

Biblical Assault on Fear of the Future

“And *my God will meet all your needs* according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”
-Philippians 4:19

While staring before an unknown and uncertain future, our immediate emotional response is usually fear and doubt. What will the future hold for us, especially transitioning from our role as students into an active responsible role in society?¹ Will God financially provide? What in the world is going to happen? The questions can pile into an unworkable heap of confusion. In this short essay, I have attempted to pinpoint the reason behind such fear and doubt and then to obliterate it by Biblical promises.

It seems that a fear of the future basically boils down to a lack of trust in God. Even after we have seen marvelous and miraculous events in our life, we still lack faith in God’s providence and sovereign hand. Take for example the case when Jesus and his disciples were on the Sea of Galilee and an unexpected storm arrives. Jesus of course is asleep and the disciples panic.² Jesus assumes that fear is directly related to *lack of faith*.

“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so *afraid*? Do you still have no *faith*?”

-Mark 4:39,40

We stare into an unknown future and the uncertainties drive us to a point that we either 1) do not think that God is in control of our lives or that 2) we know that God is in control, we are just scared out of our mind as to what this God will actually have in store for us. Each of these responses is completely out of line with who God is. We will address each of these responses.

The first, that we don’t think God is in control. There is no more Biblical heresy than to assume that God is not sovereign. The very nature of being God is to be King, that is, to be in control. Once we strip God of his absolute sovereignty, we strip Him of His deity. John Frame, in his text *The Doctrine of God*, devotes 742 pages to the fact that the three distinct attributes of God are control, authority, and what he calls “covenant presence.” He unfolds this idea by showing text after text where God is in control of the weather, the ocean’s tides, the wind, the animals, the clouds, the history of time, etc. If God is sovereign over every minute detail of existence, why would he then refuse to be sovereign over our very lives? I will not spend as much time and energy on this truth as John Frame has, but I will point out one famous text.

“And we know that in *all things* God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

-Romans 8:28

¹ I would say “real life” here but I actually despise that term. The life beyond school is no more real than the life in school. It is merely a different phase of the same thing.

² It is interesting because it often feels like God is asleep. It feels like He is either not there or not concerned. We must realize that God’s timing is much different than ours, and as we look back on a life that we thought God was sleeping through, He was actually beautifully orchestrating every last detail.

We must realize the significance of the phrase “all things.” God is a mighty King who is in control over every detail, even over paper cuts and hang nails; belly button lint and electric bills; untied shoe laces and burned biscuits, and therefore, God must be and most definitely is in control over great things and events as well; lest He cease to be God.

We will pause there and move on to the second response, that is, we know that God is in control but we fear what He will do to us. This is too a lack of faith, for it is a lack of trust in God’s goodness to His people.

“For *I know the plans* I have for you, declares the Lord, *plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”
-Jeremiah 29:11-13

There it is. The Almighty King of the universe had chosen to reveal to us in this simple text that He has a plan for us. He is orchestrating every aspect and detail of our lives. There is nothing that surprises Him, nothing that throws his plans off. Nothing can stop an Almighty Being.

“I know that you can do all things; *no plan of yours can be thwarted.*”
-Job 42:2

Once we realize God’s sovereignty, we must not fail to realize the nature of His character. God is love. God is good. He has explicitly said that His plans are *to prosper us*. He has plans *not to harm us*. He is working all things *for our good*. What else do we need to hear to be convinced that God is in the business of working all things for our good and His glory?

Picking back up where we left off in first response, one of my favorite Caedmon’s Call lyrics is “You can’t plan the ends and not plan the means.” If God has great plans to bring us to point Z, that is, a good and glorious future, God must then be working the details of A through Y to get us there. That means that God has us right where He wants us. Take comfort in the fact that you are where you are supposed to be right now. God has you there to get you to a different place.

The Biblical logic of Romans chapter 8 is absolutely wonderful. We shall pick up in verse 29. God foreknows us, predestines us, calls us, justifies us, and will one day glorify us. To do this, he had to sacrifice His only Son. Paul, speechless over this unbelievable truth, then asks a question in verse 31.

“What, then, shall we say in response to this?”
-Romans 8:31

What can you say when you’ve said it all? Paul never explicitly answers the question, but gives us enough information that the question clearly answers itself. We must realize that God is good, that God is all-powerful and that God is in control. Not only that, but God is *sold out for our good*. The “this” that Paul is asking about is in reference to the previous chain of

events that God has done. He has worked it from the beginning of eternity that we would come to Him. He has worked all things for us. God is not against us, but for us. Once we realize this, then the logic of Paul's thought is absolutely beautiful.

"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

-Romans 8:31,32

In other words, if God has done all of this for us (given up his only Son to a barbaric torturous death for the sake of bringing us to Himself) then God most definitely will not cease to give us all things. If God is capable of doing the worst and yet simultaneously greatest thing imaginable, that is, not sparing His own Son, then God is certainly capable of lesser mercies. He will not cease to be in control of our lives. He will not cease to be good to us. We are His. He is for us. He is for us. He is for us. He is *for* us.

To get to the root of it all, fear, or rather lack of faith, is actually *sin*. God commands us not to fear.³ Therefore, fearing the future is a direct defiance of God's commands. It is staring before an Almighty Sovereign God and either suggesting that He is not capable of providing or that He will not fulfill His promises. Both are an assault to God's name.

"But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

-Isaiah 43:1

To not trust God is to suggest that He is untrustworthy. It is to suggest that He is both not good and not sovereign. This is a trampling of God's glory. The Biblical truth is clear; our futures, however uncertain to us, are secure in the one who has planned them from the beginning of time.

"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

-Philippians 4:19

So what shall we then do? One of my favorite Biblical images of the Christian life is that of war. The Bible portrays the Christian life as a militant struggle against demonic forces, sin, the world, and to preserve our own faith. Life, for the Christian, is war. We must adopt a wartime mindset in our battle for faith. Our very faith is to be fought for in the face of such adversities like doubt, fear, secular influences, insecurities, etc. It is easy to affirm the truth that God is sovereign, but to live it must be intentionally and militantly fought for.

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

³ This is not to be confused with the Biblical mandate to "fear God" (1 Peter 2:17). This fear is of course the reverent awe that an Almighty King so deserves and naturally produces from a soft heart. The fear we are discussing in this essay is an emotional fear rooted in a lack of trust in an Almighty King's providential provision. The fear of God is required. The lack of trust in God's goodness or sovereignty is *sin*.

-2 Corinthians 10:4,5

“Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may *fight the good fight, holding on to faith.*”

-1 Timothy 1:18

“*Fight the good fight of the faith.* Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

-1 Timothy 6:12

“*Guard* the good deposit that was entrusted to you – *guard it* with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”

-2 Timothy 2:14

“Endure hardship with us like *a good soldier of Christ Jesus.* No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer.”

-2 Timothy 2:3,4

“I have fought the good *fight of faith*, I have finished the *race*, I have kept the faith.”

-2 Timothy 4:7

The Christian life can be summed up as this: Believe that God is working all things for our good, fight against the lies that He isn't, and then live like He is. May we never fear what the future has for us, for if we are in Christ, the future is a secure and glorious reality.

“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

-Romans 11:36

“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

-Philippians 1:6

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

-2 Cor 9:8

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

-Matthew 28:20

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

-1 Timothy 6:17