

NO NEED TO WORRY

A sermon delivered by Batsell Barrett Baxter on May 11, 1958 at the Hillsboro Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, and heard over radio station WLAC.

In this twentieth century there are a great many who are disturbed by fears and anxieties. We are told from time to time in a statistical way how much increase there has been in this type of thing. I suppose the most definitive statement of all is the fact that there are more hospital beds in America being used for those with nervous disturbances or mental illnesses than for all other kinds of illness put together. Ours is an age in which a great deal of light has been shed upon the whole subject of mental illness, but ours is also an age in which the problem seems to be more extensive than in previous generations. We are afflicted with tensions, fears and anxieties more than ever before.

In addition to this we often find ourselves in real life situations which are full of complicated problems. Not just tensions and fears of the minds but actual situations which seem to have no solution plague us. Any adult has undoubtedly observed some of these situations. We have observed them in homes where there is tension between a father and a mother or between parents and children. Sometime we have seen these situations break up a home. In other instances there is a smoldering problem which lingers on to blast the happiness of that home. I have also observed them in school. Particularly have I sometimes wanted to weep when young people were brought before our faculty welfare committee, a committee that deals with the problems of young people's behavior. I have listened sometimes as young men told out-and-out lies and I have wondered what lay behind the telling of those falsehoods. I have seen others as they confessed their mistakes and asked for protection from parent's ire or condemnation. I have seen others as they tried to patch up the pieces of what was once a fine reputation.

Subject To Bondage

We have all seen a good many people facing their problems. Some of these are problems in business. Perhaps it is inability to get along well with those with whom one works, or some other problem. We are living in a world with many problems. We are not thinking just now of those of an international nature or of a national nature, but of personal problems. Sometimes we think of man's situation and it brings to mind a passage in Hebrews. After telling about Jesus coming into the world and taking on flesh and blood so that he might know the problems that we human beings have the writer goes on to tell how that he conquered death and the grave. Then he speaks of people who "were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. 2: 15). I get a picture, as I read this expression, of the human race staggering under heavy burdens. Sometimes the weight is an imaginary one in the mind; sometimes it is an actual problem. But in either cases the person goes along through the years bent almost double by his burden.

Many have been the times that I have wished that the person might be a baby again, or if not a baby at least a small child, and might start all over again. There would be some simple things that we would want to say to this person whose mind or whose life is so troubled. They are things that we believe might change all of this. It is my conviction that it is possible for us to live in such a way that we avoid almost completely all these tensions and burdens. Sometimes when you sit across the desk and hear a young person, or an older persons describe the problems you can see no way out. You feel frustrated because you cannot help very much, but if we could turn the clock back, if we could go back to the childhood years we could build on a different foundation, and travel a different road. Many of the problems by which we are frustrated in adulthood need not happen. We cannot go back and begin again, but we can take these better principles and build them into our lives. While we may not erase entirely the scars left by our tensions and problems they can do much to erase them.

God Must Guide

If I were able to convey to some tiny child the principles that would cause that child to grow up and avoid problems and tensions, the first thing that I would want to say, and consequently it is the first thing that I would say to us who are older, is, "Let God guide you completely and fully." To say this is to say something so simple that it may sound as if nothing has been said, but the problem that makes all other problems is that we want to go our own way. In the long ago, Solomon, who went his own way to an almost complete degree, eventually came in his last days to say, "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccles. 12:13). Think of his wives, his concubines, his ivory throne, his billions in gold, his fleets of ships, his mines and his influence. When it is all over hear him say, "Now my final conclusion is this, Fear God and keep his commandments."

Our problems come when we accept the standards of the world and when we begin to strive for the goals of the world. The standards of the world are not God's standards and the goals of the world are not God's goals. It is inevitable that there will be tensions and the breaking of people if we try to go in two directions. We just cannot do it. This principle that we would convey to our children, that we would try to grasp in our minds, is a singleness of heart, a singleness of purpose in which we let God determine the standards we live by and the goals we strive to achieve.

Now what I mean is simply that we take it seriously when we read, for example, the Lord's sermon on the mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit ... Blessed are they that mourn ... blessed are the meek ... blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness ... blessed are the merciful ... blessed are the pure in heart ... blessed are the peacemakers ..." (Matt. 5:3-9). Later, Jesus continued, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matt. 6:19-20). On another page he adds, "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." (Matt. 7:12). These are God's recommendations for the way men ought to think and live.

Remember also the admonitions in the second letter of Peter "Yea, and for this cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love." (I Peter 1:5-7). These we call the seven Christian graces. They are basic principles to live by.

Think of Paul as he wrote to the Galatians in chapter five, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23). A moment earlier he had said, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorceries, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, envyings, drunkenness ... of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:19-21). If we could just somehow dedicate ourselves to these great principles of pure, clean living and let the rest of the world go by!

It Does Not Matter

Honestly, it does not matter how widely we have traveled or how widely our names are known. It does not matter at all. Honestly, it does not matter how much wealth we accumulate. Honestly, it does not matter what power we are able to wield. So far as our own happiness and well-being in life are concerned these other principles are the things that make for happiness. Were there time we should like to take examples of some who have gone man's way and of the suffering that they have brought upon themselves. Think of the loneliness of a man of great power, the frustration of those who have not served their families' needs through the years. Think of the purity of life that so many pass by as if it were something old fashioned and out of date. God still says, "As he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living." (I Peter 1:15). If we will remain pure we will have no regrets as we look back. There will be nothing that we must keep covered up.

The simple life is the best life after all, and it is a wise man who keeps his wants few and simple. The man who moves in faster and faster company, after a while, gets to the place where he cannot quite keep up. He cannot make his legs move as fast as the rest of his body. As a child I remember while on a picnic running down the back side of an earth-filled dam. It looked so simple a it was for the first few steps. But as I raced down, soon my feet could not move as fast as the rest of my body, and I ended in a number of summersaults, tumbling, scraping and scratching. People are like that. They move in a fast society; they are here today; they are somewhere else tomorrow. It is a big income; it is two telephones on the desk; it is being in demand; it is being influential; it is driving a big car. It is having a house so filled with modern luxuries that we lose our balance and get away from the simple things like honesty, truthfulness, integrity, hard work and taking time to think. The man who does not spend an hour with himself every day, thinking, is an unfortunate man.

Things that Build

We need more time for the better things of life. When in adult life we become twisted inside, distraught, and under tension, and when we face real problems about us, the only answer is to slow the tempo, and go back to the things that are eternal. They have come from the God who made us. There is message from Paul that is wonderful: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). These are the solid things. These are the things that build a life.

The first great suggestion to any child beginning his life is simply that he let God direct him. You do not have any need to worry, if you do that. No need to worry--just no need to worry, if God is in complete control of your life. If you are going where he directs, if you are traveling his road, there is no need to worry. He will take care of you and after a while you will end where you want to be. The apostle Peter wrote, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you." (I Peter 5:6-7).

No Finer Example

Of all the many examples which could be cited there is no finer one than that of the apostle Paul. He wrote to Timothy as he grew older, "I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day. It (II Tim. 1:12). Paul had been pressed on every side, but he was limitlessly happy. "I know him whom I have I have trusted, and I am sure he is going to take care of me." To the Romans this same apostle wrote, "And we know that to them that love God all

things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28). To the Philippians this same apostle wrote, “In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6-7). Isn’t that wonderful? The peace of God shall guard us. We have no need to worry.

In, that same fourth chapter of Philippians, which I often like to read and meditate upon, there is the line further down which says, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.” A moment later he adds, “I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.” Almost at the end of the letter Paul adds, “And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:11, 13, 19). No need to worry! If we really commit ourselves to the Lord and let his goals be our goals, his standards our standards, we will live happy, well-adjusted lives. If we commit ourselves to the Lord’s way we will work hard, because the Lord teaches us that idleness and laziness are not blessings. When all is said and done, he will someday say to us, “You have worked well, you have done a good job, now come home.” So, there is no need to worry.