... God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything!”**

1 John 4. 17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. **18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

2 Corinthians 1. 20 For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. **21** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, **22** who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Ephesians 3. 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. **13** Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Romans 5. 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; **4** and perseverance, character; and character, hope. **5** Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

LORD, DELIVER US

“**Fear not!**” Jesus commands us. If we are told to fear not, what are we left to do? How are we to engage with anxiety, in a world immersed in fear, when we are tempted to a life of living small when we long to be large?

We live in a culture of fear. The news, global terrorism? economic collapse? our boss? our singleness. Growing old? Dying? Living? **What triggers us**. Are we willing to take a moment and look inside, to truly know ourselves, or are we content to **live on the surface** of ourselves? I would like us to invite Jesus to begin a healing work in us. To first **illuminate our fears**. Then **take them from us** and allow us to enter into the hope that he has for us.

I used to say that I was **not living up to my beliefs**, but is that really possible? Surely we always live out of our beliefs.

Pg101 Balthasar says that when we choose to live in fear it is because ...”**we have stopped believing in the efficacy of our beliefs**, we measure the power of faith by our own weakness. We do something Christians are forbidden to do, we observe faith from the outside; doubting the power of hope; depriving ourselves of the power of love...

Pg 109 ...We do not know ourselves, but live on the surface of ourselves...

“When **sin-anxiety (giving in to the temptation)** in all its forms (which comprises everything that throws a person back on himself, closes him off, constricts him, and makes him unproductive and unfit) has been fundamentally removed from a man and hence forbidden him...

Pg 145. Faith, love, hope must always be a leap for the finite creature because only in that way does it correspond to the worth of the infinite God.

INVITATION TO PRAYER & HEALING

2 Corinthians 4. 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. **8** We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; **9** persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. **10** We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. **11** For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. **12** So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

But he says to us, "My grace **is** sufficient for you, for my power **is made perfect in weakness.**" (**2 Corinthians 12:9**)