
Wisdom for Worry Warts

by Desmond Ford

Living in the Present

We're standing, this very moment, at the meeting place of two eternities. There is the vast past behind us. There's the infinite future ahead of us. We cannot live in those eternities not even for a split second. If we try to do so, we can wreck ourselves physically and mentally. Let's live today. Let's live this hour, this moment. Robert Louis Stevenson was right. He said, "Anyone can carry his burden however hard until nightfall. Anyone can do his work however hard for one day. Anyone can live sweetly, patiently, lovingly, purely till the sun goes down. And this is all that life really means." "Be the day weary or be the day long, at length it ringeth to Evensong."

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

There are many things for us to remember when we're threatened with worry. First, God himself. When we really believe that God loves us—that he intends our best good, then we will cease to worry so much. We will trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Our ills and

our torments will disappear, for our wills will be swallowed up in the will of God. What a difference that can make for all of us! Consider Isaiah 26:3: "Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee,

because he trusts in thee." It can be translated this way: "Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind stops at thee, oh God." God lives in the future as well as the present. Nothing ever takes him by surprise. He counts even that fifth sparrow that was thrown in free when men paid two farthings for four sparrows. He attends the funeral of every sparrow. He counts the hairs of our head. Can we not let our minds stop at God? Thou dost keep him in perfect peace whose mind stops at God.

Living with Eternity

Now let us take a passage from the New Testament which reminds us of how to live. Look at Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (RSV). Paul was a man who had unending pressure. Ponder what he wrote:

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is



being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

That person to whom the eternities are real is the person who finds it easiest to live in the present moment. When God is real to us, when God is near to us, we will trust him with both past and future and look to him for wisdom and strength and live for the present. Those who see the invisible—they alone can do the impossible.

Recall those famous words found in Genesis 16:13 “Thou God seest me.” Many people understand these words to mean that we had better watch what we do for God will punish us. But that is not their intent. These words were first uttered by a poor heathen woman who had been banished from home and family and was wandering aimlessly in the desert. Suddenly, God spoke to her, and she confessed with joy, gladness, and confidence, “Thou God seest me.” However worried you are at this moment, God is bending over you in love. You are the purchase of the blood of his Son. He knew you before you were born. All of life’s ups-and-downs are meant to prepare you to live with him for eternity. Say to yourself often: “Thou God seest me,” which means he sees all our problems, all our perplexities, and all our difficulties. He not only sees, he cares, and he can and will do something about it. Trust him. Blessed is he whose mind stops at God.

The Promises of God—a Shield Against Worry

The promises of Scripture revealing the love of God are the very best protection against unnecessary worry. Take this passage from Romans, chapter 8 beginning at verse 28 (RSV):

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? ... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Paul lists all sorts of threats and then says “no” to all these things. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Did you catch his argument? “All things work together for good.” Many things are not good in and of themselves, but they can work together for good. There are lots of wheels inside your watch. If you take off the back of your watch and look, you’ll see some go one direction and some go the other. But they all work

together to make correct time. There are no good paintings without shadows and no good lives without trials, but all things work together for good to them that love God. Again, did you note his argument? “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?” (v. 32). Everything we need. Not everything we want. We ourselves are so foolish. If our slightest wish was met with an immediate fulfillment, we would destroy ourselves.

It’s the hard places and the hard situations that make us into the type of people who have learned to trust and obey regardless of the circumstances. There is an old proverb that says, “The north wind made the Vikings” and in contrast another proverb says, “Constant sunshine makes a desert.” The Christian isn’t promised a life free from pressures and anxieties that cause him to worry. He is promised the assurance that God will not forsake him, the certainty that God will be with him amidst all of life’s trials. The Christian is promised that ultimately he will see that all things have worked together for good, and that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, that nothing can separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. To be able to claim this promise is far, far better than to be the king of a great country or the wealthiest person in creation.

Realities That Defeat Worry

To have God as your father, heaven as your home, eternal life in the present, forgiveness of sins, to walk in step with the universe, that’s worth more than all the world’s riches. Believing this, life’s trials diminish in significance. There are those, of course, that call for our immediate action, our analysis of the cause and effect relationship existing behind the problem, in order prayerfully and carefully to make a decision, to commit ourselves to action. “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way”—so says the old hymn and it is right.

Paul said in this passage that death threatened many, life threatened others, and wicked angels some. But you know, very often, it’s the little things that cause us the most concern, not the big things, like impending death. I like the story Carnegie gives of Robert Moore who, in March 1945, was in a submarine under 276 feet of water. Around the sub, depth charges were exploding. And Moore could say this:

Those fifteen hours of attack seemed like fifteen million years. All my life passed before me in review. I remembered all the bad things I had done. All the little absurd things I had worried about. I had been a bank clerk before I joined the navy. I had worried about the long hours, the poor pay, the poor prospects of advancement. I had worried because I couldn’t own my own home, couldn’t buy a new car, couldn’t buy my wife nice clothes. How I hated my old boss who was always nagging and scolding. I remembered how I came home at night, sore,

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(*Wisdom, continued from page 7*)

grouchy, and I would quarrel with my wife over trifles. I worried about a scar on my forehead, a nasty cut from an auto accident. How big all those worries seemed years ago, but how absurd they seem when depth charges were threatening to blow me to kingdom come. I promised myself then and there that if I ever saw the sun and the stars again, I would never never worry again. Never, never, never! I learned more about the art of living in those fifteen terrible hours in that submarine than I had learned by studying books for four years in Syracuse University.¹

Here was a man who learned that troubles are like cannibals. The big ones eat up the little ones. It's not usually the threat of death about which we worry, it's some trifle that concerns our pride, our ego, or our greed. As our sins and follies cease, so will our worries.

Footnotes

1. *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, p. 56.

A Question of Health

Q

I understand that the germ theory, though generally accepted, is not regarded now as adequate for explaining the genesis of disease. Why not?

A

There is an increasing stress on the immune system as the great barrier to disease. A medical aphorism runs: "It is not so important what disease a man has, as what man has the disease." Similarly, one could say that in many cases it is not so important what germs have invaded a human, as what is the state of that person's immune system."

It was in 1870 that Robert Koch proved that bacteria could cause illness. A hundred years later scientists are stressing both the strengths and the limitations of Koch's disease model. It is now generally recognized that disease is usually the result of complex, not simple, interactions among agent, host, and vector (animal or insect purveyor). The germ-theory causation is not always applicable to pathogenic bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites, and does not include the often important concepts of the asymptomatic carrier state (that is, someone carrying and even imparting the germs but who himself reveals no symptoms), the biologic spectrum of disease, the epidemiologic and immunologic elements of causation, multiple causation, the reactivation of latent agents, the prevention of disease by eliminating the supposed cause, the possibility that clinical syndromes may have different sequences of causation in different settings.

Most chronic diseases today are not the products of virulent bacteria but of our own oral vices such as smoking and heavy intake of animal fats or refined foods.