

# Keeping Your Spirit Focused

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God and maintaining faith amidst the triumph of evil in the world.*

**Duration:** 23:26

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:1-4, Psalm 37:7-9, Psalm 37:20, Psalm 37:34, Proverbs 24:1-2, Proverbs 24:19-20

**Topics:** "Discouragement"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher encourages the audience not to worry or be envious of those who do wrong. He emphasizes the temporary nature of evil and compares it to withering grass and dying plants. The preacher urges the audience to trust in the Lord, do good, and find joy in Him. He emphasizes the importance of seeing beyond the visible and focusing on the eternal, as stated in 2 Corinthians 4. The sermon concludes with a call for everyone to have their eyes opened to God's glory and promises, so that they can remain steadfast in the face of adversity.

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## Transcript

I think what's going to be happening in the future here with what's going on in our culture and around the world, we've already experienced this grieving process of seeing evil seemingly triumph. ISIS, a lot of other things happening around the world, North Korea, Christians being martyred. Just now our government has finally recognized that there's a genocide, an actual genocide, going on against Christians around the world.

They're being targeted. And less sensational, but maybe just as grieving in our own backyard here where we live, in our country, it's very hard to watch the government, all the branches, glorify wickedness. It's just very hard to see that.

From the president on down, glorify things that are ungodly, that the country has never practiced ever, but forget the country. We don't go by the country, we go by the Bible. So to glorify things that are against God's word, even against the traditions of morality, it's very hard, it's grieving.

Whether it's seeing children shot in gang warfare or police using a badge to hurt somebody and do illegal things even though they're supposed to keep the peace, it's all very grieving, it's very grieving. Am I correct or not here? Very. I'd like to suggest to you it's not gonna get less, it's gonna get more.

Evil seemingly triumphs many times on the earth. In other words, it seems like the bad guys are winning. They control the media.

The media doesn't glorify Christ. The media glorifies Antichrist in so many ways. It doesn't glorify morality or glorify some missionary who's helping people.

It glorifies those things that defy morality. Like the Bible says, they not only sin, they glory in their sin. It's not that they sin undercover, they sin overtly and say, in your face.

This correct or not? This was always a problem in Israel in the Old Testament times and some of the best godliest people struggled with this. What do you do? How can you not worry and be anxious when you see evil seemingly triumph? Where the good guys and ladies get persecuted and scoundrels work with the king. And this made for all kinds of lamenting and searching.

So in one of the psalms, you know that psalm, might be 73, I'm not sure, but it says, I almost slipped, I almost fell when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They're getting fatter and more wealthy and the godly are ground like dust under their wheels. There's another psalm that is unlike most psalms.

Most psalms are directly to God. This psalm is almost like a teaching psalm. It's almost like Proverbs.

Psalms 37 is famous for that. We don't know who wrote it, but it's a psalm that tells us what to do in these times when it's hard. And this can be personal in your own family, in your workplace.

I've counseled countless people who've said, it's just going to work is so hard because the atmosphere is charged with ridicule of Christianity and glorifying things people know you're against, you don't believe in. Without me spending a lot of time, how many know exactly the atmosphere I'm talking about? Just lift your hand. So it's just very hard.

What do you do in that? And then on a global scale, what do you do when evil seems to triumph? This is what the psalmist says to us in just a few verses that I want to just leave with you. But we have to overcome. You can't become anxious.

We can't live in anxiety. We can't worry. A worrying Christian is living in sin.

A worrying Christian is living in sin. As the Bible says, don't worry about anything. The same God who says don't lie, don't steal, says don't worry.

And we all, some of us more than others, worrying is some people's main occupation in life. They have a PhD in worry and they have their degree on the wall in their house. They just worry.

And even when you pinpoint it and say, what are you worrying about? They can't even tell you sometimes. They're just worried, worried about the future, worried about what could happen, or getting anxious or jealous because you see overt evil triumphing. This was a problem in the Old Testament.

And being filled with the Spirit in the New Testament and being a Christian and Jesus' warnings about in this world you will have trouble, but don't be afraid, I've overcome the world. Anyone who wants to live a godly life will suffer persecution, so on and so forth. So they were warnings.

So we need to be reminded of God's promises. So let's look at what the Psalmist says. This is from the NIV.

Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong. For like the grass, they will soon wither. Like green plants, they will soon die away.

Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

One of the good ways to study the Bible was to read the same passage from a different translation and see the alteration, what it does. And this is from the Good News Bible. Don't be worried on account of the wicked.

Don't be jealous of those who do wrong. They will soon disappear like grass that dries up. They will die like plants that wither.

Trust in the Lord and do good. Live in the land and be safe. Seek your happiness in the Lord.

Isn't that excellent? See, delight yourself in the Lord. Maybe a little bit harder to picture. I like this.

Seek your happiness in the Lord and he will give you your heart's desire. Don't be worried on account of the wicked. Don't fret.

You know what the word means in the Hebrew? Don't boil over. Don't get heated. Don't get hot.

Don't get worked up. The Bible wouldn't say that unless we had the tendency to do that, to get overheated, discombobulated, start to fret, get filled with anxiety. Look what's going on in the world.

Look what's happening in my office. Look what's happening in the schools. I mean, just what's going on in the schools is enough.

If you didn't keep your eyes on God, you would go crazy. They wanna glorify in exposing children. Just this whole thing with the bathrooms and all of that.

Is that enough? An eight-year-old girl is gonna walk in, a 10-year-old girl walk in the bathroom, and there's gonna be someone who's not sure of his gender, and he's gonna go in with that little girl. But how about if there's someone who's a predator? But it's not just being passed, it's being glorified in. And if you're against it, you're a hater.

Some sick stuff going on out there. Am I correct, ladies and gentlemen? The Bible says, don't get heated up. So I better watch myself right now while I'm talking here.

Because I'm rebuking myself here. Don't get heated up on account of the wicked, and don't be jealous of those who do wrong. Now, in the Old Testament, there was very little teaching about the afterlife.

The idea of an afterlife judgment of rewards and punishment, that is not a dominant theme in the Old Testament. In certain places, a revelation came, and they spoke about it. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, and so on, but most of it was temporal.

The whole Old Testament covenant was temporal. You know, the greatest blessing they talked about was long life, and having a house, and living under some kind of fruit tree. But we have a different promise.

We have promise of eternal life. Praise God, through Jesus Christ. Can we say amen to that? The caution here is, don't be worried, don't get heated on account of the wicked.

Don't be jealous of those who do wrong. Because listen, God will take care of that. We're not to take care of it.

Don't get worried, don't get heated up. We've got that as a command from the Lord, that we'll do no good, only do harm to you or me. Right, we'll lose our peace, we'll lose our joy.

If we look at what's going on, and we start to worry, or get anxious, or get jealous, like why should they have that? I'm serving God, I'm going to the prayer meeting, I'm a member of Keepers of God's House, and look what I have to live on, and then this wicked person, who just exploits other people, they're getting ahead. They're in a Ponzi scheme, they get all kinds of money. And then they get a slap on the wrist.

So if you dwell on those things, you could either get, the Bible warns us, get worried or get jealous. But here's the antidote, and I close. Trust in the Lord, and do good.

Listen, the only cure for worry is faith. You can have faith in God, and worry. And if you worry, you can have faith in God.

The cure for worry at all times, is have faith to bring your need to the Lord, deposit it, casting your cares upon Him, giving Him your petitions, what you request, what you need. It has to be a spirit of faith that conquers worry. Later on, in that same chapter, maybe verse five, in Psalm 37, it says, don't worry, don't fret, it repeats it, because it only leads to bad things.

Worry is the root of other sins which burst out, and we talk about the sin that burst out, but the root of it was worry. Because when you and I engage in worrying, we're looking away from Jesus. We're looking away from God.

We are not relying on Him. And the just shall walk and live by faith. So when you're worrying, you're not living by faith, because no one who has faith can be worrying at the same time.

I know that's a confrontational truth for all of us, but there it is. You can't worry and have faith. And if you have faith, you won't be worried.

But that worry, because of what it does, it takes our eyes off of God, it then is Satan's door to get in, to lead to all kinds of other things, whether it's alcohol, immorality, this, that, the other, because worry can bring you to a point where you go, who cares anymore? I'm gonna let it all hang out. I don't care anymore. So the Bible warns us, worry is not an innocuous thing.

Worry is a nasty thing. You know, if we would only look at it that way and catch ourselves when we worry. I had a roommate in college, lived with him for three years.

He was a good guy, but he was the most worried person I ever met. He would lay on that bed while I was trying to do my homework or read, and he'd put his hands behind his head and just lay there and worry like for 90 minutes in a row. And I used to joke with him.

I'd say, you're taking your worry position, aren't you, right now? And he would just lay back and la la, leave me alone. Leave me alone. I said, what are you doing that for? Because it breaks down your body resistance to all kinds of diseases, germs.

Worry is nasty. How many want God to help you so that we stop worrying? Come on, lift your hands up. That we walk in faith, that we're so filled with faith that we're tempted to worry.

What if, how about that? Did you see what happened? That we're saying, no, wait a minute, God's on the throne. God's on the throne. So trust in the Lord and do good.

Do good. Notice, trust in the Lord, that's the attitude. Do good is the action.

You can't let worry make you stop doing the good things that God wants you to do for other people serving the Lord. Do good. Be active.

Don't go hibernate like a bear and just worry. Get out there. Trust in the Lord and keep doing good.

And finally, dwell in the land. Live in the land. The other one had dwell in the land and be safe.

What does that mean to us? What was the land to the people that he was writing to? The promised land. Where were they supposed to live? In the promised land. They were supposed to be limited to the promised land.

Who chose that land? God chose that land. Who gave them their borders? God gave them their borders. Who divided the land? God did.

And now he's saying, you don't worry what other people are doing, what other nations are doing. Forget about the nuclear tests and all of that. God's got the whole world in his hands.

He's sitting on a throne. You think anything's gonna happen to this world that God won't permit? Well, of course not. What this is saying to us is in where God assigns you, don't let worry and anxiety drive you away from your assigned purpose in life.

What did God call you to do? What is he asking you to do? Are you letting worry and discombobulation drive us away from what God assigned us? This happens all the time. When you lose faith, you start to worry and get anxiety ridden. Then what you do is stop dwelling in the land, doing what God called you to do.

Ministers quit in droves, 1,200 a month, something like that, in America right now. 1,200 a month. Why are they quitting? A lot of it is because they've given into worry, anxiety.

I don't see how this will work out, this, that, the other. Now you lose your faith. Now you're walking by sight.

Now the enemy sees that, he comes in, and the next thing you say, I'm leaving my post. It's very rare when someone leaves what God called them to do, that they're in the will of God. Well, I'm burnt out, I need a rest, I need quality time.

Okay, I'll listen to you, but I have rarely seen people do well when they leave what God assigned them to do. So if you're here today, you need to hear that. Whatever God wants you to do, do it.

Do good, do it. Possess the land, stay in the land God gave you. You know, if I would just say, you know what, I can't take the pressure, I'm leaving the ministry, but I wanna live for God.

You think I could live for God outside the ministry? You think I could be victorious outside the ministry? I would be trying to serve God on my terms, not on his. It's very grievous. So what I wanna say to you now is, possess the land.

Stay where God wants you to stay. Don't move, don't be jumping around. Find out what God wants you to do and do it.

And when you're tired, ask for strength and do it. And when you get discouraged, say, I resist you, Satan, I'm gonna keep doing it. Come on, let's say amen to that.

Trusting in the Lord. One of the things that helps worry and the way faith works to help worry is your eyes have to get open. Second Kings, we have a very odd thing happening.

We have the king of the Arameans going against Israel. And he's making plots to lay traps for the army of Israel. He'll wait over here.

He'll catch them over here. And he's gonna hide people here so when they come, he'll snatch them. But there's a prophet in Israel named Elisha.

And Elisha keeps going to the king of Israel and saying, hey, don't put the army over there, it's a trap. They got their troops waiting. So he doesn't send them.

Two months later, God showed me, don't go over there, don't march them through that field. They're waiting, they're gonna hide behind the trees because they know you usually do your exercises there. So this goes on and on.

Finally, the king of Aramea just goes nuts. And he calls his lieutenants in and he says, all right, so which is the traitor? Which of you guys are the traitor? What do you mean, king? What do I mean? Every time we plan to do something and we do it, they avoid it like somebody's telling them what we're doing. So which one's betraying us? Who's the turncoat, who's the spy? No, one of his main guys says, no.

There's a man, a prophet named Elisha. He hears from his God to the point where what you whisper in the bedroom, he might even pick that up. That's what the Bible says.

So the king says, is that what's happening? They said, you got it. He said, all right, get him. I wanna capture him and kill him.

No more of this stuff, can't take it. So Elisha then is living in a little town called Dothan, D-O-T-H-A-N. He's living in Dothan and he's got a servant.

And they go to bed one night, but they don't know that all these horses and chariots have been sent by the Arameans and they surround this little town. They're surrounded. But they don't know it, it's dark.

So in the morning, the first daylight, the servant opens the shutters as he was want to do and he goes hysterical. He goes, talk anxiety, how about fear? How about losing it? He goes crazy because as he looks around, all he sees are these huge horses, steeds, huge chariot wheel, soldiers dressed to the nines with their armor. And it's just him and the lonely prophet Elisha.

It's over. We had a good run, but it's over now. So he goes to Elisha and he calls him, oh master, oh father Elisha, you can't believe what's happened.

You can't believe what's, look out that window. And Elisha looks out and he goes, don't worry. There's more for us than are against us.

The servant thought this was some kind of new math and said, well, wait a minute. I'm counting all these thousands and there's just uno, dos, two. And Elisha says, oh Lord, open his eyes, open his eyes.

Now he wasn't blind, he wasn't blind because he saw the horses and the chariots. This is the blindness that a lot of us suffer with. We can only see the physical.

That's all you can see. That's enough to get you worried. That's why you get anxious.

You see the evil triumphing in their plots and schemes, strategies. He said, Lord, open his eyes. Su corazon, your heart, your spirit, faith, the ability to see the invisible.

That's what gets you through tough times. You can't go by what you see. You gotta go by what you see in the invisible.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith only deals with two things, future things and invisible things. If you can touch it, if you can hear it, faith has nothing to do with that.

Faith doesn't even operate in that realm. Faith only operates in the invisible, where God is, what God has going on. So he prays and the eyes of his heart, the eyes of faith are opened up and he sees chariots and horses of fire surrounding above, dwarfing those poor Aramean army.

God opened his eyes so he can see what I see. Why was Elisha calm? Why was he cool? Because he saw things that the servant couldn't see. They were both looking out the same window, but some only look with this, others look with this and then see this.

Yeah, I see all of that. Oh, but I see God high and lifted up. He's on the throne.

Wait, I see his promise. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I see that, I know that.

It's like a vision to me. Now I can sleep at night. I'm not gonna toss and turn because God's on the throne.

Where? I don't see it. Oh God, open his eyes. He is on the throne.

The things that are invisible are eternal. This is what Paul says in 2 Corinthians, the fourth chapter. Here's how we endure all the hardship.

Not looking at the things that are visible, but looking at the things that are invisible. For the things that are visible, they pass away, but the things that are invisible, they are eternal. Come on, one more time, let's say amen to God.

Maybe we can end, the pastors and us, just praying for some of you, just that God would, you know what? We all need our eyes opened. Forget some of you, all of us. In the days that are gonna come, I'm afraid, that are coming upon us, we're gonna need to be seeing with other eyes or you're gonna be tossed and turned like a wave.

But if you keep seeing God, chariots of fire. Mm, the promises of God. In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah said, he was a good king and there were nothing but losers waiting to get on the throne.

It would make, and a strong man get worried, but in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up and his train filled the temple. You know, when you see God in his glory, nothing happening

on this earth is gonna shake you. Amen? One more time, let's just thank God that he's on the throne.

Let's dismiss this way, let's say it all together. Ready, follow my cadence, okay? Ready, one, two, three. Do not fret because those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong.

For like the grass, they will soon wither. Like green plants, they will soon die away. Trust in the Lord and do good.

Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord and he will give you desires. Let us clap our hands for the word of God.

Everybody, time for a high five. No handshakes, high five. Come on, high five about 10 people.

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