

## Let God be your 'care-taker'.<sup>1</sup>

Within the pages of the New Testament, God has written out a three-fold 'prescription' to relieve our feelings of anxiety, worry and care.

First, we have the words of the Lord Jesus:

**'Do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" ... your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things<sup>2</sup> ... do not be anxious about tomorrow'** (Matt. 6. 31-34).

Let us be clear. The Lord wasn't forbidding us to *think* about tomorrow, or to *plan* for it.<sup>3</sup> He was attacking corroding care and worry.

It is often said, and rightly, that our anxiety about tomorrow doesn't empty tomorrow of its troubles, but it does empty today of its strength. For God provides us with our strength on the same basis He provides us with our bread, on a *daily* basis (v. 11). It is foolish therefore trying to carry tomorrow's load with today's strength. We can be confident that, if tomorrow does bring *fresh troubles*, God will provide us then with *fresh grace* to meet them.

The hymnwriter captured the point well:

I have nothing to do with tomorrow,  
My Saviour will make that His care,  
*Its grace and its strength I can't borrow,*  
*So why should I borrow its care?*<sup>4</sup>

Yes, **God 'knows'**.

Second, we have the words of the apostle Paul:

**'Do not be anxious about anything, 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 understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus'** (Phil. 4. 6-7).

In the very 'making known' of our requests, the automatic consequence, Paul says, is the enjoyment of God's own peace, a peace which fends off all crippling anxiety and mounts guard of our hearts and minds. For then we experience something of the serenity and calm which surrounds the very throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

How quickly my problems and (often needless) worries shrink when I drag them before the throne of God. For it is at that throne (i) that my needs and requests confront heaven's infinite resources, and (ii) I discover afresh that anxieties simply can't survive in God's presence.

Yes, **God hears**.

Third, and finally, we have the much-loved words of the apostle Peter:

**'Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you'** (1 Pet. 5. 7).

Peter's original readers certainly had every cause to be harassed by anxiety. Already, in the present, many of them suffered simply for being Christians, and the prospects for the future were even worse. In rather ominous words, the apostle warned them that the time had come for 'judgement to begin with the house('hold') of God' (1 Pet. 4. 16-17). The storm clouds were gathering!

Peter was alluding to the opening words of Psa. 55. 22, which in Peter's Greek Old Testament were rendered, 'Cast your anxiety (the same words used by Peter) on the Lord'. But to stifle any possible doubts on the part of his suffering and persecuted brethren (1 Pet. 5. 8), Peter added (and indeed emphasised<sup>5</sup>) the word 'all'. He wanted them to be confident that, notwithstanding their 'fiery trial' (1 Pet. 4. 12), they were at liberty to roll 'the whole of their worry' upon God.<sup>6</sup>

And this confidence was rooted, the apostle was quick to point out, in the fact that 'He cares for you', more literally translated, 'it matters to Him about you'. Let that sink in for a moment; that 'it matters' to the One who upholds the entire universe *about you and me!*

Yes, **God cares**.

Be off with you then, anxiety and worry (over COVID-19 or anything else); for we are assured that God has (i) *a mind that knows*, (ii) *an ear that hears*, and (iii) *a heart that cares*.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I thought that this title sounded rather better than, 'Let God be your *undertaker*!' That was a privilege reserved for Moses, Deut. 34. 6. 'Most likely the sepulchre remained hidden precisely to prevent the Israelites from taking Moses' body with them to Canaan, thus violating the divine command to disallow Moses entry there', Eugene Merrill, 'Deuteronomy', The New American Commentary, page 453.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the Lord's words a little earlier, in the context of prayer: 'your Father *knows* what you need before you ask him', Matt. 6. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Rom. 15. 23-25.

<sup>4</sup> D. W. Whittle (1840-1901) was 'breveted' with the rank of major at the end of the American Civil War. He wrote around 200 hymns, including 'I Know Whom I Have Believed', 'Moment by moment', 'The Banner of the Cross', and 'Showers of Blessing'. The lyrics of 'I have nothing to do with tomorrow' which are quoted in the main text are those of the 1906 version, which was copyrighted by his daughter, Mary ('May') Whittle Moody.

See [https://hymnary.org/text/i\\_have\\_nothing\\_to\\_do\\_with\\_tomorrow](https://hymnary.org/text/i_have_nothing_to_do_with_tomorrow), and ...

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel\\_Webster\\_Whittle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Webster_Whittle).

For many fascinating biographical facts about Daniel W. Whittle, see <http://drhamrick.blogspot.com/2013/01/>.

The last verse of 'Major' Whittle's quoted hymn reads:

So I've nothing to do with tomorrow,  
Its burdens then why should I bear?  
Should He fill it with joy or with sorrow,  
He will help me, with Him all to share.

<sup>5</sup> By the word order, 'All your care casting ...'.

<sup>6</sup> 'All the trials, the difficulties, the perplexing circumstances, and the temptations to which we are exposed, He is intimately acquainted with; and for that very reason His Word is full of promises, so that we should be encouraged to roll our burdens on Him. For it is not His will that we should carry them in our own strength; but speak to Him about everything, walk with Him continually, and so *roll all our burdens on Him*', George Müller, '*Hints on Prayer*', Addresses from the Leominster Conference ... accessed at <https://www.georgemuller.org/devotional/hints-on-prayer>.