

Freedom From Anxiety

The Promise
Of Peace

A Teaching Outline

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

Guard your heart and mind by refusing to be anxious.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

Imagine never worrying about anything! It seems like an impossibility; we all have worries on the job, in our homes, at school. But Paul's advice is to turn our worries into prayers. Do you want to worry less? Then pray more! Whenever you start to worry, stop and pray.

God will uphold you with his right hand.

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

God chose Israel through Abraham because he wanted to, not because the people deserved it (Deuteronomy 7:6-8; 9:4-6).

Although God chose the Israelites to represent him to the world, they failed to do this; so God punished them and sent them into captivity. Now all believers are God's chosen people, and all share the responsibility of representing him to the world.

One day God will bring all his faithful people together. We need not fear because

- (1) God is with us ("I am with you"),
- (2) God has established a relationship with us ("I am your God"), and
- (3) God gives us assurance of his strength, help, and victory over sin and death.

When afraid, put your trust in the Lord.

“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.” Psalm 56:3

David stated, "What can mere mortals do to me?" How much harm can people do to us? They can inflict pain, suffering, and death. But no person can rob us of our souls or our future beyond this life. How much harm can we do to ourselves? The worst thing we can do is to reject God and lose our eternal life. Jesus said, "Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul"

God's peace does not bring fear.

It's my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.” John 14:27

The end result of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives is deep and lasting peace. Unlike worldly peace, which is usually defined as the absence of conflict, this peace is confident assurance in any circumstance; with Christ's peace, we have no need to fear the present or the future. Sin, fear, uncertainty, doubt, and numerous other forces are at war within us.

The peace of God moves into our hearts and lives to restrain these hostile forces and offer comfort in place of conflict. Jesus says he will give us that peace if we are willing to accept it from him. If your life is full of stress, allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with Christ's peace

God has given us a spirit of power, of love and a sound mind.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7

The law is meant to show unbelievers their sin and bring them to God.

The false teachers wanted to become famous as teachers of God's law, but they didn't even understand the law's purpose. The law was not meant to give believers a list of commands for every occasion but to show unbelievers their sin and bring them to God.

There is no fear in love.

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18

The Day of Judgment is that time when all people will appear before Christ and be held accountable for their actions. With God living in us through Christ, we have no reason to fear this day because we have been saved from punishment. Instead, we can look forward to the Day of Judgment because it will mean the end of sin and the beginning of a face-to-face relationship with Jesus Christ.

If we ever are afraid of the future, eternity, or God's judgment, we can remind ourselves of God's love. We know that he loves us perfectly (Romans 8:38, 39). We can resolve our fears first by focusing on his immeasurable love for us, and then by allowing him to love others through us. His love will quiet your fears and give you confidence.

God's love is the source of all human love, and it spreads like fire. In loving his children, God kindles a flame in their hearts. In turn, they love others, who are warmed by God's love through them.

It is easy to say we love God when that love doesn't cost us anything more than weekly attendance at religious services. But the real test of our love for God is how we treat the people right in front of us—our family members and fellow believers. We cannot truly love God while neglecting to love those who are created in his image.

The Lord's consolation brought joy.

“When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.” Psalm 94:19

Songs, shouts, gratitude, and praise erupted from those gathered to worship the Lord. While there are certainly many examples of stillness and silence in God's presence taught and illustrated in Scripture, there are equally as many examples of raucous worship. Both peaceful silence and enthusiastic praise are appropriate expressions of worship to our great God.

There is no fear for God has redeemed you.

“But now, this is what the Lord says...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.” Isaiah 43:1

God says that despite the people's spiritual failure, he will show them mercy, bring them back from captivity, and restore them. He would give them an outpouring of love, not wrath. Then the world would know that God alone had done this.

God created the people of Israel, and they were special to him. God redeemed them and called them by name to be those who belong to him. God protected Israel in times of trouble. We are important to God, too. If we claim to belong to God, we must never do anything that would bring shame to him.

Going through rivers of difficulty will either cause you to drown or force you to grow stronger. If you go in your own strength, you are more likely to drown. If you invite the Lord to go with you, he will protect you.

God gave other nations to Persia in exchange for returning the Jews to their homeland. Egypt, Ethiopia, and parts of Arabia (Seba) had attacked Persia, and the Persians defeated them. 43:5, 6 Isaiah was speaking primarily of Israel's return from Babylon. But there is a broader meaning: All God's people will be regathered when Christ comes to rule in peace over the earth.

Israel's task was to be a witness telling the world who God is and what he had done. Believers today share the responsibility of being God's witnesses. Do people know what God is like through your words and example? They cannot see God directly, but they can see him reflected in you.

A new Exodus would take place through a new wilderness. The past miracles were nothing compared to what God would do for his people in the future.

A sacrifice required both giving up a valuable animal and pleading with God for forgiveness. But the people presented God with sins instead of sacrifices. Can you imagine bringing the best of your sins to God's altar? This ironic picture shows the depths to which Israel had sunk. What do you present to God—your sins or a plea for his forgiveness?

How tempting it is to remind someone of a past offense! But when God forgives our sins, he totally forgets them. We never have to fear that he will remind us of them later. Because God forgives our sins, we need to forgive others.

A kind word cheers up a man.

“An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.” Proverbs 12:25

Wise people have a quiet confidence. Unstable people (fools) feel the need to prove themselves, but wise people don't have to prove anything. They know they are capable, so they can get on with their work. Beware of showing off. If you are modest, people may not notice you at first, but they will respect you later.

The diligent make wise use of their possessions and resources; the lazy waste them. Waste has become a way of life for many who live in a land of plenty. Waste is poor stewardship. Make good use of everything God has given you, and prize it.

For many, death is a darkened door at the end of life, a passageway to an unknown and feared destiny. But for God's people, death is a bright pathway to a new and better life. So why do we fear death?

Is it fear of the pain we expect, the separation from loved ones, or the unknown? God can help us deal with those fears. He has shown us that death is not final but just another step in the eternal life we received when we followed him.

Even in the valley of death, I will not fear.

“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.” Psalm 23:4

Death casts a frightening shadow over us because we are entirely helpless in its presence. We can struggle with other enemies—pain, suffering, disease, injury—but strength and courage cannot overcome death. It has the final word. Only one person can walk with us through death's dark valley and bring us safely to the other side—the God of life, our shepherd. Because life is uncertain, we should follow this shepherd who offers us eternal comfort.

In ancient Near Eastern culture, at a feast it was customary to anoint a person with fragrant oil. Hosts were also expected to protect their guests at all costs. God offers the protection of a host even when enemies surround us. In the final scene of this psalm, we see that believers will dwell with the Lord. God, the perfect shepherd and host, promises to guide and protect us throughout our life and to bring us into his house forever.

Do not be discouraged, for God is with you.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Joshua's new job consisted of leading more than two million people into a strange new land and conquering it. What a challenge—even for a man of Joshua's caliber! Every new job is a challenge. Without God it can be frightening. With God it can be a great adventure. Just as God was with Joshua, he is with us as we face our new challenges. We may not conquer nations, but every day we face tough situations, difficult people, and temptations. God promises, however, that he will

never abandon us or fail to help us. By asking God to direct us we can conquer many of life's challenges.

Many people think that prosperity and success come from having power, influential personal contacts, and a relentless desire to get ahead. But the strategy for gaining prosperity that God taught Joshua goes against such criteria. He said that to succeed Joshua must (1) be strong and courageous because the task ahead would not be easy, (2) obey God's law, and (3) constantly read and study the Book of Instruction—God's Word. To be successful, follow God's words to Joshua. You may not succeed by the world's standards, but you will be a success in God's eyes—and his opinion is most important.

During the previous year, the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had asked Moses if they could settle just east of the Promised Land. The area was excellent pastureland for their large flocks. Moses agreed to give them the land on one condition—that they help their fellow tribes enter and conquer the Promised Land. Only after the land was conquered could they return to their homes. Now it was time for these three tribes to live up to their agreement.

Let tomorrow worry about itself.

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Matthew 6:34

Planning for tomorrow is time well spent; worrying about tomorrow is time wasted. Sometimes it's difficult to tell the difference. Careful planning is thinking ahead about goals, steps, and schedules, and trusting in God's guidance. When done well, planning can help alleviate worry. Worriers, by contrast, are consumed by fear and find it difficult to trust God. They let their plans interfere with their relationship with God. Don't let worries about tomorrow affect your relationship with God today.

Leave all your worries with the Lord because he cares for you.

“Humble yourselves, then, under God’s mighty hand, so that he will lift you up in his own good time. Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7

We often worry about our position and status, hoping to get proper recognition for what we do. But Peter advises us to remember that God's recognition counts more than human praise. God is able and willing to bless us according to his timing. Humbly obey God regardless of present circumstances, and in his good time—either in this life or in the next—he will honor you.

Carrying your worries, stresses, and daily struggles by yourself shows that you have not trusted God fully with your life. It takes humility, however, to recognize that God cares, to admit your need, and to let others in God's family help you. Sometimes we think that struggles caused by our own sin and foolishness are not God's concern. But when we turn to God in repentance, he will bear the weight even of those struggles. Letting God have your anxieties calls for action, not passivity. Don't submit to circumstances but to the Lord, who controls circumstances.

God is coming to your rescue.

“Tell everyone who is discouraged, be strong and don’t be afraid! God is coming to your rescue...” Isaiah 35:4

Although there have been glimpses of relief and restoration for the remnant of faithful believers, the climate of wrath, fury, judgment, and destruction has prevailed. Now Isaiah breaks through with a vision of beauty and encouragement. God is just as thorough in his mercy as he is severe in his judgment. God's complete moral perfection is revealed by his hatred of all sin, and this leads to judgment. This same moral perfection is revealed in his love for all he has created. This leads to mercy for those who have sinned but who have sincerely loved Jesus and put their trust in him.

This chapter is a beautiful picture of the final Kingdom in which God will establish his justice and destroy all evil. This is the world the redeemed can anticipate after the judgment when creation itself will rejoice in God. Spoke of great distress when God will judge all people for their actions pictures the days when life will be peaceful at last and everything will be made right. Carmel and Sharon were regions of thick vegetation and fertile soil. They were symbols of productivity and plenty.

This "Highway of Holiness" is the way that righteous pilgrims will take from the desert of suffering to Zion (Jerusalem). It is found only by following God. Only the redeemed will travel God's highway; they will be protected from wicked travelers and harmful animals. God is preparing a way for his people (those who walk in his ways) to travel to his home, and he will walk with us. God doesn't simply point the way; he is always beside us as we go.

Don't worry about what you will eat or what you will wear.

Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?" Luke 12:22-26

Jesus commands us not to worry. But how can we avoid it? Only faith can free us from the anxiety caused by greed and covetousness. Working and planning responsibly is good; dwelling on all the ways our planning could go wrong is bad. Worry is pointless because it can't fill any of our needs; worry is foolish because the Creator of the universe loves us and knows what we need. He promises to meet all our real needs but not necessarily all our desires.

Overcoming worry requires:

- (1) Simple trust in God, your heavenly Father. This trust is expressed by praying to him rather than worrying.
- (2) Perspective on your problems. This can be gained by developing a strategy for addressing and correcting your problems.

(3) A support team to help. Find some believers who will pray for you to find wisdom and strength to deal with your worries.

Seeking the Kingdom of God above all else means making Jesus the Lord and King of your life. He must control every area—your work, play, plans, relationships. Is the Kingdom only one of your many concerns, or is it central to all you do? Are you holding back any areas of your life from God's control? As Lord and Creator, he wants to help provide what you need as well as guide how you use what he provides.

The Lord is my stronghold

“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?” Psalm 27:1

Fear is a dark shadow that envelops us and ultimately imprisons us within ourselves. Everyone has been a prisoner of fear at one time or another—fear of rejection, misunderstanding, uncertainty, sickness, or even death. But we can conquer fear by trusting in the Lord, who brings salvation. If we want to dispel the darkness of fear, let us remember with the psalm writer that "the LORD is my light and my salvation."

God will never let the righteous fall.

“Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” Psalm 55:22

God wants us to give our burdens to him, but often we continue to bear them ourselves even when we say we are trusting in him. Trust the same strength that sustains you to carry your cares also.

Give your burdens to the Lord.

God wants us to give our burdens to him, but often we continue to bear them ourselves even when we say we are trusting in him. Trust the same strength that sustains you to carry your cares also.

Take courage and be not afraid.

“Immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take courage! It is I, don't be afraid.'” Mark 6:50

The disciples were afraid, but Jesus' presence calmed their fears. When you experience fear, do you try to deal with it yourself, or do you let Jesus deal with it? In times of fear and uncertainty, it is calming to know that Christ is always with you (Matthew 28:20). To recognize Christ's presence is the antidote for fear.

The Lord will never leave or forsake you.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:6

The laws were to be read to the whole assembly so that everyone, including the children, could hear them. Every seven years the entire nation would gather together and listen as a priest read the law to them. There were no books, Bibles, or newsstands to spread God's word, so the people had to rely on word of mouth and an accurate memory. Memorization was an important part of worship because if everyone knew the law, ignorance would be no excuse for breaking it.

To fulfill God's purpose and will in our lives, we need the content and substance of his Word in our hearts and minds. For the Hebrews, this process began in childhood. Teaching our children and new believers should be one of our top priorities. Our finest teachers, best resources, and most careful thought should be directed toward showing young believers how to follow God in all life's situations.

Do not be afraid, for God will help you.

“For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, for I myself will help you,' declares the Lord, your Redeemer, and the Holy One of Israel.” Isaiah 41:13-14

Israel was surrounded by many nations whose gods supposedly had special powers, such as helping crops grow and providing victory in war. These gods, however, failed to deliver. A god with limited or no power at all is not really a god. When we are tempted to put our trust in something other than the living God—money, career, family, or even military power—we should stop and ask some serious questions. Will it come through? Will it unfailingly provide what I am looking for? God delivers. When he makes a promise, he keeps it. He is completely trustworthy.

God is an ever-present help.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1

The fear of mountains or cities suddenly crumbling into the sea as the result of an earthquake or a nuclear blast haunts many people today. But the psalm writer says that even if the world were to end, we need not fear. In the face of utter destruction, the writer expressed a quiet confidence in God's ability to save him. It seems impossible to consider the end of the world without becoming consumed by fear, but the Bible is clear—God is our refuge even in the midst of total destruction. He is not merely a temporary retreat; he is our eternal refuge and can provide strength in any circumstance.

Many great cities have rivers flowing through them, sustaining people's lives by making agriculture possible and facilitating trade with other cities. Jerusalem had no river, but it had God, who, like a river, sustained the people's lives. As long as God lived among the people, the city was invincible. But when the people abandoned him, God no longer protected them, and Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian army.

War and destruction are inevitable, but so is God's final victory. At that time, all will stand quietly before the all-powerful Lord. How proper, then, for us to be still now, reverently honoring him and his power and majesty. Take time each day to be still and to honor God.

The Lord is my helper.

“The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper.” Psalm 118:6-7

Pilots put confidence in their planes. Commuters place confidence in trains, cars, or buses. Each day we must put our confidence in something or someone. If you are willing to trust a plane or car to get you to your destination, are you willing to trust God to guide you here on earth and to your eternal destination? Do you trust him more than any human being? How futile it is to trust anything or anyone more than God.

Whoever trusts in the Lord will be safe.

“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.” Proverbs 29:25

Fear of people can hamper everything you try to do. In extreme forms, it can make you afraid to leave your home. By contrast, fear of God—respect, reverence, and trust—is liberating. Why fear people who can do no eternal harm? Instead, trust God who can turn the harm intended by others into good for those who trust him.

Jesus rebuked the winds and told the waves to be quiet.

“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” Mark 4:39-40

Problems occur in every area of life. The disciples needed rest, but they encountered a terrible storm. The Christian life may have more stormy weather than calm seas. As Christ's follower, be prepared for the storms that will surely come. Do not surrender to the stress, but remain resilient and recover from setbacks. With faith in Christ, you can pray, trust, and move ahead. When a squall approaches, lean into the wind and trust God.

The disciples lived with Jesus, but they underestimated him. They did not see that his power applied to their very own situation. Jesus has been with his people for 20 centuries, and yet we, like the disciples, underestimate his power to handle crises in our lives. The disciples did not yet know enough about Jesus. We cannot make the same excuse.

The Angels are encamped round about.

“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.” Psalm 34:7

You say you belong to the Lord, but do you fear him? To fear the Lord means to show him deep respect, reverence, and honor. We demonstrate this attitude by humility and genuine worship.

Don't worry about enemy threats.

“But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats.” 1 Peter 3:14

Some Christians believe that faith is a personal matter that should be kept to oneself. It is true that we shouldn't be boisterous or obnoxious in sharing our faith, but we should always be ready to give an answer, gently and respectfully, when asked about our faith, our lifestyle, or our Christian perspective. Can others see your hope in Christ? Are you prepared to tell them what Christ has done in your life?

The Lord freed me from all my fears.

“I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears.” Psalm 34:4

God promises great blessings to his people, but many of these blessings require active participation.

He will set us free from our fears (34:4, 6),

Guard and defend us (34:7),

Show us goodness (34:8),

Supply our needs (34:9),

Listen when we call to him (34:15),

And redeem us (34:22), but we must do our part.

We can appropriate his blessings when

We trust him (34:4,10);

Cry out to him (34:6,17); take refuge in him (34:8);

Fear him (34:9); refrain from lying (34:13);

Turn from evil, do good, and search for peace (34:14);

Are brokenhearted (34:18); and serve him (34:22).

God is the first and the last.

“Then he placed his right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.'” Revelation 1:17

Our sins have convicted and sentenced us, but Jesus holds the keys of death and the grave. He alone can free us from eternal bondage to Satan. He alone has the power and authority to set us free from sin's control. Believers don't have to fear death or the grave because Christ holds the keys to both.

All we must do is turn from sin and turn to him in faith. When we attempt to control our lives and disregard God, we set a course that leads directly to hell. But when we place our life in Christ's hands, he restores us now and resurrects us later to an eternal, peaceful relationship with him.

Do not fear, only believe.

“Jesus told him, ‘don’t be afraid; just believe.’” Mark 5:36

Jairus's crisis made him feel confused, afraid, and without hope. Jesus' words to Jairus in the midst of crisis speak to us as well: "Don't be afraid. Just have faith." In Jesus, there is both hope and promise. The next time you feel hopeless and afraid, look at your problem from Jesus' point of view. Then don't be afraid; just have faith.

Nothing can separate us from God’s love.

“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.” Romans 8:38-39

Powers are unseen forces of evil in the universe, forces like Satan and his fallen angels (see Ephesians 6:12). In Christ we are super-conquerors, and his love will protect us from any such forces.

God will rejoice over you with joy.

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. Zeph. 3:17

The Lord himself will remove his hand of judgment, disperse Israel's enemies, and come to live among his people. He will give them gladness. Zephaniah points out that gladness results when we allow God to be with us. We do that by faithfully following him and obeying his commands. Then God rejoices over us with singing. If you want to be happy, draw close to the source of happiness by obeying God.

Dwell in the shelter of the most high.

“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”...He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you...For he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways...“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him...” from Psalm 91:1-16

God is a shelter, a refuge when we are afraid. The writer's faith in God as protector would carry him through all the dangers and fears of life. This should be a picture of our trust—trading all our fears for faith in him, no matter how intense our fears. To do this we must "live" and "rest" with him (91:1). By entrusting ourselves to his protection and pledging our daily devotion to him, we will be kept safe.

One of the functions of angels is to watch over believers (Hebrews 1:14). There are examples of guardian angels in Scripture (1 Kings 19:5; Daniel 6:22; Matthew 18:10; Luke 16:22; Acts 12:7), although there is no indication that one angel is assigned to each believer. Angels can also be God's messengers (Matthew 2:13;

Acts 27:23, 24). Angels are not visible, except on special occasions (Numbers 22:31; Luke 2:9). Verses 11 and 12 were quoted by Satan when he tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:10, 11). It is comforting to know that God watches over us even in times of great stress and fear.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and come into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

New American Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print