

## Handling Care and Stress

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**1Peter 5:7** Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

We live in a world full of causes for care and for resulting stress. From the time we wake up in the morning, 'til we fall asleep at night there are multiple incidents and thoughts that can trigger anxiety, worry, stress. Stress can trigger stress! Thinking about a vacation can trigger stress. Going on vacation can trigger stress. Getting ready for church can trigger stress. Going home can trigger stress. Planning to fix dinner or supper can trigger stress. Going to sleep can trigger stress! In fact, under the right conditions, almost any event we face can cause anxiety, worry, concern which then leads to stress. So, amidst all this potential for becoming stressed, humans have a hard time not falling into a pattern of worry, fretting, being filled with care. But, God has always known all about this, and that is what our text is about. He has a solution for it all.

Now, the Lord has always known that there would be things in our lives that could make us worry and get tense. He also knows very well that, as humans, we are all too prone to do just that. But, He does not let these things come to pass in order to cause us stress. Rather, along with the life events we face, He has given us a remedy for how to avoid going down the "stress road." That is what He is telling us in this text verse, and that is what we want to think about today.

I. First, this is excellent advice for a number of reasons related to the human condition. Let's think about some of these.

- Your health and well being depend on this
  - Carrying a load of care causes many illnesses and can lead to even more. Common ones are:
    - headaches, back pain, jaw pain, sleeplessness, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, high blood pressure, heart disease, psychological disorders, suppression of the immune system, heart-burn, stomach pain, diarrhea, substance abuse and drug addiction, heavy drinking of alcohol, asthma, post-traumatic stress disorder
  - This simple advice is a miracle cure for a lot of problems
  - Casting all your care upon the Lord can improve your health and your sense of well-being
- Acting alone, you can't change one thing which causes care
  - **Mat. 6:27** Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? (Note, the Greek here for "taking thought" is the same as "having care.")
  - **John 15:5** "...without me ye can do nothing."
  - We are much like my tilapia in the aquaponics tank in my back yard (explain their predicament this week. How they were helpless to remedy the threat, and how I took action to relieve the stress that was killing them).
- We can expect more things to come up which could tempt us to be full of care as the Lord's coming gets nearer.

- It is a death blow to pride within ourselves
    - Note that this instruction is preceded by Peter mentioning and contrasting pride and humility
    - It appears that the Holy Spirit teaches us here that there is at least one thing that will keep us from casting all our care upon God...that thing? Pride. **Ch. 5:5-6** "...for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. 6 Humble yourselves...casting all your care upon Him, for he careth for you."
    - It is an erroneous sense of self-sufficiency that keeps us from giving our cares over to God. That kind of sense of self-sufficiency comes from human pride.
- II. This is not an invitation for people to become irresponsible
- I have known people who interpreted Jesus' guidance (**Mat. 6:25**) "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" to be the Lord giving them permission to quit work, quit doing anything, and let somebody else take care of their needs. The same kind of folks will likely be tempted to take our text to mean they can just sit down, do nothing, and the Lord will take care of them. This text is not about stopping being industrious and productive. This text is about not worrying or fretting about conditions. There's not the slightest suggestion that it means to just sit down and take no responsibility. Just because people work hard and long, and stay busy and productive doesn't mean they are stressing about something.
  - We need to remember the bible principles about productivity or lack of it to realize that the Lord never gave this advice as an excuse to lay down and be served.
    - **Prov. 20:4** The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; *therefore* shall he beg in harvest, and *have* nothing.
    - **Prov. 6:10-11** *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: **11** So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.
    - **2Thess. 3:10** "...if any would not work, neither should he eat."
  - So how do we reconcile our text with the need to be productive and useful?
    - Are you worried about where the groceries are coming from next week? Start looking for a place to get them, or money to buy them with, but cast your fretting about it upon the Lord.
    - Are you worried about the car payment or some other bill? There's work to be done out there to earn the money for it, but cast your care about it upon the Lord.
    - Are you worried about how a loved one is going to get by next week because they are invalid or sick, or unable to get something done? Jump in there and see if you can fill that need, but cast your care about it upon the Lord.
    - When we try to be productive and useful while continuing to carry about all that care, we are like the guy who receives from a friend a carrying case with some needed tools in it along with a snack, some water and Gator Aid, a good book to read. He is to take the case and its contents to go do a project. So, he inventories everything, then before he picks up the case to go do the project, he takes a shovel and fills the case with dirt on top of all his tools and amenities. The case can represent the situation the Lord has handed him, the tools and amenities can represent the gifts and materials needed to handle the situation, and the dirt will represent those cares we are talking about. When the guy shoveled in the dirt, it just hid the tools and amenities, and made the case all the more heavy without adding anything to the success or progress of the experience lying ahead for him.

III. No kind of care (anxiety, stress, worry) is excluded - "...casting **all** your care...."

- We tend to categorize problems and one of the most popular statements about this is, "Well, I didn't want to bother you with it..." This is the way we also often do in deciding what we will bring to the Lord.
  - Do you have a serious sickness that has you almost worried sick? Cast that care on the Lord.
  - But what about something seemingly insignificant? Such as, do you have a bolt that is loose on your car and is causing you care...cast that care on the Lord
  - Are you fretting about the threat of nuclear war because of what Iran and Korea are doing...cast that care on the Lord
  - Or is it something as seemingly minor as, are you just slightly distracted because a baby has been fussing...cast that care on the Lord
- Whether we cast some care on the Lord or not has nothing to do with our sense of urgency, or measurement of its severity, but rather the Lord tells us to cast them all upon Him.
- Being selective about what care we commit to the Lord is like standing in a closet with 5 different poisonous snakes trying to decide which two of the five we will get out of the way!
  - There are things in this world that cause great destruction, trouble, and stress. One of these is a nuclear bomb. Another is a monstrous hurricane, or huge tornado. A nuclear bomb once killed a million people in Japan. In 2005, a monstrous hurricane (Katrina) killed 1,846 people and wrecked about 275,000 homes along the Gulf Coast. Back in May, a huge tornado hit in Oklahoma and killed 24 people and destroyed millions of dollars worth of property (same in MO last year, killing 124 people and destroying 8,000 buildings). These were huge things that caused enormous damage and stress. But do you happen to know what it is in this world that dwarfs all of them for destructiveness and creation of stress? A germ (explain).
    - In 430 BC, during the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta, the Greek historian told of a great pestilence that wiped out over 30,000 of the citizens of Athens (roughly one to two thirds of all Athenians died)
    - In 165 AD, Greek physician Galen described an ancient pandemic, now thought to be smallpox, that was brought to Rome by soldiers returning from Mesopotamia. At its height, the disease killed some 5,000 people a day in Rome. By the time the disease ran its course some 15 years later, a total of 5 million people were dead.
    - In 541-542 AD, there was an outbreak of bubonic plague in the Byzantine Empire. At the height of the infection, the disease, it killed 10,000 people in Constantinople every day.
    - In March 1918, in the last months of World War I, an unusually virulent and deadly flu virus was identified in a US military camp in Kansas. Just 6 months later, the flu had become a worldwide pandemic in all continents. When the Spanish Flu pandemic was over, about 1 billion people or half the world's population had contracted it. It is perhaps the most lethal pandemic in the history of humankind: between 20 and 100 million people were killed, more than the number killed in the war itself
- Point: it is the small, seemingly insignificant, care that may threaten to become a world of trouble and stress for any of us. So, God is most wise to invite us to cast **all** our care upon him.

IV. God incentivizes us to cast all our care upon Him by reminding us that He cares for us: "...for He careth for you."

- "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus."
- "...come unto me...I will give you rest."
- God Will Take Care of You
- **Psalms 55:22** Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
- Which means that if God cares for us He will without doubt take care of whatever it is that we have care (anxiety, worry, stress) about.
- This is not just instruction to stop worrying, but is instruction that says, "Cast all your care upon God. He cares enough about you to work it out for you. Meantime, you need to be rid of the weight of worry about it. That worrying will mess you up, and it may cause you to try to find your own solutions to whatever is causing you stress.
  - When teaching us to get rid of our fears and worries, Jesus said something that should make us understand how much He cares for us:
    - **Mat. 10:29-31** "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. **30** But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. **31** Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.