Lay Aside the Weight of Tomorrow’s Trouble

Jon Bloom / July 24, 2016

Fear for tomorrow kills our faith for today. So, having faith for today often means killing fear for tomorrow.

That’s why Jesus said, “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:34)

Anxiety over our uncertain, and as yet unreal, future is a heavy burden. It’s a burden Jesus doesn’t want us to bear, because it’s not ours to bear. It’s God’s burden, and for him it’s very light.

In this command, Jesus wants to give us an easy yoke (Matthew 11:30). He is showing us how to lay aside the unwieldy weight (Hebrews 11:1) of tomorrow’s trouble by freeing us to only be concerned about today’s trouble.

The Only Place We Experience Grace

The past grace of God in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection is unspeakably precious to us because of all the benefits it provides us now and into eternity. The future grace of God, all that he promises to provide us in the future, is unspeakably precious because it’s what fuels our faith to keep us moving forward with joy and courage.

But the only place we experience the grace of God is in the present.

And the grace God provides us today is designed for today’s needs, or as Jesus says, today’s troubles. In Matthew 6:34, Jesus is letting us know, as he does elsewhere (John 16:33), that we’re going to have daily troubles. However, as John Piper says, “tomorrow’s troubles are not designed to be dealt with by today’s grace.” The grace God makes available to us today is designed to be completely sufficient for today’s troubles (2 Corinthians 9:8). That’s why Jesus wants us focused on today.

But Satan, as well as our sinful unbelief, wants us focused on the future—not the real future as defined by God’s promises, but an imaginary future as defined by our fears. From the context of Jesus' command (Matthew 6:19–34), we know this is the issue Jesus is addressing: the imagined fear that God will not provide for us.

Our anxiety about tomorrow messes up our lives when we allow it to govern us. It distracts our attention away from God’s gracious provision for us today to an imagined fear in an unreal tomorrow. And it disorients us by turning us away from seeking the kingdom of God to seeking earthly protection from the future we fear (Mat. 6:19–20; 33).

What Jesus Isn’t Saying

Now, Jesus isn’t saying we shouldn’t make provision for our future. We know this because a few sentences earlier he tells us to “lay up . . . treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:19–20). He simply wants us making provision for the right future—the only future that ultimately matters.

Jesus also isn’t saying we shouldn’t plan for the future. When he tells us to look at the birds and consider the lilies he’s not saying, “make no plans” (Matthew 6:26, 28). He’s simply reminding us of our Father’s care and his power to provide for the essential needs of all of his creatures, so that we don’t waste our brief lives trying to do God’s job. There is a division of labor. We are to focus on the kingdom work Jesus assigns us (John 15:16; Ephesians 2:10), and the Father is to provide all we need (Matthew 6:33).

Jesus wants our planning mainly focused on the effort of making disciples (Matthew 28:19–20) —all under the banner of “if the Lord wills” (James 4:15). And he wants us to make financial provision for our future by mainly investing our earthly wealth in the advancement of his kingdom (Luke 12:32–34).

Receive God’s Grace and Cast Your Cares

This way of life is not meant to be a lofty ideal. Jesus wants it to be our daily reality. His command that we “not be anxious for tomorrow” is a great mercy to us. If we obey him, he will relieve us of a burden too heavy for us to carry.

We lay aside the weight of tomorrow’s trouble by exercising two simple acts of faith: we receive and we cast.

We receive from God his sufficient grace for today. His grace does not always come in the packages we expect. Sometimes his grace looks like abundance and sometimes it looks like need (Philippians 4:12). We must learn that there is sufficient grace for prosperity and affliction, for joy and sorrow, for freedom and prison, for life and for death. They look different, but God will always provide enough grace for what we really need.
And we cast our anxieties for tomorrow on God because he cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). Our fears for the future are immensely unreliable. We are fools if we allow them to govern us. We don’t know the future, and neither does Satan—and he wouldn’t tell us the truth even if he did know (John 8:44). But God completely knows the future (Isaiah 46:10), so we are wise to trust him with it. We cast our cares on him by bringing our requests to him and letting his peace guard our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:6–7).

“Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34). And sufficient for today is today’s grace. Today’s grace won’t solve tomorrow’s troubles. The only way today’s grace addresses tomorrow is by helping us cast our anxieties on God. But this a huge help, because it frees us to focus on the one place we will experience God’s grace today: today.