

The Father's House

By Bobby Schuller

Today I'm going to talk about how near God is to you. What we feel and what is true is not always the same thing. It's easy to feel like so and so doesn't love me, when in fact you just make them nervous. It's easy to feel like you're sick when you just didn't get a good night's sleep. Feelings have a way of fooling us and understanding what's really happening. We shouldn't not feel, we shouldn't ignore our feelings, our feelings are very important, but it's easy to feel like God is far away when He is so close to you. Jesus Christ stands with you right now.

And one of the ways we can feel that Christ is close is through meditative prayer. The same way that an antenna causes a radio to receive and feel a signal, if you're feeling anxious, worried, stressed out, drop your shoulders, relax, put your antennae into the air and bring your stuff to God and watch how that has such a big impact on how you feel.

Many of us are feeling anxious today, especially today. And I want to encourage, too, Hannah and I just put a video up on my Instagram where we're going to be praying for people tomorrow. If you need prayer,

or if you want to pray for people, go check out those comments and be a part of that prayer chain.

It was interesting because on Instagram I actually saw a doctor; it wasn't a religious thing at all; it was a medical doctor who was talking about science and he said we've just discovered that one of the ways a person can feel less worried and less stressed out is by doing this simple practice. Sit back in your chair, drop your shoulders, put your eyes and chin up to the sky and just relax, and you will feel yourself overcome with peace. What does that look like? Watch. What does this look like? I thought this secular doctor is praying! There is something about doing this, even physiologically that channels something in the same way that you can't fake a smile; did you know that? If you fake a smile, it makes real dopamine and endorphins happen in your body where you kind of feel a little happier. Try it, it's really hard to fake a smile. I'm going to try it really quick. All right, hold on a second, hold on, I'm going to try. See? It gets you! It gets you.

In the same way, we always so easily separate the spiritual from the physical. But isn't it weird that these things that our ancestors have done for thousands of years still work today? If you're feeling stressed, scared, worried about the future, I want you to know Christ stands with you. Open your heart and your mind and even your body to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to bring peace in your life today. He loves you just as you are.

Satan wants to trick us into thinking that there are all of these things between us and God. All of these things that if we open our heart and mind to God, He'll be like well, but first what about that. God does want to help us. He does want to make us better. But rest assured that all of your sins and fears and shames, well my friend, all of that was worked out on the cross. As Hannah said great line, justified means just as if I'd.. what is it, done nothing or something? Never done it. Just as if I'd never done it. That's Oklahoma for you. Never been done.

So today, I want you to know that in a world full of fear and worry, God has called you to be an unhurried, joy-filled life-giving peaceful presence. That's who you already are. Believe it and begin to step out in faith in that, and watch what God will do. It's really cool.

The Bible says perfect love casts out fear. But make no doubt about it, fear is also the only thing that will cast out Christian love. Fear casts out love. Fear casts out love. We are scared to death of people we should be loving. You can't be afraid of somebody and love them at the same time, can you? It's very hard. Dallas Willard told a story when he was walking into a hardware shop, and there was a pickup truck with a dog in it, and the windows down a little bit, and he watched a man not paying attention walking towards the hardware store, and of course the dog erupted in barking, startled the man and he jumped back and looked at the dog and said 'stupid dog, I'll kill you. I'll kill you.' He was scared, that's all. The man didn't hate dogs. He was just scared.

So many of us.. you can feel it in your body. The fear, the worry. When you wake up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom and you remember that thing and you can't go back to sleep and it keeps you awake. You don't need to be afraid. You don't need to be afraid. The love of God is all over you. The favor of God is all over you. And so often so much of our fear is driven by our need and desire to control outcomes. My friend, those outcomes are in God's hands. And let me tell you, that is the best place they can be. I don't want to be in control of my outcomes anymore. I'm not very good at it. What I can do is learn to be a disciple of Jesus, to love the Lord with all my heart, with all my soul, and everything within me, and love my neighbor as myself, and I know if I can accomplish that well, well God will take care of the rest. Just give me wisdom, Lord, and I know you'll take care of the rest.

I know that if you walk today trusting and believing that the Holy Spirit is swirling around you, even though you can't see Him. Just like radio waves going through this building right now, the spirit of God is all around you, at work in your life, at work in your kids and your grandkids, at work in your job and in your ministry, and in the lives of your neighbors, the more you can see that with your hearts eyes, the more power you'll have to stop being afraid of the future, afraid of the government, afraid of your neighbor and afraid of your enemies, of being afraid of everything around you and simply saying He's got the whole world in His hands, and that is the best place for things to be. And you

will be enabled to fill a very scared and worried world with the loving presence of Jesus Christ, and that's what we need. Give me Jesus, Lord.

The world is afraid right now, isn't it. There's a lot of fear. Fear of shots and variants and nations at war. Fear of politics and especially politicians. And that connects us to the fears that we have about our marriage, our mid-life, end life, beginning of life crisis, our kids not doing what we want them to do, or not being with the people we want them to be with, or the jobs that we're doing that we trained for that we don't like but we've got 12 years or 8 years of school and \$200,000 of debt! Our friends, or lack therein, see its all connected. Our fear about what's happening in the Middle East, its connected to the fears we have for our grandkids. It's all connected. It's in our heart. It's not logical, it's here, we feel it.

And so when we yield everything to the Lord, see here's the thing.. we think we get worse at those things, but the truth is we get better. It doesn't mean we stop caring, it doesn't mean we stop doing what's right, it doesn't mean we stop being responsible, it simply means we say Lord, I'll do my best, and forget the rest. Lord, I'll do my best, and abandon the outcome to you because I know that you have the whole world, you have my life, you have my friends lives, my kid's lives in your hands. I'm not going to worry anymore.

I turned 40 this year and that causes a man to think. I've been a pastor for almost 20 years. I had no right becoming a pastor at the age of

20, but it was God's will and it happened, and because of that, I think I've had a sort of stiffer 20 years than a lot of other people have. A lot of trauma, not my personal trauma but a lot of other people's things, a lot of funerals, had a lot of friends die. You probably have, too. And it causes a person to think about the world and about the way of things.

One thing I can say for sure is people are bad at predicting. That is for sure. That is for sure. The more someone gets paid to predict something, the worse they are at it. The older someone is, the better they are at predicting things, that is also for sure. I would trust my grandma's prediction over the fed's prediction any day of the week. Just look at their record. And most of these people that predict things, most of them, at best, are about 50% right. Well how much better is that than flipping a quarter, Irene! You've become the like sound guy on like The Tonight Show. I'm really sorry. You need to like have a guitar and just like hold it. Next week. That's good TV.

Think about it honestly. Think about how bad we are at predicting. I heard someone say once 90% of the things I'm worried about that never even happen. You remember Y2K? Isn't it amazing to think that the year 2000 was 20 years ago? It's supposed to be like ten years ago. It was a lot longer than that. I graduated high school in 1999. That was an interesting year to finish high school because there was a lot, if you remember, a lot of anxiety about what the year 2000 would look like. And the worry was our world had very quickly shifted to a dependence on this

new thing called a personal computer. It had only been around for about five or six years on the desks of everybody, but now all of our books and accounting, everything, it was on these websites. And the fear was there were only two digits, not four. So it said 99 instead of 1999. And the fear was when that 99 turned to 0, well the whole world would go to zero right along with those numbers. Do you remember this? Everybody was worried. What happened? Nada. Smooth as silk, man. Smooth as silk! Nothing happened.

And yet I remember in 2007, all the predictions about how much better the market would be in 2008, and you better not miss out! And when we hit rock bottom and it started to recover in 2008, all these predictions about how much better things would get in the markets. And then there was another dip. A lot of people forget that in 2010 that was just as bad as the first. And all these guys still have their jobs! Does that drive anybody else crazy!? At least find a new guy to be wrong. Don't go with the guy that you know got it wrong last time.

Oh and Trump's election. Don't get me started. Without any, okay, without any political opinion, I remember.. I did the Trump fingers; did you notice that? but without any political.. I remember where I was when Trump got elected. I was in a little town with Hannah called Braunschweig in Germany, and I remember watching TV, there was only one station in English, Air France, I don't know why it was in English, and this was their guess: 98% chance that Hillary Clinton would win, a

1% chance that Trump would win, and a 1% chance that “other” would win, like Mickey Mouse or something. Can I just say we’re just bad at predicting stuff. And does it do us any good anyway? We’re bad at it. I think the world today has a lot of predictions about what’s coming in the next five or ten years. Stop. It’s not helping anybody.

I don’t want to hear about blood moons. I don’t want to hear about changing tides. I don’t even want to hear about politics or any of that stuff. Just give me Jesus. Just give me the Lord! There is no way we can predict what will happen in America or Afghanistan or Eurozone or China, and unless you’re the President or a senator, there’s very little we can do about it. What we can do is be who God called us to be now! Different. Not anxious, not worried, not afraid, but anti-fragile. You know what that means? Anti-fragile means you thrive in chaos. It means you thrive in chaos. It means that God has put something inside of you that if things go really bad, well you’ll be just fine. And if things go really good, well you’ll probably be fine then, and that is who you are. Its more about becoming who God’s called you to be than preparing for some bad or good thing to happen. Trust me, friend, that’s a better way to live life.

I stopped predicting things a while back. I still do it out loud sometimes, but I try to not do it anymore. And this is a problem. If you think of yourself as an intellectual, you’re always like trying to play chess with life, there’s too many pieces. Just trust the Lord and be at peace and only then will you be able to be free to love your neighbor. It’s like a

Chinese finger trap. You remember those from Chuck E Cheese? Those Chinese finger traps? You ever seen those? They're funky looking, aren't they. They're like rainbow bamboo things, and you put your fingers in, like this, and then you pull your fingers out and you can't get them out. You remember how to get them out? You got to lean into it, huh? The only way to get it out is to get the trap to relax. The more you pull, the harder it will feel, and that's how life is. You got to relax. You got to relax. So many of you have an amazing destiny before you, but for some of you, I feel like God wants to say it will be unlocked the day you stop worrying about it. You will get it the day you let it go. You will get it the day you let it go. Let it go. Trust the Lord in faith. He's got some good things in store for you, my friend. Good things in store for you. I can't wait to celebrate with you when you cross that line.

The kingdom of God is all around us. Jesus is standing with us even now in this building, standing next to you. Can you feel Him? He's right there. He's right next to you, hand on your shoulder, loving hands, not judging, not angry, He loves you the way a perfect father loves a child, the way a great teacher loves a student, the way your best friend loves you in your hardest time, that's how the Lord is with you right now. Just feel it. Just open your heart to it. Feel it in your spirit. Can you feel that? He's here.

See when we worry about things, we want to solve it the world's way. We have to lift it into the kingdom of the heavens which is a reality

all around us that's happening all the time that's way more powerful than what we see in the natural.

That brings us to the passage for today in the letter to the Philippians. Paul planted the church in Philippi with his friend Luke. Luke writes about it in the book of Acts. Philippi was an amazing city. It was a colony of the Roman Empire. This is going to be important in the way that Paul writes to the church in Philippi. A colony was different than a big city that was annexed. It means that on this hill there was nothing and then they built something and that something was supposed to be another Rome. This was sort of the main city now in Macedonia. It was built by Caesar Augustus. And the intent was that if you went to Philippi, even though it was thousands of miles away from Rome, it would feel like you were in Rome. So you could say that it was a beachhead of Rome on the edges of the Roman Empire in order to be a safe place and an example of what Rome could be if only you went there.

When Paul and Luke arrive in Philippi led by the spirit, they go down to the river because they hear there's a place to pray. That would make sense. Jews that are outside of Israel would usually pray by a river because if you're going to have a synagogue or a time of prayer, you have to wash yourself first. And in order to wash yourself, you have to mikvah. Mikvah means that you wash your heart, your chest, Lord, give me a clean heart. You wash your hands, give me clean deeds. You wash your

head, Lord, give me clean thoughts. And you wash your legs, Lord, guard my ways.

And so they went down to the river and they found some people there praying. One woman who had been influenced by Judaism named Lydia, who says she was a worshiper of God, which meant she was probably sympathetic to Judaism. And this is one of the big standouts – she dealt in purple. Everybody would have been like woah. Woah. Don't you wish if you dealt in purple people would say that about you? Oh well. Purple was a big deal in the Roman Empire. Only a handful of people could deal in purple because purple was a special dye, it was very hard to come by. I don't know if this is true, I read somewhere it would take two thousand of these special seashells to create one ounce of purple dye. That's a lot of dead crabs, Hannah. And the reason purple was so special is because it was the color and only royalty could use it. So she dealt directly with Caesar's family.

Lydia was a woman of power, influence, fame, and especially wealth, and when Paul told her the gospel, she went for it hook, line and sinker. She was into it. You see Luke who writes the gospel of Luke is always painting and showing Jesus' kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens, versus this other kingdom, the kingdom of Rome. They had a lot in common, by the way. Both claimed to have the king of kings and the lord of lords. Both used this word called "the gospel" or "the good news" to proclaim the coming of their king. Both believed that their

kingdoms would be Catholic, meaning that they'd be universal everywhere. And both proclaimed this idea of peace, shalom, that only peace would happen when their king reigned.

So Luke, reflecting on Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of heaven, loves to compare the physical kingdom of Rome that was obvious to everyone, and the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven that was in direct opposition to that Roman kingdom. Lydia is an example of someone who was completely immersed in the kingdom of Rome and didn't want their king of kings, didn't want their lord of lords or their gospel, she wanted Jesus, and it was in her house that the church in Philippi was planted and began. And as a wealthy woman, she likely used her resources and means to cause that church to flourish and to grow and to thrive within Philippi, which is really good news.

I want you to be careful, my friend, when you look at the power, worldly power and worldly fame and worldly wealth, its alluring, but there's nothing more alluring than the joy that can be found in a Christian life. I know. Your faith, when you're on fire for God and full of His hope and life and peace is way more alluring to the world than what the world has. As the world has is brittle. Passes quickly. Withers in the sun. That's not for you. It's not for me, either.

So, when Paul is writing to the church in Philippi, he says to them, he uses this Roman phrase – your citizenship is in the heavens. And what he's saying is the same way that Rome hopes to have in a colony in

Philippi an example of what Rome really is, that's who you are. You are a beachhead. This translation, by the way, heaven is so irresponsible by Bible translators. In Greek it actually says the heavens. For Jews and early church Christians, heaven wasn't just where I went when I die, there were three levels of heaven. The first was the very air around me, like I'm walking through heaven right now. Its air. The birds are flying through heaven, trees are growing into heaven, mountains go into heaven. That was the first level. The second was outer space: the stars and the planets and the sky. And then the third was heaven, home of the angels and the throne of God where we go when we die, if we're clothed in Christ.

So when you say the kingdom of the heavens, when you say just heaven, it's easy to think that oh that means I'm going to go to heaven when I die, and of course you will, but that's not what Paul is saying here. He's saying in you heaven is in Philippi. In Philippi as it is in heaven. Or he might say in Irvine as it is in heaven. That all around us the kingdom of the heavens, the will of God is being done in His presence and His spirit are all around us! In the short term, it's so hard to think that things will go in a good direction. But God thinks in much longer and broader terms than we do. And so he says to the church in Philippi – be that presence.

And then in Philippians chapter 4, he mentions two women in the church who were great leaders and preachers and did a lot of work with

Paul, and how they're arguing with each other. And I don't have time to get into now, but they have a lot of good reason to be anxious. Things were not going well in Philippi for the church. I mean it was growing and flourishing, but they were afraid, and yet they didn't need to be afraid. But you can see it here. When fear permeates a congregation, people begin to turn on each other. When fear permeates a nation, its citizens begin to turn on each other. Fear casts out Christian love. The more you feel fear and worry and anxiety go up in your body, the more defensive you feel and the more frustrated you feel with other people. The more blame you're already cast, the more judgement you are to feel towards others, and that is not you. My friend, you can relax. Do your best, obey the Lord, always do what's right, but then abandon outcomes to God.

And that's what Paul says. He says, "rejoice in the Lord always." That means just be like celebrating; like beaming with positivity and joy for good reason! "Rejoice, I say it again, rejoice. Let your gentleness" everybody say gentleness don't you wish the church was known for its gentleness? "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near." See there it is. He's right around us. He's in the space around us. "Don't 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" that means it doesn't make any sense logically in the natural, but you get this thing that comes in your mind that it will guard your heart. Our hearts need to be guarded, don't

they and it will guard your mind. Our minds need to be guarded, don't they. And you'll be able to be the person God's called you to be.

See I'm not very good at this. I'm getting better, though, but the Lord has put people in my life, and when I start to spin my wheels and get worried, they'll just reach their hand out, put it on my shoulder and just start praying. My friends, a lot of them don't even ask if they can pray for me, anyway, they just start praying for me. And I can instantly feel as I hand the thing over to the Lord, I said it'll be okay. It'll be okay. It'll be okay. When you're less worried, less hurried, less anxious, we sort of unconsciously think that we'll be worse at it or less responsible. But that's not you. When we become less worried, hurried and anxious, we get better at everything, especially loving people who need it the most.

I'm so proud of you. I'm so proud of you. You're doing a lot better than you think. The Lord is with you right now, not angry at you, not frustrated with you. You might be frustrated with yourself, let it go. Believe the word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to do a good thing in your heart and mind today. And just relax and watch Him do a good thing.

Father, we love you. Stand with us now in our hour, Father. Many of us are facing many things, things we can't control, we give those things to you. We trust, Lord, that if they're in your hands, it's better than if they're in our hands, and we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

