

Romans 6, Is 42

The wife comes into the living room, angry, tears threatening to gush out, she's tired, she's exasperated, she's maybe a bit scared and overwrought.

The expert husband of many years thinks to himself, "I got this, I know exactly what will fix this situation, a few magic words." So he stands up and says to his anxious wife, "Just calm down. Stop Worrying." Boom, problem solved, right? Never fails.

The problem with "calm down and stop worrying," is that it fails to validate a simple fact – they aren't calm, and they are worried. And we might think it's for no good reason, but they certainly do, or if they don't think it's for a good reason, they probably are just as frustrated that they are worried and upset for that not good reason too, but they can't help it.

So husbands please, take another tact, I might suggest: "how can I help, do you even want me to help?"

All that being said, I, your pastor, now get to say to you – "Just calm down. Stop worrying."

But actually no, I can't really say that either. Because there is, believe it or not, a situation when someone can say "Just calm down, stop worrying." It's when

someone is in such control of a situation that they can solve the problem with care, with ease, and without a doubt.

And lets face it, we husbands can't often do that. Nor can pastors.

But today we read of one who can.

Jesus can tell us to “not be anxious about our life – look at the birds, look at the flowers, and you are of much more value than they.” He can say that, not to guilt trip us for worrying, but because he is actually in control and will see us safely to his side.

And today in our epistle lesson I think we see wonderful news of why we actually don't have to worry so much. “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death... for if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

Now you may not see why all that death talk is supposed to make us not worry, that seems like a scary thing. Well, just bear with me for a brief illustration.

I sometimes have dreams that I'm back in college. I don't know, I guess school was that traumatic for me – don't worry about me going back to school for a doctorate let me tell you. I'm suddenly back in the halls and I'm late for class. Then I can't find the classroom. I swear it was here, no, the other wing of the campus, I run, but I can't run – because it's a dumb dream and my limbs don't

work right – but somehow I’m there where I am supposed to be, and I am in the class and find out I’ve actually missed three weeks of the class. I’m doomed, I’m going to fail... And then I wake up, with college and seminary 10 years behind me. Deep breath, just a dream, all those stressors are gone, never again, and my worry melts away.

My worry melts away because all that stress is in the past, already done. Calm down, stop worrying. It’s over, school can’t hurt you anymore. It’s all in the past.

Notice the tense that Paul uses in those verses I just read, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death.” Past tense. “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, (which we have already, in the past, in baptism) we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” There he switches to future.

Do you see? We are not slowly inching toward death and the grave. No, you have already died. Your death, was on a cross 2000 years ago. You are inching forward to a resurrection, to a new creation, to a freedom from sin and pain.

And we protest, “Well, IF I get into heaven...” But didn’t you hear? You died, the judgment for your sin has been levied on Jesus, the verdict is already in, the gavel already smashed down, Jesus is guilty, you are free. You may even have it in writing! A baptismal certificate somewhere. And what’s even better, Jesus is risen

and has promised you will be too! Calm down, stop worrying, Jesus has already saved you. Why would he take it back?

We actually talk this way a lot, truly. We often talk about how you are his child through faith, no? So you acknowledge you already are part of the family. Is he letting folks into the family and then denying them into his household? Nonsense. Face it, it's already done.

The stressors of whether or not God would save someone like you... are gone, because he already has. The stressors of "will I stand in the judgment" are already gone because your judgment already has been carried out, on a cross.

Now, OK, I get it. "What if I fall away?" Especially me with all my doubts and fears and sins.

Well, I direct you now to our Old Testament lesson, the first suffering servant song in Isaiah. This very passage is quoted in Matthew's Gospel, saying this is talking about Jesus. Verse 2: "A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench."

"Jesus died for me a long time ago, that's great, but my faith... I don't know. I struggle at times. I'm afraid at times. I'm anxious. I have questions and doubts. I see so much evil out there, I've been broken." Well then guess what, you are a bruised reed. Bent double by a broken world and a sinful mind and heart. But Jesus

does not come to a broken reed and say, “how worthless, how weak, begone!” If you have doubts and fears and sins and you seem you are just barely hanging on, then you are a faintly burning wick. Gasping for oxygen, or fuel. But our Lord does not come by and say, “what a weakling. What a doubter. How dare your faith be so small, I will punish you in kind, I will put you out of your misery.” No, not our Lord.

He will not judge by the worlds standards. The world cares about what you can do, what you can offer. We run our rat race because we need, need, need, this luxury or that promotion. That luxury will fade, and that boss, if you dropped dead today, will replace you in two weeks. And we let them run our lives and determine our happiness and peace and meaning. That’s the world that will cut you off if you are bruised and bent, “sorry, not productive anymore.” That’s the world that will snuff you out if you don’t say the right things, look the right way. If that child has an abnormality, “welp, better get rid of them – wouldn’t want to be a burden to someone else.”

Jesus says, “no, I will bear your burdens. For the broken, I myself will be broken and bruised.” For the flickering, he will gasp for breath on a cross, choking out “why have you forsaken me?” And his life was snuffed out as he bore the just punishment for our sins. And we know our sins were there because, back around again, Paul reminds us that baptism is our proof that the work of the cross was for

us. His death, your death. Already happened. Jesus has already cried, “It is finished.” He’s done the work, he did it for you. You have the certificate and I suppose you could cut it up, disown the verdict, and say “no, I don’t want or need or think that death 2000 years ago matters.” You could put the chains back on, sure. But I don’t think you have.

So calm down, stop worrying.

He has already handed death it’s first loss. There will be many more, yourself included because as we have already seen, we know the verdict our God has for you, whether you are smoldering or broken. Because you are, by baptism and or faith, his. He loves you. You didn’t have to earn it or manufacture it. He gives it.

The past is past, and for you that means your past is forgiven, redeemed, and a place where your death has already happened. So that means we can look ahead, past our physical deaths and judgment, confident of a resurrection. God has worked to save and he has worked in your life through baptism, through the word.

You are his. May we, in times of worry and fear and doubt, remember such promises and be strengthened by his Spirit and we pray that these same promises then would replace a little of the doubt and worry, with a bit of a thing called Joy.

In Jesus, name. Amen.