



Relieving anxiety

"An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up."

Proverbs 12:25

There is a lot of talking that goes on in church circles. Many words are spoken, are written. What kind of words are they? Which have you been saying? Why did you say it?

Proverbs 12:25 is typical of many of the sayings found in this Bible book. It is an everyday truth. It is the kind of text you might expect on a calendar, in an almanac, maybe on a wall tile. What is it doing here, in God's Word? Is this sufficiently "spiritual"? Is there a deeper meaning?

The fact that we find this text in Scripture tells us God considers it important. Life does not consist of spiritual things and material things. Life consists of things with both material and spiritual sides to them. God is concerned with hairs, with sparrows, with grass. He is involved with huge hurricanes and individual rain-drops, with raging bushfires and pilot flames in gas-heaters. All things fall under God's providence.

Anxieties do too. The fears we have, our sorrows and hurts - God knows about them. Indeed, the adversity we meet in this life of sorrow is actually sent to us by our Almighty Father (HC, LD 9). Anxiety is very much part of life, also for believers. But is a Christian allowed to be anxious? Does not Scripture say, *"Do not be anxious about anything"* (Phil 4:6)? However, that does not mean Christians never are. Christians are not supposed to sin either. But they do; even our best works are all imperfect and defiled with sin. Anxiety is part of life.

Anxiety leads to feeling down, God tells us. An anxious person feels dejected, even depressed. And depression hurts. It affects not just yourself, but those about you. Instead of being a support, you need support. Out of the depths of sadness you call, to God, to those you love, to anyone. You feel bad for feeling the way you do. You long for something good.

God not only points out this reality in broken life, part of the sighing of Creation. He also points out the remedy. Observe God's wisdom! *"A kind word cheers him up."* The word translated "kind" is usually translated "good." It is the "good" of Genesis 1: *"and God saw it was good."* The Hebrew word for "good" has the flavour of "suited for a purpose."

A good word is not just an expression of sympathy. It goes a step further. It seeks to relieve the anxiety, to alleviate the fear. It may point to the goodness of the Lord.

It may offer advice, if the anxious person can and will take it.

More is in view. It's not just a good word. "Something good" is the translation I'd prefer. For the Hebrew word translated "word" can also mean "deed" or "thing." "Something good" may also be a hug. It can be a meal for the family.

It can be the loan of an RV or a hand with yard work.

We have been blessed with a book filled with good things.

For example, *"Nothing will be able separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

(Rom 8:39)

The Psalms provide us with many comforting, admonishing, and encouraging words to speak. The Proverbs tell us what to do and what not to do. There is no excuse for not knowing something good.

There's more yet to the simple message of the text. Anxiety: think of Adam and Eve, hiding in the bushes, afraid of God. Things were no longer good.

And think of the word which God spoke. It was a good word, the best word ever: *"He will destroy its head."*

In the midst of time God spoke a Word. The Word became flesh. When he dwelt among us, he saw anxiety. He saw the tears of a mother who had buried her husband and was about to bury her only son. He heard a blind man cry for help. He touched lepers. He saw it all. And he took it upon himself.

Christ is the Word of God, the best word ever spoken. It relieved the anxiety of mankind and cheered us up forever.

Put your anxieties in the context of that good Word. And when you say or do something good to relieve someone's anxiety, follow the example set by the Christ. Thanks be to God for the good words that fill our lives, especially the Word he spoke.

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