

How to Avoid a Nervous Breakdown

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of prayer and trust in God as essential tools for overcoming anxiety and finding peace in a troubled world.

Duration: 35:57

Scripture: Philippians 4:6

Topics: "Nervous Breakdown"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the increasing number of mental and nervous breaks that people, including missionaries, are experiencing. He emphasizes that this is not limited to missionaries and ministers, but is affecting all of God's people. The speaker encourages listeners to rely on God in times of trouble, as He is the one who can turn their troubles into glory. He shares a story about a Methodist pastor who faced a challenging situation but found peace by trusting in God's provision. The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking peace of heart by calling on God, rather than denying the existence of trouble.

Transcript

I want to talk to you about how you can avoid a nervous breakdown. In Philippians, the fourth chapter, verses six and seven, be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Over the last five years, probably, I wouldn't give an exact date on it, but over the last number of years, I have observed that more and more people are having mental and nervous breaks. This has particularly affected our missionaries. God knows, the circumstances being what they are, that this would be a problem for anybody.

Preachers also tend to this, because they carry a load, a load that nobody can carry. But it's not confined to missionaries and ministers. The Lord's people tend, more and more, it seems to me, to become a nervous and harried people.

And I want to give an example of that. You know, a man can preach about it and then go out and blow his own language of the street, his own top, before the sun sets. So I don't claim that I know everything.

I only claim that there is hope and relief for the children of God in these terrible days, and I want to try to show you. Philippians 4 tells us that we're not to be anxious about anything. The word careful there doesn't say, doesn't mean having any care at all.

The Bible tells us just that we're to walk circumspectly. But the word is anxious, corroding, corroding. Be not anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

And as a result of this, the peace of God which passes all understanding, hearts and minds, to Christ Jesus. Now, I suppose that there's scarcely hope, but what has worries and anxieties? We worry because of world conditions, the threats that are upon us, the dread of war and atomic destruction in the future. And if we should have just an hour or two to be consoled, somebody would get on.

Likely to be a democrat now, though there'd been a republican before the republicans took office. If we continue the way we are now, we'll have total collapse. So in spite of the fact that we have very great prosperity in this country, somebody's declaring there's going to be a total collapse.

I was down south, where was it, in either Atlanta or Norfolk. And here within the last year, and I was in a hotel room, and I turned on the radio to get the news. There was a gentleman from Illinois, in an old, full funeral director's voice, telling us much longer that unemployment and depression were on the way.

Well, some are meditating, and with good reason, I suppose. Then there's the anxieties of the home. Almost everybody is worried about their home.

They fear they're not going to have money to carry on. I used to wake up in the middle of the night, old house full of boys, and they were helpless and desperately needed attention and care. And I, starting awake, for fear something would happen, those poor kids would be left with nobody to look after them.

I suppose that's normal. At least it's human in this fallen world of ours. In addition to the economic care, there's guiding them and rearing them and protecting them.

You that have children and bringing up children, you'll get beaten over the head for it. If you give them money, they'll say that you spoiled them by giving them too much. And if you don't give them money, they'll, people that write the books, you know, and make lectures on the radio, will say that you spoiled them by never giving them a cent.

And they'll say you beat their brains out. If you don't whip them, they'll say you neglect them. Neglect them, let them have their own way.

And if you're in the house, they'll say that you turned your house into a park, and that they never had peace at home. Let them bring their friends home, they'll say that they had to go somewhere else to find friends. They've always got the answer, God bless them, and it keeps the bullying and the royalties coming in.

But, brother, no matter what you do, you're going to have trouble. You that have little tiny babies you can still boss around, you say, ah, that preacher. But you wait a little while, just wait.

I tell my boys, you just wait. Report to me 20 years from now. And you'll be wiser than you are now, when they're little and you can lick them.

When they get bigger and you can't, then you've got something else on your hands. Well, then there are fears about ourselves also. Fears that we're going to be feared, we're going to be safe.

Fear for our safety and our health. Now I know that some people are more inclined to be morbid and introspective than other people. But it escapes us.

Almost everybody's inclined to worry a little about his health, about our future. There's individuals that Mr. Jones, James even, helps it along by telling us we know not what will be on the morrow. And God knows we don't know what will be on the morrow.

Mostly these fears are driven inward and underground into what's subconscious. Now I don't know whether there's such a thing as a subconscious or not, I suppose there is. But it's that which worries underneath.

It's the thing and the thing you worry with when you don't know you're worried. And the result of that, of course, is that it weakens us, makes us nervous, and inclines to steal away our joy. Well, what do we do about it all? You listen to the cult of the don't worry crowd, the don't worry cult, that says there's nothing in the wide world for you.

Now don't I know better than that. I am not going to rest my nerves at the expense of my head. That is, I am not intellectual suicide.

And listen to some tabby cat telling me there isn't anything to be afraid of in the world. There just is something to be afraid of. Go up in the air and you're likely to crash in flames.

Go out on the highway and you're likely to have an accident. Polio is likely, TB is likely to come your way. And you could lose your job.

You could die of a heart attack. This is a plain fool. And he ought not to be paid any more attention to than a poor inmate thinking he's a bird.

Just, just let him flap, let him flap their wings. You write big books on how. Well, what do you do? And there are legitimate fears or legitimate dangers that lie.

How are we going to escape fear? Well, somebody's got to care. Now there's no question about it. Somebody's got to care.

Have to be somebody, stay awake and look things over. And for anybody to lie down, I say that he ought to be examined. It's not so.

There's lots to be. What are we going to do about all this? Well, now here's what the man of God says. Don't be anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God, that passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Somebody has got to look after us. Somebody is doing it. Not only somebody is going to do it, but somebody is doing it.

And it is not only sinful, but it is extremely foolish for us to worry when somebody is looking after us. Jesus, our Lord says, your father knows what you have need of before you. And it says again in the Bible that he

careth for you.

And it says again that we are not to be anxious and troubled. And Jesus said, let not your heart be troubled. In the world you shall have tribulation, but I have overcome the world.

And in all there is afflicted, it says, and that he makes all their bed in their sickness. The Bible pictures God as a careful, tenderhearted father, busying himself, oh, about the people, looking after them, going ahead of them, caring for them, and guiding them all through. There you see the problem of worry and anxiety is not solved by saying to worry about.

The problem is solved by being told there is something to worry about, but why should you worry because somebody is taking care of you. Now I have a story that I tell every once in a while. It crops up on the average about once a year, because I read it.

So this will be the annual story. And it's a true one, and it's about a pastor who was up in the days of Davy Crockett. He went to the conference, and those little Methodist conferences, you know, where they didn't go off, but they prayed all night and shouted until the woods rang.

Well, he was the treasurer, and on his way back, riding his horse, a bag of money, just a little bag of money, a little conference money. I suppose it wasn't much, maybe a hundred dollars, but it was money in those days. And he felt very conscientious that belonged to the society, they called it then.

And he couldn't, he worried about that money, so he stopped. But the inn itself looked dangerous and suspicious. The man who kept the inn was rather suspicious.

And the people that came and went, and the noises he heard and the whispers bothered him. And he went to his room, and he couldn't, he blew the candle out, but he started awake and sat up, and finally gave it up and decided to stay awake. And he sat there, and the candle lay back down, but worry and anxiety were eating at him, because he felt that there was real danger that he'd not.

So he lit the candle again and started reading. He came to this passage, he that keepeth thee slumber. And a big smile broke out on his face, and he said, I am like a baby till morning, stay awake.

And Wesley said, I just for a worry. Now, I want you to consult this to people. Remember when Peter was in prison, and the Lord wanted to deliver Peter, now he was spatially livery to heaven without any trouble.

They knew that you won't break a leg, it isn't, but if there is one for, and God said to an angel, go down and release Peter. And the angel spread his wings, and just tell him to put on his sandals. And the angel said, Peter, great thing they put around them, put that on.

And then he said, and God is a cool, and that's God, brother. Now that isn't silly, and real, and that's just how much God cares for you. Some of you older men know what it is.

Well, God is more concerned, or Mother God. Now, God may take you home to heaven, aren't you? Millions die around us and have no heaven to go to. Why should we be taken off to heaven suddenly? We got a heaven to go to, and that's what he's there preparing a mansion for us with you.

Thank God we've got a place to go to when old Mother Nature and Father Time conspire to end our lives down here, with him. So this isn't intended to be a Pollyanna dress on how sweet it is to put flowers, listen to a Mozart symphony. It's to tell you that you are in a tough, rough, dangerous, deadly world, but that the

great God Almighty who made the heaven, nothing can harm my people.

And there isn't a devil, nor an angel in heaven above, nor that can harm you permanently. If God says he'll look after you. Then another thing I want you to consider, I've told you this before, I well remember, but just to recall it again.

Remember that all your difficulties and the worries and anxieties that have been plaguing you, they're common to all mankind. It is the devil who isolates us and makes us feel that we have nobody in the world has ever been in our shoes, that we are above the most to be pitied. The fact is there is nothing taking you but what is common to man.

And there is nothing but what Jesus himself endured, and all of the saints down the years, and all of those thousands who worship and strum their harps and sing unto God in the heaven above. Now or in the years and ages to come, they all went the same. So God is honoring you by letting you tread a path that angels and saints and holy sages have trod.

Now another thing I'd like to tell you, that while this is a deadly and dangerous world, most of your fears are groundless. If you're as imaginative as I am, it couldn't possibly be that there should as many things happen to you as you imagine happen to you. I can imagine more things happening to me than any man you ever saw in your life.

It is a good thing, but it's also a bothersome thing, because you can project your imagination. For instance, you can take a cow to a slaughterhouse, and up until the very moment the hammer drops on her head, she doesn't know she's going to die. The steward never thinks anything about it.

She has no imagination. She's a cow. She just walks right straight along.

She may bawl and be bothered by being shoved, or she's going to die. But a man, if a man's going to die in the electric chair, it isn't the electric chair. Nobody's afraid of an electric chair.

That's that, and you're over and finished. Done. Unconsciousness.

But the thing is, your imagination plagues you to death. It pictures constantly things that'll never happen to you. And most of us have had worried lives about things that never happened at all.

And then another thing is, we never do a problem any good by worrying about it. It's a well-known fact that if you're trying to write something, or trying to compose something, trying to create it, and you stay awake at night driving and driving and driving, you'll not get it done. But if you relax and throw yourself back and say, oh, where did I come to in the night? And you wake up the next morning, you've got it.

But you never get anywhere but driving. And yet so many people are driving. That child you're afraid you're going to lose, that job you're afraid will be taken from you, and that money obligation you never get paid, and all that misfortune that you've anticipated.

God says that he's there for you, and he may humble you a little, and he may not give you everything you think you ought to have, and I'll talk about that. But now I just want to ask you whether you're willing to let God take over or not. If you listen to this and feel a little bit encouraged, you might just as well have gone to a psychiatrist.

That's their business, you know, they encourage you and stroke your back and send you away and charge you nine dollars. But if that's all this means to you, you might just as well have gone to a psychiatrist. But if you remember that peace of heart does not come from denying that there is trouble, but it comes from rolling you up and calling in one greater, greater than you.

An evangelist liked to tell the story of the little boy. And a great big bully of a fellow had him down. And he'd say, will you say you've had enough? Will you say enough? And he was pummeling him, and the little big boy on top was twice as big.

And he said, you can't lick me, that you might as well say enough. And he was his brother. Now, that's why he rolled out, because a bigger one than the other.

And that's why you can take it. Born of a woman of good form, eyes like yours, who is himself man, and declared to be of the seed of the flesh, but who was also the son of God, declared to be so by the power of the Holy Ghost. And if he's going to, well, then I want to ask you why you should be worried at all.

Now, the roots of anxiety, a number of them. One of them is self-confidence. We don't like to admit we're licked, and most of us are licked.

Unbelief and self-confidence. We're afraid God can't be trusted. We're afraid to face the disillusionment.

Most everybody's born into the world feeling that he is superior. Then he goes to high school, self-reliance by Emerson. By that time, he's confirmed in the doctrine that he is superior.

And the idea that he ever has to admit I'm licked. Why most people can't do that. And so they struggle and fight and continue to fight, and they quit fighting this driven underground.

Now, the New Testament message is, stop your fighting. Already you've let go. Let go and let God.

Let go and let God bear your problems. Just depend on how you carry the load. If you insist on carrying the load, God will let you carry it because you've got free will.

But if you refuse to carry the load, God will roll the load off of you. And it's possible to get real tough when you pray, get real serious and severe. I remember well, I was walking the street and my heart was as heavy as if I were carrying an anvil on it.

Heavy-hearted and burdened and bound. So as I walked the street, suddenly I stamped my foot and looked to God and said, God, I won't carry this load anymore. Off she rolled as it's possible for a human being to be completely free because I said, I won't carry this load.

You're such in holy faith and say, God, I don't intend to carry this load and let it kill me. You take it. And God will take it all right.

And you take it off you. And your future is just as bright and as safe as Jesus Christ's future. For so are you in this world.

He has taken you in his own heart. He bears, if you're a Christian, he bears you in several places. He bears your name in his hand, on his heart and on his shoulder.

Now, why can't we relax and stop all this worry and this? Now, of course, if you want your own way all the time, then it won't help you a bit. But if you want to humble yourself and let God's way be your way, instead of your way, you can get the help I'm offering you. People who are going to have their own way, if they die, all right.

And if their constitution's strong enough, they won't break. But if it's a little weak, they'll break. They won't have their own way.

Wanting our own way is one way to break down and to be in loose joy and to become highly anxious. Stop having your own way. Let God decide.

Don't try to prescribe for yourself. Go to the great physician. He knows.

How many people there are in their grave now that went there from reading a book on diet? Remember, we had a dear old preacher. Good, good. God bless him.

He's in heaven now. He had three daughters, four daughters. Two of them went as missionaries.

They stayed home. But they read books. And poor old daddy, one day was, well, he was in bad shape.

Gone. They're looking weak and underused. Well, he said, my daughter's reading a book on diet.

Diet. And somebody arrested her. Don't read books on diet.

And then try to diet yourself. Don't read books on psychology and then try to. Now, I say this kind of charging you or commanding you.

I couldn't do that. I'm simply giving you advice as somebody that I think perhaps knows a little about it. Do that.

You'll only disturb yourself. But let God have his way with you. Let God have his way.

A feast will come to your heart. I've gone to my knees a few times, carrying the burden of the world on my shoulders, feeling I could never sleep. And 15 minutes, the whole world changed.

The whole world. Everybody was better looking when I went back onto the street. And the future.

Nothing had changed in the wide world. The change had been subjective. The change was inside of me.

So now if you obey, my sermon will do you no good this morning. When you try to rest and turn your way over to God, it won't work. You'll try to roll your way over to the Lord, and it won't roll as you want your way.

But if you will say, Lord, I've had my way long enough. I quit. God will smile, and you'll find everything will work out beautifully.

Businessmen are afraid to let God have his way for fear in their business. But it doesn't work that way, actually. There are thousands of honest businessmen who can tell you that when they began to let God have his way, they were better than they had before.

They didn't lose a thing, only their burden. You have nothing to lose but your chains, as the commies say. And that's all you lose, just your heavy heart and your anxiety.

And then, of course, there are those who are miserable, and on their way to a crash, deep, unsuspected resentment and a hidden desire to get even. You know, laziness helps you. A certain kind of laziness helps you a lot.

Now, personally, it's crazy ever to hold a grudge, even when I wasn't Christian. I had somebody do me wrong, and I'd be mad for a few days, and the stuff, you know, to keep mad. That'll help you a lot if you just can say, oh, what's the difference? But to hold a grudge in your heart, I tell you, brother, to hold something against somebody, all you've got there, you've got a serpent inside your heart, a little serpent, and he's getting big, and someday, you know, he'll bite you.

So, let's forgive everybody. Let's start now. Will you do it? Let's think with me a little bit.

How about that fellow, that woman, that person, that real estate man that did the wrong thing, that dentist that pulled? That happened once in our family, a little stand. The dentist had a chart, you know, one of these funny things, had a chart, and I went and pulled a little fellow in under gas, and I pulled his teeth, some of them, and turned out to be the wrong teeth, and said, it marked the chart, and I said, what about this? He said, that's what rubbers are on lead pencils for, mistakes, and that's all, that's all I got, but the little boy lost his teeth. You know, he could hold that against the fellow, but I didn't.

We're the warmest, best. If you hold anything against anybody, you'll never be able to roll your burdens on God. So, let's forgive everybody.

The person that's told that awful thing about you, forget it. If you knew what a heavy heart he had, and what trouble, you wouldn't pity him, or you wouldn't hate him either. And of course, self-love, it's another disease that gets a hold out of self-love there.

You'll never be able to roll your burdens on the Lord. Can't do it. But let's ask God to take self-love, and decide to be free.

Roll thy burdens upon the Lord, and he shall sustain. Care upon him, for he careth for you. So, you do it now, while I speak.

And then, don't just from your troubles, permanently get rid of it, will you? Don't take a vacation. Now, after hearing a little encouraging talk, somebody says, I'm fishing from my troubles. Don't do that.

Emerson said, no man was alone, as long as he had brought with him, the thoughts and anxieties of society. Man wasn't alone. That is, no man was in society, as long as he had the peace of solitude.

Man that has no troubles in the wide world, can just walk down the street, knowing all around about him. But he's in the hand of God. He's just as much alone, as if he were in a monastery.

But the man who decides on a vacation, goes into Wisconsin to fish. And he sits, and he throws the hook out, and as it sinks down, he sees charts, and depressions, and rising costs, and falling prices. He isn't all alone.

He isn't having a vacation. He has problems with him. And so, if you go out of here this morning, with a little vacation from your trouble, and then come right back.

Roll your burden upon the Lord, and go back the next morning, and pick it up. It will do you no good. But the peace of God, with understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

So don't be anxious about what in everything, by prayer and supplication. If it's a problem, pray it through. And then with thanksgiving, tell God the whole truth.

And the promise is, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds to Christ Jesus. Now listen, I'm done. The scholars, who make it their business to find out all the little details about these things, say this.

That when Paul said, God shall keep your hearts, he was using a military term, Paul often did. And he said, this was a military camp, was this. A little fort, with some people in it, maybe women, and children, and babies, and all around about it, a garrison of military men, soldiers, guarding that little place.

You know, in old Indian days, how they used to do, take their wagons, and run them around in a circle, and the old folks, and the babies, and young people, in that circle. And then they lined up around that circle, as a garrison Indian came, they brought him down, brought him down, along with their muskets, and the ones on the inside were safely christened with protection. Now they say, Paul used that figure of speech, the peace of God will garrison like soldiers your heart.

So, if you're willing to believe that, why, let's go out of here this morning, and let's leave at the door, peace, that great burden we brought him. With fear, and anxiety, and distress, and worry about tomorrow, and the future, and our children, our family, and our country, and all the rest. Let's leave it right at us.

And if we do, with thanksgiving, of course, and prayer, God will put his soldiers round about you, and not allow you to be in any way. He will keep your heart in Christ Jesus the Lord. Do you believe that? I do.

Christianity is not simply a way to escape hell. The gospel is not to be preached simply as a way to escape hell. Christianity is as full as any machine.

It comes down where you live, and gets hold of you now, and works on you now, and blesses you, and takes you as Spurgeon's head from where you are, to where you want to go. So let's get up and go out of here knowing, not only going to escape hell, certainly we are. To have goodness and mercy to follow us all the days of our lives.

God's two wonderful servants, goodness and mercy, follow us all the days of our lives. So you've got to make that journey all by yourself, lady. Hmm? Well, goodness will go ahead, and mercy will come.

And the soldiers of God will garrison you all round about. What are you worrying about? Can you quit worrying, this man? I don't like to say you're put on weight, but I will say you'll get a lot more relaxed than you are now. Amen? Thank you.

A sermon, this is just a little discussion. A pastor to his flock, telling you that I notice tension and jitter in this man, and I don't want to see it. I want you to rest in God.

Oh, I read a little word this week that I thought was this sweet. Some sermon on somebody preaching, I don't know where it got it. I believe it was my friend Battles who said to me the other night, talked about God's children playing before the throne.

God relaxed children. Here's the great king on his throne, and here are God's people playing around the throne. I believe him.

And Fenelon says the same thing, in a different way. He says, if you want to be ceremonial, all right, he said, God will treat you that way. God will save you and bless you and take care of you.

He'll be formal if you insist upon being formal. But he said, if you will believe and become intimate, God will unbend and treat you like a father, and you can play in God's lap. Awful if a sinner said that.

Awful if any of that. But for a saint to say, I know what he meant, climb up into God's lap and play there as a child. Listen.

Father, bless thou this exhortation. Off our shoulders, Father, and send us out a happy people. For surely we ought to be a happy people.

Since thou art our Father and Jesus our brother, and the Holy Ghost our indwelling paraclete. Save us from errors, and help us to sing unto the Lord a new song, and rejoice continually. For the Lord has set our feet upon a rock, and put a new song in our mouth, even praises unto our God.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/5/SID5731.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/how-to-avoid-a-nervous-breakdown/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net