

03-22-2020 – DON'T WORRY! GOD PROVIDES PEACE, HOPE, AND COMFORT.

These past few weeks have turned 'normal' upside down. Some people have gone absolutely bonkers, others have turned into something rather frightening, while many, it would seem, have become contestants in what I will call, an international contest for extreme worrywarts.

Yes, life can be hard and, at times, dangerous; but in the end we all die.

John MacArthur was being interviewed on the Larry King Show after 9/11, and he was asked, "What is the lesson here." John said, "The lesson is that everybody is going to die and you're not necessarily in control of when."

Everyone dies, that's inevitable; but there are things that occur in our world that frighten us far beyond any normal acceptance of the fact that we will each someday die, for instance, last year: 1.25 million people died from car accidents. 5.6 million children died (mostly from preventable causes). 17 million people died from heart disease. 10 million people died from cancer. 60 million people died worldwide.

The current Coronavirus pandemic, at of the time of this writing, has recorded 270,270 cases, of which 168,391 are currently infected, 90,603 have recovered, and 11,286 have died. The 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic killed more than 50 million people; but the worst of all time was the Black Death in the 1300's that killed 75 million people.

Those who do not belong to Christ have good reason to be concerned about death; everybody dies, but those who die apart from Christ are condemned to an eternal hell.

But how should the family of God respond to these things? How can we be a messenger of hope and a helper to those around us? How can we encourage those who are anxious and disheartened? Well, first of all you must have God's hope yourself.

The Psalms are full of God's promises which are meant to give us peace, hope, and comfort, for example: "The Lord is our stronghold in times of trouble," and so, "I will sing praises to the Lord." "He is my hiding place; He preserves me from trouble." "I seek the Lord and He answers me, and delivers me from all my fears." "Those who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing." "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore I will not fear." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me," says the Lord. "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken."

God's protection and provision is promised over and over again to God's people.

Please turn to Matthew 6:25-34, and follow along as I read it aloud from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? 28 And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,<sup>29</sup> yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! 31 Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Three times in that passage Jesus commands us not to worry. First, if you are already worrying, stop! Second, if you haven't started worrying, don't start! And third, as an overall attitude, don't worry, i.e., don't be anxious, don't be afraid. Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

We are admonished (Matthew 6:25), not to worry about our life, our temporal biological-physical life. That is what is in view, i.e., what we eat, drink, and wear. Jesus tells us not to worry about such basic needs.

That may not sound so profound to us today, but in context, to the people of Jesus' day, many would of had nothing except what was on their back, and perhaps didn't know if there would be anything to eat the next day; not to mention that the small streams and shallow wells in Israel would often go dry in the summer heat, making it difficult to find water to drink.

The Lord is saying, "Don't worry about those things." Why shouldn't we worry? Because God is our Father and He will care for us; and also because life is so much more than food and drink, and the body is much more than the clothing we put on it.

I don't know how many of you have had to experience the recent craziness of going into a Walmart, Fred Meyer's, WinCo, Smart & Final, Costco, etc., or perhaps have seen a video clip on YouTube or a News feed, showing the bare shelves in these stores, the overloaded shopping carts, or people fighting over a bag of toilet paper, a gallon of bleach, or a jar of peanut butter. Some people have gone absolutely nuts!

But we as God's people can't be consumed by this pandemic; I mean being inconvenienced or deprived of this or that, must not drive us to be like the people who are greedily or fearfully acquiring and hoarding supplies.

See Matthew 6:26-30: "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more, much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!"

Israel is full of birds, and yet those birds don't worry, nor do they store up goods for the future; but neither do they just sit around in their nests waiting for God to drop food down to them.

In the same way, neither are we to sit around waiting for the Lord to deliver our food. The birds have to hunt and search for it continually. God has provided for them what they need, but they must go out and get it themselves.

Jesus is saying, God cares for the birds, do you think He cares less for you, i.e., do you need to worry about food for tomorrow and beyond? Do you need to stockpile and hoard, or will you trust in God's provision?

God gave you life in order that you might obey and honor Him, do you not think He will also sustain you, for His own purpose, that He might receive honor and glory and praise? He will provide what you need.

In Matthew 6:11 Jesus teaches us how to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." How do we get that bread? God gives us strength, knowledge, and the ability to work, for He is a loving Father who has filled the earth with good things that are accessible to those who are diligent and thankful.

Ecclesiastes 2:24, "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God."

Back to Matthew 6:27, "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" The Lord basically tells us that we cannot add to the length of our life

by worrying. In fact, worrying is a sin, and you can actually shorten your life by worrying, because it affects your attitude, your nervous system, and your heart.

See Matthew 6:28-30... Jesus says, "Why are you worried about clothing? Observe [look at] how the lilies of the field grow; they don't toil nor do they spin." God has provided clothing for the flowers, that when placed alongside the regal garments of Solomon, make Solomon's clothing look like rags.

If God takes care of the flowers in the field, that are here today and gone tomorrow, don't you think He's going to take care of you, who will live forever? Ecclesiastes 3:11, "[God] has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in [our] heart[s]."

See Matthew 6:31... Do not worry about what you will eat?, or what you will drink, or what you will wear for clothing, for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. "But first seek His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Those who do not have God as their Father have reason to worry, especially at times like this, for they are on their own, without a sovereign provider/protector. Unbelievers are sustained, in a general sense, for the rain falls on the believer and unbeliever alike, through God's universal providence and common grace; but unbelievers have no claim to any provision from God, for He is not their Father, instead, He is their Judge.

Those who reject God are outside of God's kingdom and God's blessings; they are dead in their sins, and they most definitely should be afraid during times like now.

See Matthew 6:32-33 Gentiles [unbelievers] are consumed with the material world and the gratification of their own felt needs. They are wrought with worry about these things. But God assures those who belong to Him that He is a loving Father who knows what we need, and therefore, we shouldn't be anxious or fearful about these things, for God is a protective, attentive, loving and faithful Father.

Look! While everybody else is looking for a tangible visible means of supply and support during this crisis, we can find peace, hope, and comfort in the invisible means of our supply and support, because our heavenly Father knows and supplies what we need, (Philippians 4:19), "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

We should not react like those who do not belong to God. When things are difficult and unsure, we should react as those who have confidence in God; even when life turns out to be dreadful and/or deadly, God's children should have the same perspective as Paul expresses in 2Corinthians 4:18, "We look not at the

things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

COVID-19, it would seem, is holding the world hostage, and yet, it is just a virus, it is na living thing, just part of the temporary world that God will one day do away with when He makes all things new, at which time there will no longer be any crying or mourning or pain or death (cf Revelation 21:4).

See Matthew 6:33... Our heavenly Father knows what we need, and all these things will be provided to us; but we must first seek His kingdom and His righteousness. We must get our eyes off the visible, physical, temporal world at times like this and recognize that we belong to the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth and everything in them. He is the Almighty, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the Great I AM! The One who was, who is, and is yet to come, the Almighty!

See Matthew 6:34... “So do not worry [lit. do not start worrying] about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for [lit. worry about] itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

We should not start worrying about tomorrow, today; but let me also say that preparing for tomorrow, today, is prudent and wise to do so; but it is not to be done out of worry. We must always remember that God is the God of tomorrow, just as He is the God of today and yesterday.

In Lamentations 3:22-23, Jeremiah says: “The Lord’s loving kindness will never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”

The Lord’s mercies are new every morning. Why would you worry about tomorrow when the Lord’s mercies will be provided again, brand new, so that you will become consumed by worry.

Worry is a powerfully destructive force. It can rob your joy and fill you with anxiety and fear. To worry is to sin, if God is your Father, for you are His child and a member of His eternal family, and your future is completely guarded and guaranteed in Christ.

Ephesians 1:13-14, “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Let the unbelievers and those who reject Christ worry; for they have no protector, they have no promises, they are spiritual orphans and they are spiritually homeless. They need what God has provided through His own Son: the forgiveness of sin and eternal life through Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior.

Let's review what we have studied today:

Pandemics and other world crises (like COVID-19) most assuredly cause heightened stress, confusion, chaos, anxiety, and fear which can shake the very foundations of our lives.

Times are indeed hard and difficult, and they may get worse before they get better. There are good reasons for us to be concerned and there are precautions that we can and most assuredly should take.

But honestly, although we may become personally affected by COVID-19, it is more likely that we will be inconvenienced and perhaps even deprived of certain things for a time. But the truth is that we who belong to God are a blessed people, for our God is a loving, merciful, and faithful Father.

Don't worry, for God will give you peace, hope, and comfort during this time.

Don't worry about food, drink, clothing, or other basic needs, for God knows what you need and He will provide it.

Don't worry about tomorrow, but instead, let tomorrow worry about itself. Instead of worrying, which is at its best useless, and at its worse destructive, do the following:

Seek to know more intimately the God who saved you and loves you.

Read God's Word daily and obey what you understand.

Talk with God moment by moment, throughout your day, through prayer.

Love the family of Believers and treat all people the way you want to be treated.  
2Thessalonians 2:16-17, "May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word."

1Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

2Thessalonians 3:16, "May the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!"

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