

Have Faith In God, He's On His Throne

Matthew 6:25-34

Introduction: 1) The hymn was written during a revival meeting in Muskogee, OK, in 1934. It was a time of hardship, severe economic depression and uncertainty in America. People were anxious and worried. The author was B. B. McKinney who wrote more than 500 songs. The hymn: "Have Faith in God" (*Handbook to The Baptist Hymnal*), 135, 405-06). The words of the song are filled with assurance and hope. They inspire faith and trust in the God who, no matter what, "rules and reigns upon His throne." They also serve as a wonderful poetic commentary on Matthew 6:25-34.

Have faith in God when your pathway is lonely.
He sees and knows all the way you have trod;
Never alone are the least of His children;
Have faith in God, have faith in God.

Have faith in God when your prayers are unanswered,
Your earnest plea He will never forget;
Wait on the Lord, trust His Word and be patient,
Have faith in God. He'll answer yet.

Have faith in God in your pain and your sorrow,
His heart is touched with your grief and despair;
Cast all your cares and your burdens upon Him,
And leave them there, oh, leave them there.

Have faith in God though all else fail about you;
Have faith in God, He provides for His own:
He cannot fail though all kingdoms shall perish.
He rules. He reigns upon His throne.

Refrain:

Have faith in God, He's on His throne,
Have faith in God, He watches over His own;
He cannot fail, He must prevail,
Have faith in God, Have faith in God.

2) Jesus has encouraged us to store up treasures in heaven and not on earth (6:19-24). He has told us money and the enticements of this world must not be our priorities. In faith, “focusing on heavenly treasures (vv. 19-21), being characterized by generosity (vv. 22-23), and refusing to allow materialism to compete with one’s devotion to God (v. 24) should free the disciples from many of their anxieties. [It is] failure to view riches and possessions from a proper perspective [that] promotes anxiety [in this life]” (Quarles, 258).

3) Anxiety and worry can be emotionally and psychologically paralyzing. They are spiritual thieves that rob us of joy, peace, sleep and a thousand other things. Matthew 6:25-34 is “Jesus’ spiritual prescription for this spiritual illness and disease. Actually, worry is only the symptom of the disease. At its core is a heart of

“little faith” (v .31). Jesus lays out for us “specific teaching that helps to free us from paralyzing anxiety . . . an antidote to worry” (Ferguson, 142).

I. God will take of our food 6:25-26

- The great battles of the Christian life are fought in our minds and between our ears. This is certainly the case when it comes to the sin of worry. And yes, worry is a sin because it is a symptom of unbelief. Jesus tells us the cure for worry is changing the way we think about our heavenly Father (vv. 26, 32) and how He takes care of His children today, right now.
- Jesus begins by saying, “Don’t worry.” This is a present imperative, a command calling for constant and continuous action. The sense is probably “stop worrying.” And what is it that we are not to worry about? Quite simple, “life.” To be specific, stop worrying and don’t worry about “what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear.” Jesus then raises a rhetorical question to drive home his point, “Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing?” And of course the right answer is, “Yes! Of course it is!” Life needs these things, but life is so much more than these things.
- Jesus then addresses the issue with an illustration specifically related to food, pointing out how God takes care of the birds. He says in verse 26, “Consider (“look at,” another imperative of command) the birds of the sky.

They don't sow or reap or gather into barns." (emp. mine). Oh, they are industrious creatures, but it is "your heavenly Father who feeds them." Birds don't plant crops in the ground, harvest or store them. Nevertheless they are fed and cared for not by "their" heavenly Father, but "your heavenly Father." So, Jesus says, ask yourself a question, "Aren't you worth more than they?" And the answer is, "of course you are." You are created in God's image. You are recreated through His Son Jesus. God has bought you at a great price to Himself (1 Cor. 6:20). You are of infinite value and worth to your heavenly Father. Why be a worry wart?! It simply makes no sense.

- Food is a wonderful servant to sustain life. It is a terrible master. It is a horrible and debilitating idol. Jesus told us in verse 11 to ask the Father for our daily bread. If he told us to ask, don't you think we have good reason to expect? Don Carson puts it well, "is not constant worry about how future meals will be provided an affront to God, a charge that we cannot trust his providence? Has not Jesus already taught the heirs of the kingdom to pray, "Give us today our daily bread?" And will this prayer, taught by Jesus himself, be mocked by the Almighty?" (*The Sermon on the Mount*, 87).
- A simple, but memorable poem by Elizabeth Cheney helps us get the truth of these verses in proper perspective.

The Robin and the Sparrow

Said the robin to the sparrow,
“I should really like to know,
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so.”
Said the sparrow to the robin,
“Friend I think that it must be,
That they have no Heavenly Father,
Such as cares for you and me.”

II. God will take care of our life 6:27

My dear friend James Merritt, with his usual wit, says of worry: “Sometimes it is carved into our bodies by sores that we call ulcers. Sometimes it is etched into our faces by lines we call wrinkles. It may be pictured on our lips by the shape we call a frown. It can be heard in footsteps pacing back and forth across a floor late at night. Sometimes it is muffled by the silence of someone lying in bed staring at the ceiling without being able to go to sleep.” (Don’t Worry, Be Happy,” Sermon).

These are very powerful words to describe the power and impact that worry can have on our lives. Jesus told us in verse 25, “Don’t worry about your life.” Here is verse 27, He tells us, “Can any of you add one moment to his life-span by worrying?” This is a better translation than, “Can any one of you add a

single cubit to his height?” Once more the answer is obvious, “of course not.”

Worrying about your life is pointless, fruitless and foolish. You cannot add a year, a month, a week, a day or even a second by worry. Worry may certainly effect the quality of your life, but it will not add to the length of your life.

Why? The answer is both biblical and theological. Theologically, God is sovereign and your life, every life, is in His hands. Biblically, God has numbered your days. As Quarles put it, “God has determined both the moment of one’s birth and the moment of one’s death” (Quarles, 270). Consider the following Scripture:

- Deuteronomy 32:39 - “See now that I alone am he; there is no God but me. I bring death and I give life; I wound and I heal. No one can rescue anyone from my power.”
- Job 14:5 - “Since a person’s days are determined and the number of his months depends on you, and since you have set limits he cannot pass...”
- 1 Samuel 2:6 - “The LORD brings death and gives life; he sends some down to Sheol, and he raises others up.”
- Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, 11 - “There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven: a time to give birth and a time to die.”

- Psalm 39:4 - “LORD, make me aware of my end and the number of my days so that I will know how short-lived I am.”
- Psalm 139:16 - “Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began.”

Again, Quarles nails it, “A person’s survival depends on divine sovereignty, not human anxiety” (Quarles, 271). God has sovereignly and particularly mapped our lives from beginning to end. There are no accidents in His plan. He knows who we are. He knows what we need. He loves and cares for each one of us individually. He will be sure to give us everything we need to fulfill his purpose and will in our lives. We will receive all that is necessary for His glory and our good. I love the way Sinclair Ferguson puts it,

“Your life is in the hands of your Father. He has designed it. He knows the end of it from the beginning. He plans each step of the way to fulfil his purpose for you and through you. You will have all you need to fulfil that purpose, and when that is accomplished, you will be taken home to be with him. Why worry when he has your life in his hands? Your worry is a sign that you do not adequately know him, or that you do not trust him, or have not yet yielded to him as you ought.

It is only when we want to take our lives out of the Father's hands and have them under our own control that we find ourselves gripped with anxiety. The secret of freedom from anxiety is freedom from ourselves and abandonment of our own plans. But that spirit emerges in our lives only when our minds are filled with the knowledge that our Father can be trusted implicitly to supply everything we need." (*Sermon on the Mount*, 144).

III. God will take care of our clothing 6:28-30

- That Americans, in particular, are clothes and fashion conscience would be a massive understatement. The U. S. apparel industry today is a \$12 billion business. The average American family spends \$1700 on clothes annually (Emma Johnson, "The Real Cost of Your Shopping Habits," *Forbes*, 1-15-15). While that is only 3.5 % of a family's expenses, Emma Johnson makes the point, "What is significant is whether the money is spend on need or waste. The answer is, largely, waste."
- The situation was much different for common 1st century Hebrews living in Israel. There was little or no money to waste. Like most person in the 2/3 world, people owned little more than was on their back. Like my friend "pastor Sam" who lives in South Sudan, they owned 1 or 2 sets of clothes and a pair of sandals. Period. That is all. Nevertheless, it appears humans

struggle to escape the worry of apparel. So, Jesus provides a time of Q & A where he both asks the questions and provides the answers!

Question: “And why do you worry about clothes?”

Answer: “Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow.” They simply and naturally grow. He continues, “They don’t labor or spin thread.” Carson says, “Watch those flowers grow: They do not work to earn or buy their beauty. They grow.” (Carson, 91). Jesus continues in verse 29, “Yet I tell that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these.” In the time of Jesus, King Solomon’s royal and regal opulence and splendor was proverbial. Jesus then drives the nail into the coffin of his argument in verse 30, “If that is how God clothes the grass of the field,” and it is, “which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t he do much more for you – you of little faith?” And again the answer is, of course He will!

- The last four words of verse 30 are intended as a healing dagger in the heart of the disciples: “you of little faith.” Is your faith so small, so puny, in the sovereign and omnipotent God? Interestingly, the adjective “little faith” (Gr. *oligopistos*) appears four times in Matthew. The disciples showed little faith that Jesus could control the storm (8:26), that they (Peter) could walk on water (14:31), and that Jesus could miraculously

provide bread for them to eat (16:8) [Quarles, 274]. Worry is energized by little faith. Small faith = anxiety and worry. It is, Quarles notes, “an expression of doubt in God’s knowledge, strength, or compassion” (Quarles, 275).

- Call it what you want: Tension, anxiety, worry. Bottom line we need to call it what God calls it: unbelief. At its core, worry is practical atheism or practical deism or practical finite theism (Robert Mounce, Matthew, *NIBC*, 61). Either we think God isn’t there (atheism), He is there but He doesn’t care (deism), or He is there and is not powerful enough to be counted on (finite theism). George Mueller (1805-1898), the great prayer warrior, counters all of this when he says, “The beginning of worry is the end of faith. The beginning of faith is the end of worry.”

IV. God will take care of all our needs

6:31-32

- Worry is foolish on so many levels. Pastor James Merritt says, “Worrying never solved a problem, never dried a tear, never lifted a burden, never removed an obstacle. It never made bad things good, or good things better.” (sermon notes).
- Jesus knew this better than any person who ever lived. So once again he is direct and to the point. “So don’t worry. . .” To be precise, don’t worry about, what you will eat or what you will drink or what you will wear (v.

31). Why? Well, one answer is this, it puts you in the camp of unbelievers! It puts you on the level of pagans. “Gentiles,” pagans, unbelievers, “eagerly seek all these things.” They have a laser beam focus on what they eat, drink, and wear. In essence, Jesus equates worry with idolatry. What I eat, drink and wear becomes my primary concern and my first priority. These become things I “eagerly seek.” These become my gods which make them idols.

- Now, think for a moment how foolish this is. It borders on the absurd. These false gods can’t talk, hear, see or do a thing. They are deaf, dumb, blind and impotent. In stark and startling contrast, the One true and living God is a talking God, He hears everything, He sees everything and He can do anything! We now are running the risk of both a “little faith” and a “misplaced faith.”
- Jesus concludes verse 32 with a simple but comforting truth, “your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” Let’s break this powerful statement down.
 - Your heavenly Father – The God of heaven is my Father. I need to daily remind myself of this wonderful truth.
 - Your heavenly Father – The sovereign God of the universe is my heavenly Father. He is Abba, Daddy! He sees me and

knows me in the most tender and intimate way through Jesus my Lord.

- Your heavenly Father knows – My heavenly Father knows. He is not ignorant nor indifferent to my needs in this life. He knows! He sees! He cares!
- He knows that you need them – My heavenly Father knows precisely and exactly what I need. He knows what I want, but His attention is on what I need. The promise penned by the Apostle in Philippians 4:19 comes calling with joy unspeakable, “and my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
- John MacArthur is right, “When we think like the world, and crave like the world we will worry like the world. . . The faithful, trusting, and reasonable Christian is “anxious for nothing. . .” (*Matthew* 1-7, 426).

V. God will take care of our future

6:33-34

- In his excellent study of Matthew 6:24-34, entitled, “Do Not Be Anxious About Your Life,” John Piper highlights “Eight Reasons Not to Be Anxious.”
 - 1) Life is more than food and clothing (v.25)

- 2) The birds of the air work, and count on God (v.26)
- 3) Anxiety doesn't get you anywhere (v. 27)
- 4) God delights to adorn things (vv. 28-30)
- 5) Unbelievers are anxious about food and clothing (v.32)
- 6) Your heavenly Father knows your needs (v. 32)
- 7) God will carry your burdens if you seek first His honor (v.33)
- 8) Tomorrow will be anxious for itself (v.34)

The last two items on Piper's list summarize well what we find in Matthew 6:33-34.

- Jesus again uses a present imperative as a word of command calling for continuous action. "But constantly seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you." Seek God's rule and reign above all other things in your life. Seek His righteousness, a daily and practical righteousness that is unveiled for us in the Sermon on the Mount. Do this and life, drink, food, and clothes will be provided for you. As you seek God with your life, He will take care of you. As Spurgeon puts it, "Seek God first, and the rest will follow in due cause." (*Matthew*, 76). When we seek God's kingdom as our ultimate passion and priority in life, "he works for you and provides all your needs" (Piper). The cure for worry is found in 3 simple words: "first things first!" Stop worrying and start

seeking. Stop worrying about your little kingdom and start seeking God's big kingdom. There is nothing passive or indifferent about this. Be active and be aggressive! Go for God and His kingdom with all that you have and watch Him take care of everything that you need.

- Verse 34 concludes the paragraph. "Therefore," in light of this promise in verse 33, "don't worry about tomorrow." Why? "Because tomorrow will worry about itself." God has called us to live today, right now, for Him. Focus on today and watch anxiety disappear. If and when tomorrow comes, be assured "each day has enough trouble of its own." Carson says it perfectly, "It is as if Jesus recognizes that there will be some unavoidable worry today after all. But let's limit it to the concerns of today! Our gracious God intends us to take one step at a time, no more; to be responsible today and not fret about tomorrow. "Each day has enough trouble of its own." And if there will be new troubles tomorrow, so also will there be fresh grace." (Carson, 95).

Conclusion

1) James O. Fraser is one of my missionary heroes. I love his thoughts on anxiety and worry. They provide a marvelous and helpful word to our study. He says, "True faith glories in the present tense, and does not trouble itself about the future. God's promises are in the present tense, and are quite secure enough to set our

hearts at rest. Their full outworking is often in the future, but God's word is as good as His bond and we need have no anxiety." (*EGT*, 90).

2) The God who took care of our greatest problem at the cross can certainly be trusted to take care of anything else we may face daily in this life. He has secured our eternity! He will see you through today. No need to worry. God is on His throne and you are in His hands.