

Anxieties We May Face

And so we follow today the pattern of Jesus and Paul. We battle the unbelief of anxiety with the promises of God.

1) When I am anxious about some risky new venture or meeting, I battle unbelief with the promise: "Fear not for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God; I will help you, I will strengthen you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

2) When I am anxious about my ministry being useless and empty, I fight unbelief with the promise, "So shall my word that goes forth from my mouth; it will not come back to me empty but accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

3) When I am anxious about being too weak to do my work, I battle unbelief with the promise of Christ, "My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9), and "As your days so shall your strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25).

4) When I am anxious about decisions I have to make about the future, I battle unbelief with the promise, "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you" (Psalm 32:8).

5) When I am anxious about facing opponents, I battle unbelief with the promise, "If God is for us who can be against us!" (Romans 8:31).

6) When I am anxious about being sick, I battle unbelief with the promise that "tribulation works patience, and patience approvedness, and approvedness hope, and hope does not make us ashamed" (Romans 5:3–5).

7) When I am anxious about getting old, I battle unbelief with the promise, "Even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (Isaiah 46:4).

8) When I am anxious about dying, I battle unbelief with the promise that "none of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself; if we live we live to the Lord and if we die we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose again: that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living" (Romans 14:9–11).

9) When I am anxious that I may make shipwreck of faith and fall away from God, I battle unbelief with the promise, "He who began a good work in you will complete it unto the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:6). "He who calls you is faithful. He will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). "He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Escaping the Performance Trap

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by Charles F. Stanley

A treadmill is one of the most effective tools for burning calories, despite the fact that the person exercising stays in the same place. Similarly, many workers worry and grope through each day, without actually making headway. Isn't it ironic that in both pursuits, people must give great effort without really going anywhere?

So it is with people who try to work their way to righteousness. Many Christians grow stagnant in their faith because they expend tremendous energy trying to attain some lofty ideal of the "Christian experience." They usually understand that grace is what saved them but believe they must pay God back with good works in order to *remain* saved.

Have you become a modern-day Pharisee? Do you maintain a mental or psychological checklist to ensure that you do what you should and resist what you should not? Are you closer to living under the law than under God's grace?

When you act outside of God's will, your life runs on finite "fumes": your own strength. The result can be exhaustion, withdrawal, and bitterness. The *real* Christian experience requires only that we have faith in Jesus Christ and abide in Him, the true Vine ([John 15:5](#)).

You can't do anything to make God love you more. Nor can you do anything to make Him love you less. This is a liberating truth! Your heavenly Father isn't keeping score—we can't pay Him back for His grace. In fact, no amount of good works can pay the debt of love we owe. The apostle Paul wrote, "The Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor" ([Gal. 3:24-25](#)). He explained that there is no way we can keep God's moral code perfectly. We need a Savior.

Even after we become Christians, God doesn't want us to add law to His grace. He wants obedience, of course. But obedience is the overflow of a heart full of love, not legalism.

When Jesus tells us to keep His commandments, He emphasizes that obedience shows others we love Him ([John 14:31](#)). The moral law shows us our need of a Savior. But we cannot obey the Lord Jesus without His help. We are children wanting to please the Father because we love Him. This delivers us from legalism and keeps us grounded in grace, not only for salvation, but also for living the Christian life.

Living by Grace

The Scriptures compare our relationship with God to a race. Paul calls us to run so that we may win ([1 Cor. 9:24](#))—and the author of Hebrews adds that we are to do so with endurance ([Heb. 12:1](#)).

Only by running on the wings of grace can believers triumphantly finish the course God has assigned for each one of His children. The legs of performance eventually grow weak. The muscles of legalism and religion weigh us down and become rigid hindrances. Our main problem is that we can understand the need for grace in *salvation*, but we tend to rely on other means for process of *sanctification*.

How can you cease striving, get off the performance treadmill, and learn to walk in grace? Here is the key: the more you humble yourself before God, the more you will receive the fullness of His grace.

God "gives grace to the humble" ([1 Peter 5:5](#)). Not to the strong, but to the weak. Not to the self-sufficient, but to the dependent. Grace belongs to the poor in spirit—in other words, those who humble themselves by recognizing God's majesty and worshipping Him. The more you adore and praise the Savior, the more highly you'll think of Him.

Humbling yourself won't reduce your self-esteem or diminish your worth to God. Rather, it positions you to receive your sustenance from the source of all good things, Jesus Christ. As a humble believer, cast yourself on the grace of God, leaning on Him with your full weight. Draw all your strength, peace, joy, and security from the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit living within you.

Be strong in grace. Throw off the chains of works and "religion," and receive the remarkable power of God's merciful lovingkindness.

Adapted from Charles F. Stanley's *"Into His Presence"* (2000), *"Seeking His Face"* (2002), and *"Handbook for Christian Living"* (1996).