

Matthew 6 v 25-34

Do Not Worry (continued)

Introduction

Jesus is dealing with the subject of worry, a very prevalent problem in society. While he permits trouble to come our way, we have no need to be full of anxious care if we are Christians, for we have a heavenly Father who will take care of us. It is the mark of the unbeliever to worry. It is important to bring Christ right into the centre of the life, give him complete control, and make his will our will, if we are to overcome worry. The final two verses in this passage show us how we should handle worry in every day life. According to Martin Lloyd Jones, “you will not find anywhere in any text book a more thorough analysis of worry and anxious care, which tends to kill man in the world (and a better answer to the problem), than in this paragraph”.

Even though Jesus bids us not to worry, we all do it. We all know what a terrible force and power it can have in our lives, gripping and controlling us, affecting our bodies and our minds. It has a very vivid imagination and it seems it does not want to be relieved. Causes us much inward trouble and struggling. Aggravated if we have temperament which has an inclination towards being anxious and nervous.

We are going to look at the spiritual cause which is described here, what it is, and how it can be dealt with.

Condition of little faith

The spiritual cause of worry is “little faith”, or *ολιγοπιστος* in the Greek. It is used five times in Matthew and once in Luke (Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20; Luke 12:28). It does not say “no faith”, but “little faith”. Faith is there, but it is weak and flickering and inadequate. Here is a very accurate description of many Christian people. They trust God for salvation, but there the trust ends, and goes no further. Therefore they rob themselves of so much in life and are very prone to anxiety and corroding care. Faith goes so far, but not to whole of life and everything in life. Faith has brought them to Christ and salvation, but it has little part in daily lives. Therefore there is little difference between them and non-Christians. They talk in the same way, and react to trouble in the same way. They believe that God is our heavenly Father but that conviction has no influence at all on the way they look at food, drink, clothing and tomorrow, and all the other affairs of life.

But the Bible tells us faith should affect whole of life, and we ought to lay hold on all and not some of God’s promises. “Little faith” accepts some, majors on some, but neglects others. Therefore triumph in some areas of life, but abysmal failure in other areas. “Spiritual worldlings” – right about salvation, but worldlings about life in general. I once heard it put like this “Our trouble is we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but we don’t believe him”.

Jesus says **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened** (Matthew 11:28), but we prefer to keep our worries and our problems to ourselves. If we have “little faith”, we do not believe, live by, or apply the Scriptures. We fail to work out all that is involved in being saved. Forget that we now belong to a heavenly Father and are part of his family. As a result we remain mastered by our circumstances instead of being in the position where we master them. So we sit helplessly under great burden of worry and concern. We are bowled over and helpless. “Under circumstances”.

We can sometimes be like the man who was carrying a very heavy case on his shoulder, so someone stopped and offered him a lift. He accepted the lift, but kept the heavy case on his shoulder. Asked why he continued to carry the case, the man replied “you’ve been so kind to give me a lift, I couldn’t trouble you further to carry my case too”.

But Bible picture is of the Christian “above circumstances”, even rejoicing in tribulation. Not just grinning and bearing it, but, like Paul, **delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecution, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong** (2 Cor. 12:9-10). The Christian is not mastered by the situation, but is master of the situation.

Where are we in all this? Spiritual worldlings? Or do we have a faith which has relevance in every area of life? The great test is in the crises of life. How do we react to things then? When problems arise and things go wrong, then we realize what we are made of, and the real person that we are is disclosed. How do we face circumstances that are adverse? War? Illness? Job in doubt? Troubles? At the end of the day, are we any different from the non-Christian? Does our faith in God control and influence the whole of life? Does it determine our reaction to every event? Does it extend to every detail? Do we see everything within context of our Christian faith?

Means whereby faith may grow

Prayer of the disciples **Lord, increase our faith** (Luke 17:5). Aware of our own lack of faith, we need to turn to the only one who can deal with the situation because we lack the resources. God’s answer is through means, not through direct injection of faith. Done through teaching us and drawing us to himself.

First of all we must realise who we are. Not Gentiles i.e. heathen who are in dark about God and lack revelation. God has come into our hearts and lives. We are his children and he is our heavenly Father. So we respond to events quite differently. The heathen has two attitudes (i) whatever happens, it’s the luck of the draw, an accident, no purpose, or (ii) obsessed with fatalism – “what will be will be”. Therefore to the heathen, effort is useless, they just hope for the best, and hope the worst won’t happen. Therefore it is natural to worry about food and clothes and tomorrow. Worry is increased because hazy about next life – its all shadows and uncertainty. They take the view that this world is everything, so make the most of it. Take all we can now, cannot be certain of next month or next year, get all you can, spend all you can, enjoy things now, experience everything you can. Food, clothing and possessions are number one priority, the only things to live for, and so they worry over them. People know no better.

But there is no place for this attitude in the Christian. They are radically different, for they have the revelation of God through Christ. Whole outlook and philosophy of life is different. The Christian has certainty, confidence and assurance. Lives are not controlled by accident, blind fate or luck. They belong to a living God, are in his hands. The smallest as well as the largest detail are his concern. They completely rely on their heavenly Father. Nothing can happen to them unless God had ordained or permitted it. He knows all about them, even the hairs on their head are numbered. Never in a position or situation which is outside his knowledge or care. He knows when they are sorrowful, ill, bereaved, broken hearted, concerned and troubled for themselves or relatives. He knows everything, nothing is outside his omniscience.

God knows every need, therefore the Christian need not be worried, he is not alone. God is in every situation. God's purposes, power and grace are at work. Rest quietly and confidently in assurance of his knowledge and care. Put trust in him with absolute confidence. That is why the Christian sees life entirely differently, and does not put events down to good luck or fatalism. He puts everything in the context of God – his care and his purposes – and of eternity.

Therefore for our faith to grow, we need to begin to use our minds and be clear about basic facts.

Cultivate strong relationship with God

Not enough to have clear conviction. Need to be in contact. God is more concerned with you than with your circumstances. **Seek – keep on seeking – first God's kingdom, and his righteousness** (Matthew 6:33). If going to worry about anything, worry about your relationship with the Father. Most of all, be concerned with God, his rule and his will. The Gentiles were seeking and worrying about everything else. Jesus tells his followers they should be seeking and worrying about God. To "seek" means to earnestly and intensely be concerned, to live for these things, to give them top priority. C.f. the pattern for prayer set out in the Lord's prayer – God's name, kingdom and will first, then our own provision, pardon and protection.

God rewards those who earnestly and diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6). We seek, but how diligently? We should have a concern for his kingdom, i.e. his rule and his will; a concern for his righteousness, i.e. holiness of life; a concern to be Christ-like; a concern to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. Being more like Christ and having more of God's image in us requires being nearer to God. Then our faith grows, our assurance grows, and our reliance deepens. Our quality of life and relationship with God improves as our faith deepens. So we have less anxiety about this world and things of this life. The more we realize our relationship with God as his child, and the more we see we are heirs or eternity, then we see this life and all that happens in different light. We get the right perspective.

Australian clergyman, McCartney, visiting Hudson Taylor in China. Hudson was almost 60 years of age, and bearing tremendous burdens. He had piles of letters – anyone of them could have been full of news of death, shortage of funds, riots, and troubles, and yet all were opened and answered in calm and unruffled way. McCartney told Hudson he found himself in terror all day long, unable to enjoy the Lord as he ought. He said the Daily Mail robbed him of God's delightful society. He

asked Hudson why he was always so calm. What made the difference? Hudson told him that he dwelt in Christ, and partook of his very being and resources by simple and continuous act of faith. He drew from the Bank of Heaven every farthing of his income. He said "I could not possibly get through the work I have to do without the peace of God keeping my heart and mind. It is not just a privilege, it is a necessity." McCartney's conclusion from this encounter was "Look up and see the Lord in glory. Is he worried and troubled and distressed? Yet these affairs are his as much as yours."

Jesus tells us to seek God first, and everything else will be thrown into the bargain. C.f. Solomon, who did not pray for riches and long life but for wisdom to be a good king. Having asked for the most important spiritual gift, the other material things were given as well.

Live one day at a time

Handle the demands of each day as they come. Do not worry about the unknown future. Obviously some things need forward planning, e.g. holidays, interviews, but as a general rule for everyday living **Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough troubles of its own** (Matthew 6:34). Do not anticipate problems and do not look for troubles. Worrying about the future is quite useless, it achieves nothing at all. However much you worry about it, you cannot be sure it will happen, and in any case you can do nothing about it now. Many of the new threatened disasters are purely imaginary. Do not let them rob us of our peace. There was a famous Christian business man, with many great concerns, who decided to leave all his worries till "next Wednesday". Usually he found that by the time Wednesday came round, they had disappeared.

Why let future possibilities cripple you in the present and reduce your efficiency to deal with both the present and also the future? Yesterday has gone. Tomorrow has yet to come. Only today matters. Do not spend each day adding up grand total of all that may happen tomorrow. This will crush you. Each day has its own problems and difficulties. Deal with them, and them alone. Deal with today's quota. Live each day as a separate unit. Take life as it comes day by day. Live one day at a time. Leave tomorrow's problems till tomorrow. Rely on God for dealing with today's affairs.

Be comforted that God who helps today will be there to help you tomorrow. Tomorrow, turn to him and he will be there as he was today. Divide up life and whole relationship to God into separate days. Not only trust him in general terms, but for each daily section of life. Take things to God as they arise each day. Not try to store up grace for the future. Not anticipate God about the future. Day by day, walk with God in obedience and reliance, commitment and apportion of grace for needs of that day. **Your strength will equal your days** (Deuteronomy 33:25). **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever** (Hebrews 13:8). **The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms** (Deuteronomy 33:27).