

Be Anxious For Nothing

Overcoming Anxieties

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Have you ever been worried or felt anxious about something? I am sure that you have. If you have not, you might not be human! Fear and its many facets seem to be a fundamental human emotion. It has something to do with our being carnal and physical. We just do not have the powers to banish all fear and anxiety from our lives.

One might say that to fear is to be human. It is so common among us that we have come up with many synonyms for fear, worry, and anxiety, and all the many nuances to describe this emotion. I will just give you only a sampling. I have taken them from a thesaurus.

Abhorrence. Agitation. Angst. Anxiety. Aversion. Concern. Consternation. Cowardice. The creeps! Despair. Discomposure. Dismay. Disquieted. Distress. Doubt. Dread. Faintheartedness. Foreboding. Fright. Horror! Jitters. Misgivings. Nightmare. Panic. Presentiment. Qualm. Revulsion. Scare. Suspicion. Terror. Timidity. Trembling. Tremor. Trepidation. Unease. And finally—Worry.

Did you notice the great, wide spectrum of fears that are in there, all the way from concern to sheer terror? Whatever we choose to call it, the mental and emotional stress, or distress that we feel is still fear, and it is very difficult. People naturally worry about their personal welfare. Most of us worry about the welfare of our loved ones. We worry about the personal welfare of our brethren, our friends, our neighbors; sometimes we even worry about people that we do not even know. We worry about our fellow countrymen—our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, or some other foreign posting. We worry about the widow and the orphan; the poor and the needy; the sick; the oppressed; they may just be faceless blobs out there—a big group of people—but we worry about them just the same.

We almost literally worry about everything, when you come to think about it. When I was putting this sermon together, I started to list the things that we worry about. We worry about our jobs. We worry about our homes, whether the roof is leaking or the termites are eating them. We worry about our cars as to whether we needed to put oil in the last time we filled up, or whether the tires are okay or not. We worry our pets. We worry about our favorite sports teams, and the individual players on them. We worry about our food. We worry about our water.

We worry about every little disease that is mentioned in the news, or on the Internet. We worry about the public schools, and the private schools, and the parochial schools. We worry about every kind of school, even home schools. We worry about the electrical grid. We worry about crime. We worry about drugs. We worry about the economy, especially these days. We worry about politics. We worry about foreign relations. We worry about the traffic while trying to get to work every day. We worry about the weather. And now, we even worry about the climate.

We worry about the rain forests and whether or not they will survive. We worry about the manatees down in Florida. We worry about baby seals and polar bears. We worry about killer bees and fire ants. We worry about terrorism and nuclear war. We worry about volcanoes and earthquakes, and asteroids. We worry about sun-spots, or the lack of them—and little green men—and the boogie man—and Sasquatch—and aspartame—and MSG (monosodium glutamate)!

Do not laugh! We do! We tend to worry about everything. And, we are not done! Let us not forget about the phobias! Everybody seems to have a phobia these days. There are literally hundreds of these specific fears from ablutophobia, which is the fear of washing or bathing; to zoophobia, which is the fear of animals. I see that none of you have cassisophobia, which is a good thing, because it is the fear of sitting down. That is good, because we all do a lot of sitting down every Sabbath day. Nor do you seem to have ecclesiaphobia, which is the fear of going to church!

Now, I certainly do not have glossophobia, which is the fear of public speaking—maybe a few butterflies, or mild nervousness as I rise to take my place, but that is about it.

Some churches these days—and we have seen this in *The Journal, the News of the Churches of God*, who have parishophobia, which is the fear of challenges to official doctrine or the radical deviation of such.

Really, the list of phobias is pages long. Just type in "list of phobias" in any search engine like Google, or Yahoo, and you will find dozens of pages of phobias. Like I said, from ablutophobia to zoophobia—from A to Z.

But have I left anything out? Indeed I did. We fear old age, the unknown, death and taxes, Satan and his demons, and God Himself.

Now I think I have probably covered everything from A to Z. Maybe you have your own list.

We fear everything. When you think about it, we human beings are sniveling, groveling, terrified little creatures—without a backbone or any confidence, it seems. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's, "All we have to fear is fear itself," sounds awfully hollow and silly after going through this list. What was he thinking? I know that he was trying to pump up the nation, and get us ready for war, but all we have to fear is fear itself?

How do we do that? How do we not fear? It is part of the human psyche to fear.

It is a wonder to me after thinking about all this and all the various fears that we tend to have, that we are not all dressed in straight jackets, and living in rubber rooms. "They're coming to take me away! Ha Ha! Hee Hee! Ho Ho! To the funny farm where life is beautiful all the time!"

I mean, that is kind of how I felt after reading through all this, and making these lists. We are just so anxious all the time about everything.

Turn to Matthew 6. I only want a little bit of this scripture. If you remember your chapters, this is smack dab in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says:

Matthew 6:25 Therefore I say to you, do not worry. . .

Turn to Philippians 4, and I just want the first phrase there, where the apostle Paul says,

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, . . .

Is that not incredible? Our God and Savior Jesus Christ and His apostle He sent out to evangelize, and write fourteen books, and do all this for us for our admonition and learning, they both encourage us not to worry. "Don't worry! Be happy!" It is not quite like that, but they do tell us not to be anxious about anything. All these fears are not something that you need to be worried about.

It is normal for people to have fears, but they advise us here not to allow them to consume us. But our fears, worries, and anxieties are not something that we can just drop like some mismatched tie, or handbag, or something. Fears are deep-seated and pervasive within us. They are not something that we can just shrug off.

And fears—anxieties, worries, phobias whatever you want to call them—seem to have claws, or they are made of Velcro, or they excrete some sticky substance so that they cling to us, which makes shaking them off one of the hardest things for a person to do.

Obviously, I will be discussing fear and anxiety today. I hope that throughout this sermon, I can help us see that these fears are often groundless and unnecessary and terribly harmful to us. And if nothing else, I hope to provide a healthier perspective so that we can begin to overcome these fears, and in overcoming these fears, we can find ourselves growing in faith, love, obedience, and the knowledge of God.

Now, in my introduction, I was maybe a bit flippant about fears—seeming to take them rather lightly. I do not mean really to take them lightly, but rather

to get us to think about them not quite as seriously as we have before, because they *can* be overcome.

In this world, there are many things happening right now that incite some fear in all of us. Certainly, we are all apprehensive about the declining economy, and what it can do to us. We are all a little worried that our money will not go as far as it once did. At least, we are worried about inflation sapping the strength of our money, and it will not be able to buy what it used to buy.

But others of us are worried about losing our income altogether, that there is not much work out there—construction, banking, finance, automobiles, or wherever—it is beginning to touch all different sectors of the economy.

Even in my line of work, if you members cannot pay your tithes, and make contributions, our income goes away. So it will affect us too. We are not somehow immune to all this.

We are afraid that because of the economy, people will grow desperate, being out of work, so that crime will get worse, and increase—that we will start to have literally highway robbery. People will hijack our cars, or people will steal things from our garages, or burst into our homes, taking what they want. There are already some people who, having food stored in their house, wonder that if things get bad enough, will people come and commandeer their food just because they have it? Just because it is known in the neighborhood that a certain person has food? You wonder about these things.

We are alarmed that the government is making all the wrong moves in trying to correct the economy. And while it is doing all the wrong things, it is taking the opportunity to give away our sovereignty to the world, and to trample on all of our constitutional freedoms.

There is a lot to worry about. There is a great deal going on in this world that seems to be going the wrong way! And it makes us jittery at the very least. And it makes us concerned.

Now, all of these worries cause stress. Do not think that it will not affect you, or that it does not affect you. I have firsthand knowledge and

experience. Stress refers to the consequences of the failure of a person to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats, many of which are fears regarding the organism (self) whether real or imagined.

A lot of phobias are imagined. There really is not a giant spider that is going to come and attack you. Not every spider can hurt you like the black widow or a brown recluse. If you are afraid of spiders, you have arachnophobia, and it produces stress. Your fears produce stress.

Stress is not necessarily quick and out of the way. I mean, you may go to work every day facing a forty-minute commute and you get through it every day. It is not bad. You go up the road, and you have some stop-and-go traffic, and the guy cuts you off, and you want to make some gesture, or shout something to him out your window—but you do not. You hold it back. You are trying to do what is right. You finally get into work, and you settle down for the day. That is a small stress in itself. But, doing this five days a week, and about 50 weeks a year, for how many years of your career—it builds—it wears on you.

And that is just one small stress. I have not even talked about the stresses at your work or your stresses at your home—with your children, with your mate, with your neighbors, with your ball club, or whatever. There are more and more stresses that are upon us all the time.

And stress by itself is not a bad thing. We need stress from time to time to be able respond and feel as if we are alive. There is a stress called "eustress," which means a good stress. Some of these are wonderful stresses. I mean, there is a great eustress that we have called baptism. There is a stress there, but it is good. It is the same thing for marriage, having children, having a child graduate from school, or whatever, but these are all good stresses, because they make you happy, and make you feel fulfilled. Your life moves on down the road. And it is a wonderful thing.

But it seems like there are a lot more bad stresses in life and these stresses can build over long periods, and wear down a person's defenses, ultimately leaving us tired, and irritable, and anxious. And it opens us wide to many ailments, syndromes, and diseases that are potentially life-threatening if we do not get a handle on them.

Now, I always thought I could handle stress very well. I thought it was like water off a duck's back. I would just shrug it off—no problem! But last year had taught me differently. What I was really doing instead of water off the duck's back was absorbing these stresses. I was not handling them, I was just like a big sponge absorbing them. Stresses would come upon me, and I would act as if I was the Rock of Gibraltar, and they were just breaking upon me like the surf. But actually, what they were doing to me was sweeping into me and lodging there. And, I was holding them, rather than handling them.

Stresses at work? You might think that a minister's job is easy. I would trade with you any day should you want to try it out. It is not easy.

Of course, we all know the stresses of family. Families stress each other all the time. They have to live together in close proximity all the time. And you do one thing, and the other person does not like it. Or, they do one thing, and you do not like it. And they mess up your plans. You were going to do something, and then you have to talk it out, or hopefully it will not get into a shouting match. So there are stresses at home.

There are stresses at church! We all get along so well, do we not? But every once in a while we rub each other wrong, and we have to work through it.

Of course, there are stresses with the house. You own a home. There are stresses whether the roof leaks, or termites; or shifting foundations; the windows; the siding; the garden. We worry about all kinds of things.

Another big stress in everybody's life is time. How are you going to use your time? How long are you going to sleep? How much time do you give to your prayer and Bible study? How much time do you give to your ablutions? How much time do you give to your recreation with family, friends, and neighbors? There are so many 'time' things. We have to be at work at a certain time, we have to leave work at a certain time. If we do not, everything gets messed up, and then we have to work with that.

These are the things that are stressors on me that I have just mentioned in general terms above as something that we all have to face.

Now what I did in my own particular situation, being the faux Rock of Gibraltar, is that I, instead of handling them, I covered them up with multiple cups of coffee every day, and satisfying my sweet tooth. They were the two main culprits of how I remained buoyed up. Rather than having these things affect me, I buoyed myself up with caffeine and sugar and so I was able to think that I was handling them. But I was not. I was just putting off the day when I would have to actually meet them, and face them. Basically what I was doing was I was burying them under layers of stimulations. And what part of me do I have that paid for all that? My adrenal glands.

Whenever you are stimulated, your adrenal glands secrete a hormone to try to bring it back down. And then it goes down into the trough, when you hit your low, it secretes another hormone to bring you back up. So, whether you are up, or down, your adrenal glands are pumping constantly. If you are like me, you do not sleep well. When your adrenal glands are supposed to be rejuvenating themselves overnight while you sleep getting you ready for the next day, mine were still pumping trying to lift me back up. So my adrenal glands became terribly weakened through over-stimulation, and now I am paying the price by having to really watch everything—to get my sleep; to eat right; to get my exercise; and to handle the stress, rather than suffer for it.

So, just to let you know, I have not had a drink of coffee for about six months (as the audience notices the wistful longing in my face), even though I do like coffee. It was not just a stimulant, I enjoyed coffee. And I have cut back drastically on my sugar as well. You cannot totally cut them off, you would die. But this is some of the things that I had to do.

For me, the adrenal fatigue manifested itself in anxiety attacks, insomnia (especially), muscle aches in my left side and chest, and my side above my right hip. And of course, there is the general fatigue and lethargy—you just do not feel like doing anything. You do not have any get-up-and-go. Because this took place last summer, when I first began to understand what I was going through, and started working on it, I no longer have the anxiety attacks. However, the others are still with me—insomnia and muscle aches which produce the general fatigue and lethargy.

But the insomnia is the worst of all. Last night, it hit me again. It usually happens around a stressful time, such as I had a sermon on Thursday, and am

doing another one today. I had to make sure that I had it all done and ready for today; so, my mind was going a million miles a minute, and I did not sleep very well last night. I probably got to sleep around 3 am., but that has been par for the course over the past week. And I could not get up and have a cup of coffee to help me through it. You just have to face things. I figure that if I can somehow conquer the sleeplessness, the rest would fall back into place. At least, from a physical standpoint, because that is what is really keeping me from getting my adrenal glands back to where they should be. They are not getting their chance to rejuvenate during sleep. So, I would appreciate your continued prayers for my situation.

Overall, I am getting over it, but it is going to take a long time. I am paying for the years of not handling the stress as it came to me—maybe since high school or college. And it is all because of anxieties, fears, and other stresses that I thought I was handling, but was not. I was just covering. From all the reading I have done on adrenal fatigue, more people have it than we suppose.

Daniel 12:4 [This is a prophecy of the time of the end.]"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

Daniel 12:4 suggests that the end-time conditions could have this affect. Our bodies were not made to handle all this constant running to and fro. God did not make us so that we would be in a rat race treadmill—constantly being stimulated, constantly being scared, constantly having the fight or flight syndrome, or constantly facing the world. Our bodies need much more rest and peace and calm than we tend to give them.

It seems like every other month they are coming up with greater number of hours that we need to sleep. They used to say that most people can get by with six hours of sleep a night, but then they said seven hours, and then they changed it to eight. Now, they are saying nine hours of sleep each night. For people with adrenal fatigue, go to bed as early as possible before 10 pm, and sleep as long as you can, no limits on the other end. You need at least five hours of continuous sleep to recharge your adrenals every night. That is the minimum. And it must be continuous sleep for that five hours.

The moment you begin to wake up, your adrenals begin to go to work because it knows that you are about get up, and begin your day's activities. So, it stops rejuvenating, and begins working for the day. It is an amazing thing that God made our bodies to work like that, but He did not make them so that they would have to face these kinds of stresses everyday.

And our minds too! Not just our bodies, but our minds have trouble handling the exponential increases of knowledge, and the rapid advances in technology, and all their implications upon the body, the environment, the economy, international relations. Just think—what did the nuclear bomb do to international relations?

That is an advance that was obviously contemplated, but when Daniel was getting this prophecy, he never dreamed of something like a nuclear bomb. And a nuclear bomb would be fine if it had to be just carried in a suitcase, or something. But when they can put it on top of a rocket and shoot it halfway around the world (another "great and wonderful" advance in human technology), we have got something to worry about. That is why I mentioned implications on international relations.

Of course, most important of all, to us, is all this running around, and all these advances, and how it affects our faith. How it affects human morality. How it affects society, and culture. From what we have seen, very little of it has been good. We have been able to harness some of these technologies, these advances, for the good of spreading God's Word around the world, but the side effects of the technologies are awful. People out there use these same technologies for very evil and perverse things.

The Church of the Great God uses the Internet. But maybe as much as 30% of the Internet websites are pornography. I am not quite sure if that is an accurate number, but the fact of the matter is that pornography is a huge part of the Internet. We get the Word of God out on a very little sliver of that great big pie. And a very large segment of that pie is perverted sex.

Our bodies and our minds cannot keep up with all of this. All this agitation, all this speed, with all this heavy dose of knowledge, and we are changing our operating systems on our computers every couple of years. So we have to learn a new one, and the old one was better (so it seems).

And phones? You buy a phone, and some of you like all the new little gizmos on it, and two months later, a better one comes out. Yours is now a "legacy" item. "Oh, you got one of *those* (snicker)!" People try to keep up with all these things, and it is hard. It is hard on our bodies, and it is hard on our minds. Many of you have stressful jobs. Many of you have stressful home lives. Many of you have debts and obligations hanging over your head.

These things truly make us anxious, and when we have a worsening economy like we have now, and socialism is on the march in Washington DC, a turbulent world scene, and it is getting more turbulent all the time with terrorists, and pirates, and rogue regimes with nuclear weapons, and advanced delivery systems on top of all that, not to mention a resurgent Russia, a menacing China, and a volatile Middle East—with all of that, we have plenty to be worried about, even fearful, even terrified about what is just around the corner.

Here, we live in a big metropolitan area—Charlotte, North Carolina—in the top 25 American cities. What are the chances that we here in Charlotte are on some rogue nation's hit list of cities to be nuked? Or, our people who live near Baltimore? Chicago? Los Angeles? Portland? St. Louis? Kansas City? Dallas? All of these places have big targets on them and let us say that some terrorist organization decides to bring over a couple of suitcase nuclear bombs, and plant them in one of our big cities. How do we know it is not going to be one we are closest to?

That is what I mean about terror. You fear for your very life. Or, you could.

This is a prophecy of the time just right ahead maybe. We do not know.

Jeremiah 30:4-7 Now these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. "For thus says the LORD: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and

see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.'

If we here in the United States of America, and the other countries of Israel, are on the precipice of the Great Tribulation, here called the time of Jacob's trouble, fear and trembling and terror are normal standard reactions. It is human to see slightly into the future, and to see destruction coming, to be afraid. The deterioration and the destruction of our way of life and our nation are not things to be happy about. You cannot be at peace when our country is falling down around us. When we see the abortion rate, the murder rate, the divorce rate, and all these things just being so sky high, these things that we are seeing do not bode well for our people, our nation, or our future.

But we see here that God wants us to temper our fears with a proper perspective. What does God say there at the end of this passage? "But he shall be saved out of it." We are beginning to see already even though what He has told us is very bad, that there is light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope.

The reaction of fear and trembling—this person who has his hands on his loins as if he is giving birth, the one whose face is pale for very terror—this person has no hope. He cannot see the end. The end he sees is one of death. Nothing good. He can see nothing good coming out on the other side. Maybe he cannot see *anything* coming out on the other side. This is it. This is the end. This is oblivion. This is annihilation. Nothing.

But we need to read on. The next passage is where God begins to change our perspective.

Jeremiah 30:10-11 'Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the LORD, 'nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,' says the LORD, 'to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will

not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.'

God gives it to us straight, does He not? He does not sugarcoat the situation at all. He tells us plainly that it is going to be terrifying. I mean, when He says that He is going to make a full end of the nations where He has scattered us—that is scary. It portends a horrifying amount of death and devastation all around us. God is not going to trick us into thinking that things are going to be hunky-dory, that we are just going to skate on through without a scrape or two—talking to Jacob, not necessarily to the church of God. But we are part of Israel, and we are part of Jacob. We have to think. We have to be prepared for these times that are coming. The picture that God paints here is that after God's work is finished, after He is done making a full end of all these nations where He has scattered His people, nothing will remain the same.

Talk about a new world order! Everything is going to be turned upside down. Earth's population will be drastically reduced. Certain nations will no longer even exist, except for maybe a certain small remnant of them. Many areas of the earth will have been demolished, ruined, polluted, and for who knows how long it will last.

All of this occurs because of the world's sins, and its opposition to God. He let the nations have their big war, and it falls on Israel the hardest. Then comes God's wrath for all that they have done to His people, His earth. And He settles the score.

But God says very plainly, do not fear, nor be dismayed. Those are strong words. There does not seem to be any caveats there. Do not be afraid.

He gives two reasons why we should not be afraid, and why we should not worry about all this; why we should not have sheer terror at the thought of it all. The first one is that He says very clearly that He will save His people. We have seen Him save His people in the pages of this Book. We know that He can do it. We know that His arm is not shortened. He has the strength to save us anywhere, at any time, out of whatever situation we happen to be in. We have proof.

So, He says that He will save His people. This is a promise He has the power to keep. And the second thing He says is that God is with us. "I am with you to save you." So, no matter how destitute and alone we may seem to feel, no matter how trapped we are, or in prison, or in slavery, or chained to an oar—whatever it is, wherever we happen to be—we need to remember that He is there, protecting and guiding amidst all the world going mad. This means that if we want to endure to the end to be saved as our Savior Jesus Christ tells us we must do, we have to believe God, and His promises, as well as to know God so deeply that we recognize and even feel His presence with us, no matter what the situation.

Do we have that depth of faith and knowledge of God? That we believe His promises, even in the worst of crises, and that we know that He is right there beside us? And more importantly, that He is in us by His Spirit.

Let us see some verses from the New Testament. Jesus Christ makes several statements to this effect. Jesus says,

Luke 12:32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Do you believe that? Do you believe that enough so that you do not fear what is coming next down the pike? God is happy to give us His Kingdom. He is happy to fulfill His promises. He is happy to be there to hold our hand. Do we believe it?

Luke 21:34-35 "But take heed to yourselves [at the time of the end], lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life [the anxieties and things that tend to get us down], and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth."

So He says here to take heed so that you do not get bogged down by the cares of this life. Do not worry. Avoid all that.

Turn to John 16 where Jesus is finishing up His discourse to His disciples on that Passover evening before His arrest.

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. [The world may be going to hell in a hand-basket all around you, but in Him, we can have peace.] In the world you will have tribulation [trials and terrors, and whatnot]; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Because He has overcome the world, He has finished His work, He is there to give us the strength that we need during any trial, even as great as the Great Tribulation. It is hard to be happy in times like that, but He says that it is possible. He would not have said it if it were not possible. "Be of good cheer! I have overcome the world!"

So, He says, "Don't fear. Don't let the distractions of life distract you. Be of good cheer." Do not be down and anxious, because Jesus Christ has finished His work, and He is on God's throne helping us at every turn, and watching all events.

If we need to overcome something, because He has overcome, it is possible for you to overcome too.

It is a tradition that Psalm 91, like Psalm 90, was written by Moses. If you notice, all Bibles do not give Psalm 91 an author. But, there are many people who believe that it might be true that Moses wrote Psalm 91.

If it was written by Moses, it was probably a comfort to him, as he trekked toward the Promised Land, when he felt constantly alone, and embattled against a few million of his own people, not to mention Israel's enemies who were likely to strike at any time; the privations and dangers of the wilderness, and the frequent catastrophes that the people brought onto themselves by their frequent sins.

It is very interesting if you were to go back and watch the old Ten Commandments movie once again, in the Passover scene, where the firstborn were dying all over outside, hearing the screams, and one of the children is asking, "Why are we doing all this?" Well if you listen carefully

in the background, you will hear Aaron singing a song, Psalm 91. Those Jews who made that movie probably knew of the tradition that Moses may well have written Psalm 91.

Let us read this because they are true promises of protection and guidance that we can count on even today. It was not just for Moses, although Moses is quite a paragon of virtues that we need to have. Let us see what he has to say here:

Psalm 91:1-16 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.

Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

[Says the Lord] "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation."

Quite a hopeful psalm! Now these promises that are in this psalm, are not unconditional, did you notice? He did not say that everybody who is a part of

His people could claim these promises. God is not going to be our Fortress and our Deliverer "just because." There are certain things that we must do. I will point these out for you too.

In verse 2, Moses says, "In Him I will trust." That is the first of the things we must do. We have to trust Him. This is unswerving faith. We have to know what He has promised. We have to know what He has done. We have to understand all the things in His Word that show Him to be true. We should be trying to know all those things. We should have all those proofs. And then, put them into practice by trusting in Him, by having faith that He is going to come through for you, that He is going to back up what He has said, because He is God. So, the first thing we have to do is trust Him. We have to have faith.

The next one that comes up is found in verse 9, "Because you have made the Lord who is my refuge, even the Most High your habitation. . ." This is the next thing we have to do. Verse 9 tells us we have to make God our dwelling place. In other words, in the New Testament it might be phrased as, "We have to live in Christ." This means that in a simple way, we must live according to His commands. We have to live His way of life. We have to live a life of obedient cooperation with Him. We have to walk with Him always, side by side. Or like Christ said, "Follow Me." His every step is our every step.

The next one is found in verse 14. We must set our love upon God. Simply put, we must love Him! It sounds so simple. He wants us to respond to Him with affection and willing sacrificial service. Just think of it in terms of loving your mate. You are obviously affectionate, right? I mean, that comes first, it seems. And it is easy for us to be affectionate to the one we love. But, when we really love, we give ourselves to them and do things for them, without a qualm. If something needs to be done, we do it. We are happy to do it to please them. God wants the same response from us toward Him. That we are affectionate toward Him, and are willing to do anything to please Him. It is so simple to look at it that way, without trying to get all theological about it. God wants us to have that kind of relationship with Him, where we are so intimate that we would be willing to do for Him as much or more so than our mate.

Verse 15 gives us the fourth one in that we have to call upon Him. What are you doing when you are calling upon God? You are praying, are you not? You are having a constant and close communication with Him. He wants us to be in touch with Him, because when we are in touch, we are strengthening and deepening the relationship we have with Him, and we do this day by day.

So, those four things are (1) faith, (2) obedient cooperation, (3) love, and (4) knowing Him through prayer.

Now, think about this, each one of you yourself, about your own life. If we have constant fears, anxieties, worries, jitters, or whatever you want to call them, if you have any of those things, and it is fairly constant within you, living a life of fear, then (it is pretty clear to me and should be to you) we are probably lacking in one or more of these areas—in faith, obedience, love, and in your prayer life. I would be willing to venture that we are all deficient in all of these areas. None of us gets 100% in any one of them, do we? So, there is room for improvement in each of us in each of these areas. We could all be more faithful. We could all be more obedient. We could all show God more love and service than we have been doing. And certainly, we could all use more time in prayer with Him—both for what we ask, and what we receive.

So, if we have anxieties, like I do—and I am preaching to myself today—we need to work on faith, obedience, love, and prayer. No worries! Right?

These are huge areas of Christian living. But they are doable. They are not hard things, especially if we start making the little easy choices everyday (remember last week's sermon, *Overcoming Is a Choice*), to trust Him, obey Him, to serve Him, and to remain in contact with Him—daily.

Now we cannot talk about worries without going to Matthew 6:25. We were here before, but I only read the one little portion of one verse. But before we begin, I want you to consider that this fear is in the Sermon on the Mount, and pretty much right smack-dab in the center of it. That to me implies Jesus Christ is making a pretty important point here. We should not gloss over it as being simple, or simplistic; that it is something we have already overcome. Because, I do not think that we in the flesh could ever overcome this entirely.

Matthew 6:25-34 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Jesus' thought here actually begins back in verse 19, where He begins talking about your treasure should be in heaven, not on earth. He is working up to this and the reason I know this is because verse 25 begins with the word, "therefore." So, all things from verse 19 to 24 were on one theme leading up to this. He is trying to get us, as hearers of this Sermon on the Mount, to turn our focus from earthly things, to heavenly things. He is trying to change our focus in life. He does not want our hearts to be on earthly things that can be corrupted, but on heavenly things which will be preserved forever—uncorrupted.

And then down in verse 22, Christ talks about the lamp of the body is the eye. He says if your eye is good, or single, unified—focused—the whole body will be filled with light. He is saying again, "Where are we looking? What is your focus on? What are our priorities?" He wants us here to concentrate on the light, and not the darkness.

In the first part, it was heavenly things, as opposed to earthly things. Now it is light rather than darkness. And He says that if we have the right goal, if we

have the right priorities, then that is going to fill us with the light that we need, meaning spiritual truth that we can follow, so that we follow Him.

Then He speaks in verse 24 of not having two masters. He talks about God and mammon, which yet again is a command to have the right focus. You can only give your loyalties to one. You cannot divide your loyalties to both. If you split your loyalties like that it is going to ruin things. It cannot turn out right. You are not going to be able to give your all to the One. So He is saying in this one to concentrate on God, not on money, or this world, or the things that we could have in this world.

To summarize, He wants us to concentrate on heaven, life, and God to have a single pure focus on what is good and right and pure and true and divine. And to leave off and ignore if you can the evil, the wrong, corrupt, false—human and demonic.

If we concentrate on those bad things, we are going to be all screwed up.

What did Paul say? "Meditate on these things," in Philippians 4:8 the true, noble, and good things, and that is what Jesus is saying here. If we focus on all the things that are good, and true, and right, then we are not focused on all those things which cause anxiety and fear—all those things that tend to trip us up.

Verse 25 begins with "therefore." It is the conclusion, the summary and wrap-up. It brings His teaching in these three sections (19 through 24) to a practical conclusion and application. Maybe the people who were listening to Him did not understand what He meant by treasure in heaven, or the part about the lamp of the body, or the part about God and mammon. But they sure knew what He was talking about when He said eating and drinking and clothing. Those were things that they could grasp. So He says, "Don't worry about these things. Don't worry about these mundane things as eating, drinking, and what to wear. God will handle those things for you."

Now, "do not worry," does not mean "never worry." It is important we understand that. He is not saying that we are to divorce worry and anxiety and fear from our lives altogether. That is impossible. However, what He is saying, is that do not be overly concerned. Do not invest too much of

yourself into these concerns. Do not become unbalanced in thinking about these concerns.

Kenneth Wuest in his translation of the Bible translates this as, "Stop perpetually worrying about even one thing." "Perpetually" worrying about one particular thing. We get stuck on one thing, and it seems to ruin things; we cannot seem to think about anything else. Jesus says, "Stop that! That's not good."

Now, we must take a certain amount of care to eat, drink, be healthy, to be safe, to be clothed—sure. The Bible says that we are to be good providers of ourselves and our family. If we do not provide for our own, we are worse than unbelievers. So obviously we have to take some care to do these things. We have to gather the foodstuffs. We have to make sure the utilities are paid so that water and sewer service remains on. Once in a while we purchase clothes. God provides for these things. That is what He is telling us. You should not have to worry about them.

We do not need to get caught up in these mundane things. We do not need to keep up with the Joneses. We do not need to make it our life's struggle to have the most and the best of everything. It does not mean anything ultimately. We were born naked, and we are going to go into the grave naked. Praise God. Is that not what Job said?

But this is the right attitude.

So, if we are focused on these earthly things—food, clothing, drink—we have the wrong focus and we need to move on. In effect, it is the spiritual equivalent of burying our head in the sand. The real activity is the light, God, treasure in heaven. But if we have our heads in the sand, we cannot look up. All we are concerned about is the "sand." And that is not worth anything.

In verse 27 Jesus tells us that ultimately all this worry about the mundane things is unproductive. It is not going to do us any good. I have been worrying for years about these various stresses that I have, and I am still 5'10". That is a fact of life. So I just need to get over it.

It does nothing for us. It gives us no advantage to be a worrywart. It is really useless. It is counterproductive. It is not worth it.

In verse 30, Jesus brings out a telling truth—if we are trying so hard to be a success by our own strength, what it is really blaring out to the whole world, as if you were wearing a sign which says, "I don't have faith. I don't have faith." People of faith do not try to do that. It is showing how little faith you have when you are trying to get glory, or stuff, or money—whatever. We are trying to beat the Joneses. It is telling us that our focus is in the wrong direction. We do not have faith in God. We have faith in the things of this world instead.

I mean, if we are truly focusing on the good things, then we have faith in God that He will give us all these other things when we need them.

So in effect, Jesus says, "Chill out! You're acting like the unconverted when you try to do everything on your own power. That's what they do. All they want to do it get, get, get. They spend all their energies to do this. Christians don't need to do this at all. It shouldn't be their focus."

The key, of course, is in verse 33. Here is where our perspective and our priorities must be—in the Kingdom of God and growing in His grace, truth, and righteousness. If we are truly growing in them, God will supply everything that we need. So, there is no need for fear. No need for anxiety, no need to worry about what is coming. We can let God take care of tomorrow.

Psalm 37:7 says, "Rest in the Lord. Wait patiently for Him." That is oh so hard! But it is what He wants us to do. We do not need to get caught up and anxious about all these things that are happening around us. You can watch them, sure. We can maybe speculate on where they are going, sure. But, we need to always have our single eye focused on God, that He is in control of everything.

Matthew 6:34 says, "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient to the day is its own trouble." Every day brings its own cares, and to anticipate is only to double them,

according to the *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary*. In other words, you do have problems and worries. Handle today's problems and worries today, with all your heart, soul, and mind. Give it all to solve your problems. But do not let tomorrow's troubles get you down today. God will be with you then, too. And He will be helping you then, the same way that He is helping you today, now.

Paul told us to be anxious for nothing, and then we stopped. But let us return there, because Paul also gave a solution.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Paul's solution? Take everything to God in prayer. This gets our minds in the right orientation immediately. It brings God to the forefront. If we do this, we are beginning to look at the problem through God's eyes. We touch bases with Him, and there is a chance that He is going to give us an answer—if we are listening, that is.

So, take everything to God in prayer. It reminds us, when we do so, that God is there and at work for us. Just knowing that brings peace to our minds, because we should remember at that point that help is available to meet any challenge and every challenge. That is why it is so important that when these things come up, and we begin to worry, that we take them to God in prayer because it orients us properly, and begins our mind to thinking in the right spiritual direction for a proper solution.

Do we believe it? Do we believe what it says here? That if we do this the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds? It is true! It is right there in the Book!

Paul goes on to say, if we were to go on reading in Philippians 4:11 that whatever your state is, be content. It is very similar to what Jesus Christ said. Do not always be trying to battle the Joneses. Be content with your situation and status.

Then in verse 13, he says to remember that our strength is in Christ, and with Christ exalted at God's throne, nothing is impossible. Then in verse 19, Paul reminds us that God has promised to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. In verse 20, he reminds us to give glory to God in everything.

This should set us down the proper road if we remember these things.

Finally, let us conclude in I Peter 5:7.

I Peter 5:7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

This is not easy, but if we can do this, and teach ourselves to do this, we can teach ourselves to make these right moves when anxiety comes—and we can with Christ's help—then we will overcome anxieties.