

TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR TOMORROW?

By Mark Dinsmore

Take no thought for tomorrow.... Really?

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew: 6:25-26, 31).

This verse is a timeless reminder that our soul is of immeasurable value, even while the outward man perisheth (2 Corinthians: 4:16). It is also a tremendous encouragement to cast all our cares on the Lord, especially concerning those things over which we are powerless.

And yet, there are many who run the risk of "tempting God" by failing to take reasonable precautions concerning our present perilous times. Therefore, Bereans must be careful to rightly divide the Truth, and consider the whole counsel of God concerning the wisdom of "taking thought for tomorrow."

For example, if we interpret this verse to be a *promise* of God concerning *all* of his children, then we must agree with critics of Scripture that God is a liar:

- Do not any believers starve to death?
- Do not any believers freeze to death?

Yes, many faithful children of God, throughout history, have been hungry, and cold, and have died from exposure and malnutrition—whether by martyrdom or "natural" events beyond their control.

Does this unfortunate fact tarnish God's faithfulness?

How is God's Word vindicated in this passage, which promises to care for his children, if many actually suffer and die?

Of course, we must first underscore that in the Father's matchless care for His children, He has miraculously answered the prayers of millions of saints throughout the ages who have cried for "daily bread." And yet, not all can testify to this "promise" of Scripture—at least not while on this planet.

Clearly, then, there must be another application to this precious promise and exhortation to "take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."

After all, if believers took this *literally*, not only would many be running around either poorly or partially clothed (or even naked of their own choosing) but they would also never go shopping for food—and if they did, they would never purchase more than *one* day's groceries at a time, lest they be in violation of this biblical "command" to "take no thought for tomorrow."

Thus, taken out of context, a group of believers could even create a doctrine to "be like the birds" who "sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet [God] feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Using this faulty logic, their doctrine would say, "the birds do not sow; they do not reap; they do not store; yet God feeds them, and we are far more valuable to God; therefore, God will feed us, whether we sow, reap, and store—or not."

Of course, such a belief would be ludicrous, and contrary to Scripture, which declares that in the church, if a man will not work, then neither shall he eat (2 Thessalonians:3:10).

The clue that "redeems" God's character is of course Jesus' statement, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body [more] than raiment?" So though each and every day we give thanks for "daily bread," the believer's ultimate assurance is not any temporal provision, but in God's eternal promise.

The point of this discussion is not to point out the obvious, but to address the tendency of some believers to trivialize God's Word by substituting clichés for serious consideration of potential calamity, such as the inevitable collapse of our nation's currency system.

Especially since the Y2K "debacle," when many believers followed prominent Christian leaders and prophecy "experts" to make preparations for surviving a massive global meltdown (which never came), many believers today assert that any similar preparations today constitutes a lack of faith, or a confession of fear, or both.

The verse that is commonly cited as a case for "non-preparedness" or even "anti-preparedness" is the very passage we're discussing, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."

Which among us today could truly live by the creed, "take no thought for tomorrow"?

Would taking this phrase literally lead us into a life of order and security?

Can you imagine if we applied such "wisdom" to our vacation plans? Career direction? College preparation? Marriage? Children? Gathering wood for the winter?

Today, most believers who are able have some form of savings account. Many also have multiple forms of insurance: health, fire, flood, life, etc. In addition, nearly everyone has to cover living expenses a month at a time, not just "one day at a time." In all of these areas, then, are believers violating the commandment of Jesus to "take no thought for tomorrow"?

One is reminded of the aphorism, "most people never plan to fail; they simply fail to plan."

Regarding the signs of our times, then, we must apply the whole counsel of God. We must not trust in riches, nor in our own understanding. In reference to John: 3:8, the old song by Second Chapter of Acts declares, "you don't know which way the wind blows, so how can you plan tomorrow." Indeed, we must submit all of our plans, hopes, and dreams to the Lord, and be content in His will:

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." NKJV (James 4:13-15)

On the other hand, the Lord rebuked the Pharisees for being able to forecast the weather (observing the direction of the wind) but yet failed to discern the time (Luke: 12:54-56).

In like manner, many of God's people are claiming "faith" for their lack of preparation for the fast-approaching financial storm. Spiritually, those who "take up your cross daily" (Luke: 9:23) should *always* be prepared to "lose everything" for eternity's sake—but practically, God has given us the ability to see and recognize not only spiritual truths revealed by His Spirit, but has also gifted us with the ability to see and recognize, in advance, the signs of potential and impending physical and financial hardship for a majority of our population, which will in turn impact all believers.

Therefore, while we must indeed "take no thought for tomorrow" in terms of not being anxious for our lives, it is only common sense to batten down the windows and store provisions (and/or have an exit plan to a safe location prepared) before a hurricane hits.

Once we recognize and understand the signs of the times then, we must also recognize and understand that it is absolutely impossible for every believer to prepare for every eventuality. Therefore, we must first seek wisdom and godly counsel, starting with Scripture.

To be sure, we must first and foremost advance an eternal perspective regarding our temporary physical dwellings—both that which houses our material possessions, and the one that houses our souls. Next, we must also consider practical steps to provide for, and protect, our families and loved ones—recognizing that God grants us that wisdom and that ability—the very act of which includes "taking thought for tomorrow."

As with many "controversial" (misapplied) Bible passages, views are often extremely polarized.

But is preparing for winter season, or an approaching storm, a "lack of faith?"

Or is it practical, God-given wisdom?

Is it any less "faithless" to prepare for a temporary, transitional period of "domestic unrest" in our nation?

After all, many believers buy health and life insurance—and even extra AFLAC (if they are able)—to get them through unexpected tough times. How much more should we be prepared when we can actually *see* these things approaching?

Whether we are able to prepare for them or not, God is always present. And, he will always use bad things happening to good people to draw us closer to Him. After all, Jesus promised to never leave us, nor forsake us. And yet, we regularly face physical consequences for our own actions and the actions of others—some within our "control" and some of which we do not even see.

But while we must take the position of surrendering our souls and our possessions perpetually to the Lord by taking up our cross daily, we must also utilize common sense and reason as we seek to minister in increasingly perilous times, "occupying until He comes."