

## One Day's Trouble at a Time. A Meditation on Matthew 6:34

By Jason Van Vliet

*Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

Our Saviour has told us not to worry and not to be anxious. That is clear from Matthew 6:25-34. However, some worries are easier to avoid than others. It's one thing not to worry about what you will eat or drink (v. 25). After all, at least here in North America we live in a time and place where there is plenty of food. Sure, budgets can be tight, but there's still always bread on the table. We don't really have to worry about that. Much the same is true about clothes (v. 28). Budgets can be tight, and mothers may shop at the local thrift stores, but we and our loved ones still have clothes to wear. We don't have to worry – too much – about that.

But what about the future? What will tomorrow bring? Now, *that* causes us many, many anxious thoughts. What will I do after I finish university? What kind of job security do I have? What about my health and the health of my loved ones? Will our children be faithful to the Lord all the days of their lives? Where is the church heading in this age of increasing secularism? How severe will the oppression of Christians become in this world? Nothing is quite so good at generating worries as thinking about the future.

And yet in Matthew 6:31, our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ says, no better, he commands, "Don't do it! If you are worrying about the future, stop it! And if you are not worrying about the future, don't even think about starting it!"

But how? Let's follow the three *therefores*. Three times our Saviour commands, "Do not

worry" (vv. 25, 31, 34). And each time he puts a *therefore* or a *so* in front of his command. So if we follow the chain of *therefores* back from v. 34, to v. 31, to v. 25, we come right back to the preceding pericope, or paragraph, where our Saviour lays down the basis for his tri-fold anti-anxiety imperative. In Matthew 6:19-24 Christ first teaches us that our heart has to be in heaven where our true, indestructible treasures are! The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with nothing less than every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ (Eph 1). That's a lot of treasure!



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Next, in the verses 19-24 Christ also teaches us that the eye of our mind must not be clouded by misplaced priorities. If we're too pre-occupied with earthly treasures that rot and rust, it inevitably starts to skew our whole life. Secondary things jump into the driver's seat of our soul. And the real priorities get left in the dust, if not in the ditch.

And finally, in the verses 19-24 Christ reminds us that so far as lordship is concerned: it's *either* God *or* Mammon, but it's most certainly not *both-and*. And right there is the heart of the matter. *This* is the solid foundation for the three "do not worry" commands that follow.

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Since God, not Mammon, is our Gracious Master, then the rest of the details of our lives *will* be lovingly put into place—both in the present and in the future. It's just as the apostle Paul says elsewhere, "He who did not spare *his own Son*, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also... [that is to say, how would it even be remotely possible]... along with Christ, graciously give us all things?" (Rom 8:32). Added to that, the future is just as certainly and clearly in the hands of our Father as the present and the past. We look at the future and many question marks flood into our minds. But when God looks at the future not even one single question mark enters his mind. Nothing is unknown or uncertain to him; after all, he has it all planned out, right down to the very last sparrow and hair (Matt 10:20-31).

Therefore, since even the future is not able to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38), you do not have to worry about what tomorrow will bring. Rather concern yourself with the day at hand and the challenges it may bring. After all, we creatures of the dust have our definite limits. Sixteen hours of toil and trouble is about as much as we can handle. And then we're told we should sleep for about eight hours before we tackle another day.

And if anxieties about tomorrow still manage to creep into your heart, do not forget what one servant of the Lord Jesus Christ taught us: prayer is the God-given anti-dote for anxiety. In language that is reminiscent of the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 6, the apostle Paul writes, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6).



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