



ENCOURAGE

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I was in a discussion group the other day that was considering Matthew 6:25:

*"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink;
or about your body, what you will wear."*

Someone pointed out that Philippians 4:6 uses the same Greek word for *worry* but translates it there as *anxious*: "*Do not be anxious about anything . . .*" Then a businessman who had gone through some difficult times asked, "How can an intelligent person not ever worry? Life is full of hard times: illnesses, children not following the Lord, accidents, divorce, bankruptcy, Christian friends letting us down, business partners cheating us, and a lot more." He's right, so why does Jesus tell us not to worry and Paul tell us not to be anxious *about anything*? Did Jesus and Paul not live in the same world as we do?

I would guess that some of you have faced, or are facing, difficult situations that my friend has never even thought about: living in a strange culture, sending your children thousands of miles away for school, trying to live and minister in a foreign language, and not being sure about the quality of the medical care available. Did Jesus and Paul really mean what they said: *Don't worry about anything*? Nothing seems more natural in this world than to be anxious, to be burdened, to worry.

But Jesus then told us why we need not worry, "*...do not worry about what you will eat or drink...or about what you will wear...Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?*" What's he saying there? If we think about it a bit we will realize that it is a profound and powerful argument. Our life that we are worrying about, how did we get it? This body with its aches and pains that we are anxious about, where did it come from? We are alive right now because God wills it and decides it. And our body also is a gift from God. The argument that Jesus used is that if God has given us the gift of life, do you think He will not see to it that our life is sustained? Since God has given us our body, we can be quite certain that he will provide the means by which we can be clothed. It is an argument from the greater to the lesser. He did the greater thing--giving us life; will he not do the lesser thing--sustain it?

A few verses later in our text Jesus calls those who worry, *those of little faith*. By this he means we fail to think as we should. We fail to realize that God is the giver of our life and body, and there is a plan for every life in the mind of God. We can be certain that God has a plan and a purpose for our lives, and it will be carried out. So we need never be anxious when bad happen or when we think they might happen. God is sovereign. There are no accidents in a Christian's life.

This truth is what kept the great heroes of the faith going (Hebrews 11). They might not have understood what was going on, but they had confidence that God knew and that "He who brought them into being and had a purpose for them, would not leave nor forsake them. He would surely sustain and lead them all the journey

through, until their purpose in this world had been completed, and...then He would receive them into his presence.”¹

Also worrying or being anxious is not the same as being concerned about something. Paul was concerned that the young church in Galatia not “*turn to another gospel.*” Jesus was not happy about going to the cross. In the Garden he said to his friends, “*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*” Paul could have had a much easier life had he just stopped preaching the gospel. “If I keep this up, I very well might be stoned, ship wrecked, beaten with rods, in danger from bandits, go without sleep, know hunger and thirst and end up in prison.” But apparently neither Jesus’ sorrow nor Paul’s concern about the young churches nor his awareness of coming hard times were what the Bible means by worry or anxiety. The faith that kept them going and keeps us going is our confidence that God knows what he is doing and has a purpose in it all.

I trust this thought encourages you. Otherwise you might be like a friend of mine who said, “I think this situation is too big for God. I’ll start worrying and that will take care of it.”

Be encouraged,



Roger K. Gulick
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¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 386.