What is Faith?

What Difference Does Faith Make to Being Anxious and Worried?

by Ernest O'Neill Program 71

What do you do when you find yourself utterly overwhelmed with worry and anxiety? That's what we're talking about these days. Especially, what difference does faith in a God or a Supreme Being in the universe make to worries and anxieties in your life.

One of the differences we've been saying it makes is that we begin to listen to what His Son said. You remember Jesus, who we believe is the Son of the Creator of the universe because of His perfect, sinless life and His power over nature, disease and His power over death itself. We believe He is the Son of the Creator of the universe. One of the things He said, you remember, is if you ever want to look it up in the Bible, is recorded in Matthew 6 and verse 25. He said, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink; nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"

We have been saying that often the first, best response to worry immediately when it occurs in your mind is to stop. Stop it! Stop it in order to obey God's injunction to us that we shouldn't worry and we shouldn't be anxious. If you say, "Well now, that's kind of dumb. I mean, just because He says it?" Yes, but you know who He is? He's the God who can see where the sun is at the moment, and you might not be able to see exactly where it is in space. He's the God who knows where the planets are that our radio telescopes haven't yet discovered. He's the God who knows what the weather is going to be three months from now.

He's the God who knows the person that you're going to meet in two years' time. It's this Person who says to you, "do not be anxious". After all, if I said to you, "Listen. Don't worry about the interest rates. They're going to come down." You might say, "Well, how do you know?" But if Paul Volcker says it, you'll say he's the head of the Federal Reserve. He must know a thing or two. Now it's not Paul Volcker that is saying this. It's not the President that is saying this. It's the president of the whole universe. It's the Creator who made you, who knows the way your life is going to turn out. It's Him that says, "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall put on." Don't be anxious.

So often the best first step when worry and anxiety begin to take hold of your mind is simply to stop it. Don't try to work out the details of the worst-case situation so that you're able to face it and cut your losses. Instead, simply stop worrying. Just stop it at the moment. It is, I agree with you, an act of faith, but it's a reasonable act. It's an act that is based on your belief that there is a God and that He is the Father of Jesus and that He is actually able, because of His infinite mind that is far higher than our best computers, to foresee all possible permutations of eventualities that will take place in our lives. He's able to work them together for good in our lives so that His purpose for our lives is fulfilled. It's very reasonable in the light of that kind of belief and the kind of evidence that backs up that belief down through the centuries showing us that He has done that for thousands and thousands of people.

You remember Joseph who was sold into slavery and you remember Joseph saying, "You, who sold me into slavery intended it for evil, but God intended it for my good, and that's why now you see me the prime minister of Egypt." So, we have all kinds of evidence down through the centuries that this God

has been able to work all things according to the council of His will.

It's in the light of that evidence that it's very reasonable to obey what He says about worry because it's far better than the head of the Federal Reserve Bank telling us about interest rates. It's far better than the President telling us how the country is going and the state of the union. This is a word from the Maker of the whole universe. He must know how my life is going. He must know how it's turning out and He wouldn't tell me a lie. He hasn't shown himself a cruel God that delights in dangling people in agony and pain. He is a kind God who has shown Himself generous and kind to all kinds of little children and widows and those who have nobody to care for. He has shown Himself as God to them. So when He says, "Don't be anxious," there must be good reason for it.

So often the first, best response to worry and anxiety is just to stop it. To stop it on the very sure and reliable word of your Creator who says, "Don't do it. Don't do it! I'm your Father. I don't want you to worry and there's no need for you to worry. I have your life planned out. I don't deal with you according to your sins. I don't reward you according to your iniquities. I certainly don't deal with you according to your errors. Otherwise, you would be dead by now with all the wrong things you've done. So don't worry. Don't be anxious. Don't try to take the whole world into your own hands again. Don't try to become God as you were before, trying to rule your life. I am God. I am the one who sees the things you cannot see. You've just to do a few little things."

Indeed, and as we've shared before, you've only to see the day through to sunset. For you there is no tomorrow. For you there is no ability to see beyond sunset. indeed, in a way, there's no ability that you have to see beyond this present moment. So don't be anxious. Often that's one of the best moves we can

make when we're faced with worry and anxiety to just remember what the Creator of the universe has said to us, to see the good ground and the good qualifications He has for telling us that kind of thing and for giving us that kind of direction. Then simply obey Him and don't worry and don't be anxious.

Now, some of us get caught in the move that ... well, I don't know if you believe that there is a Satan, but I do. I believe there is a devil, but if you want to talk about it as a power of evil, that's okay. However it happens, some of us allow the powers and currents of evil or the devil or Satan to embroil us more and more in the particular situation that we are facing. So we have barely done that. We have barely said "Yes, God said don't be anxious. Okay, I'm not going to be anxious. I'm going to thank you Lord that you have this thing under control, even though I can't possibly see a way out. I understand that people like Joshua and Moses and all kinds of other people were in these situations before where they could see no way out at all. Yet, they rested completely in You. So, I'm going to do that. I'm going to rest in you Lord God and thank You that You can see the end from the beginning and that You have this thing in Your hands. I'm going to commit my way unto the Lord. 'Trust in Him and He will act.' I'm going to do that, Lord. I do that now."

Then the spirit of evil or the currents of evil or whatever you like to call them, the social, psychological, soulish belief that fills our society moves in upon us, or the devil or Satan moves in upon us, and says, "Just think once more about it. Just go over it once more in your mind and maybe you could add to your faith in God a little more understanding". Don't do it! Don't do it. Don't get embroiled in the thing again. You know how that goes. You think of the thing again and then, before you know it, you're down in the slough of despair. No, don't think about it. Faith is not thinking about the worrisome thing. it's not being anxious about the thing. If you say, "That's complete irresponsibility!", no, faith

is very obedient and responsible when you're actually at the job or when you're in the situation where something has to be done. Faith is very responsible. You ought to do your best in the actual situation. But you ought to DO, not think, because the thinking in anxiety is only a trick of the power of evil in the world to destroy you and debilitate you and prevent you being able to fit to meet the actual situation that you have to face the next day. So, no, don't be embroiled in it. it's not irresponsible. it is only irresponsible if you're not faithful when you're in the situation.

Apart from the situation, you're to regard it as absolutely dead and buried. You're to commit it to God and leave it in His hands. That's what He says, "Commit your way unto the Lord. Trust in Him and He will act." That's what I would like to share about tomorrow.