

# The Do's and Don'ts of Prayer

*Non Series - Matthew*

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Good evening. It is good to see you tonight. I am going to ask you, please, to turn to the book of 1 Peter chapter five and we read tonight beginning with verse five. We are going to read to verse 11.

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

Let's pray together.

*Father in heaven, I thank you for the privilege that is mine tonight to open your Word and to preach to your people. I thank you for this and I acknowledge, Lord, that I know that I am not only unworthy of this, Lord, I am incapable of doing it in a way that would please you and that would be good for your people apart from the power and the ability that you give by your Spirit. And so, Lord, I ask you to help me tonight to preach your Word. Lord, grant me clear thoughts, clear expression and then, Lord, I pray that your Spirit would take my words as I share your Word and, Lord, apply your Word to the hearts of your people in a way that is effectual, in a way that is edifying, in a way that convicts, in a way, Lord, that also builds up and encourages. Lord, I pray for my*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 5:5-11.

*brothers and sisters who are here tonight. I pray, Lord, that they would receive blessing from your Word. Lord, you know what they need and I pray that you would meet us not at the point of what we think we need, but at the point of what you know we need tonight.*

*We also pray for anyone in our midst this evening, Lord, who is in need of salvation. We ask that, Lord, you would demonstrate your grace and your power by bringing someone within the sound of my voice to true faith in your Son Jesus. Lord, we know that if that doesn't occur, your Word doesn't return void. So we ask you, Lord, to plant the seed of your Word in hearts or to water what has already been planted and, Lord, in due time to bring it to fruition. We love you, Lord. We thank you for your love for us and we pray for this tonight in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Worry. Discouragement. Depression. Despair. Discontent. Fear. All those words are captured by, they are in some way included in this word that we find down in verse seven where we are told in 1 Peter chapter five verse seven that we are to cast all our anxieties on him, because he cares for us. Anxiety. It is a major problem, isn't it? It is a major problem in this world.

I was reading this week a particular website where they offer, I guess, counseling, that sort of thing, some kind of help for people who are dealing with anxiety disorders. And on this website they said that 43 percent of North Americans take mood altering drugs every day. Think about that. Almost half the population of the United States and Canada every day have to take some kind of medication that alters their mood in order to cope.

In the year 2002 [?] and [?] two of the more popular anti anxiety medications, at least in 2002, now those two medications ranked seventh and eight in that hear on the top 10 prescribed medications list in the United States. So think about all the medications that are prescribed. Seventh and eighth on the list of the top 10 were anxiety medications.

The sales on those two medications totaled that year almost five billion dollars. So anxiety is not only a big problem. It is also big business.

And we know from Scripture that this is not just a problem for lost people. God's people deal with anxieties, too, don't they?

Psalm 94 verse 19 says this:

“When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.”<sup>2</sup>

Lord, your consolations cheer my soul. But, notice, he acknowledges there are times when the cares of his heart are many.

Psalm 139 verse 23 says this:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 94:19.

And the Hebrew word translated “thoughts” there is a word that literally means disquieting thoughts or anxious thoughts. In fact, the New American Standard translates it, “Know my anxious thoughts.”

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my [anxious] thoughts.”<sup>4</sup>

Proverbs 12:25 says:

“Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.”<sup>5</sup>

And so, again, all those verses acknowledge that God’s people, the psalmist, the write of Proverbs, we know what it is to have cares in our heart. We know what it is to be anxious about things.

We also know from Church history that some of the greatest servants of the gospel that the Church has ever known have battled with discouragement and depression. Who is the most notable in your mind? If you think of someone who is famous in his service, a gospel preacher who struggled with discouragement, who comes to your mind? Charles Haddon Spurgeon, right? Major battles with depression.

The question I want us to think about tonight is this. Does God have an answer for anxiety? Does God have an answer for the troubled heart? Does God have an answer for worry and fear and discouragement and depression? Do we have to be medicated to cope or is there a biblical solution for the anxieties of the soul?

The good news tonight is this. God does have an answer. And that answer we discover in 1 Peter chapter five verses five through 11. Two main points I want to share with you tonight. First of all we are going to talk about an analysis of anxiety. We are just going to briefly take time to acknowledge what it is from the Scriptures. And then we are going to look at the answer for anxiety. And notice I didn’t say answers. I said answer because I think you can actually sum it up in a word, but we are going to see that the answer for anxiety is expressed, it is manifested in a manifold way.

So it is a single answer, but the expression of it, the application of it is going to have great variety. And if we are going to walk in the answer, we are going to have to experience the multi fold application of it in our lives. We are going to have to apply this answer in all these different areas.

But, first of all, let’s just talk about what it is. I have already mentioned it. But I think it is important that we acknowledge what we are talking about when we are talking about anxiety, because I think what we do many times is we are not honest about what we are

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 139:23.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 12:25.

dealing with. We are dealing with anxiety. We don't want to admit that we are, so we re-label it. We call it something else.

When he says in verse seven, "...casting all your anxieties on him,"<sup>6</sup> what is it that we are to cast on to the Lord? What is anxiety?

Well, does anyone here ever worry? That is anxiety. Worry is a form of anxiety. You look into the future and you think about what may happen or what may not happen and your heart is troubled over it. Discontentment. You are just not as someone might put it, I am just not happy, just not satisfied. That is a form of anxiety. Discouragement.

Anybody come in here tonight discouraged? I might have asked you are you anxious and you have said, "No, I am not anxious. I am just discouraged. My heart is just sad."

Well, that is a form of anxiety. Depression, fear. Anyone here tonight afraid? In fact, this thread runs through many of the things that we have just already mentioned, right? I mean, I am worrying. Well, what is that? It is a form of fear. I am discouraged about something. And many times our discouragements have to do with something we are afraid of. Where is this going to end up? Where is this headed? What is the end road or what is the end of this road? What am I going to meet with if it continues this way?

Well, that is just a form of fear.

Here is a great biblical description of it. Look at Psalm 42 and look at verse five.

Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation  
and my God.  
My soul is cast down within me;  
therefore I remember you  
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,  
from Mount Mizar.  
Deep calls to deep  
at the roar of your waterfalls;  
all your breakers and your waves  
have gone over me.  
By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,  
and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.  
I say to God, my rock:  
"Why have you forgotten me?  
Why do I go mourning  
because of the oppression of the enemy?"

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 5:7.

As with a deadly wound in my bones,  
my adversaries taunt me,  
while they say to me continually,  
“Where is your God?”  
Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation and my God.<sup>7</sup>

Here is a psalm, actually, that would represent a man who would encourage himself with truth. He is troubled by adversaries. He is troubled by those who would taunt him for his faith in God. And the result of this adversarial relationship, the result of this taunting is that his heart is depressed. Why is my soul cast down?

So there is this feeling of sadness, depression, but he also described it as turmoil. Why are you in turmoil within me?

He talks about going about mourning and feeling as though God has forgotten him. What is this? This is anxiety.

Now look back at 1 Peter chapter five. The question is: Is there a biblical answer? Is there an answer in Christ Jesus for the anxious heart? The answer is yes and it is simple and it is straightforward.

You say, “Well, what is it? What is the answer for the anxious heart?”

Well, look, again, if you would, at verse five.

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.<sup>8</sup>

What is the answer that you see there in verses five through seven? It can be captured in this word “humility.” Do you see verse seven?

“...casting all your anxieties.”<sup>9</sup>

Do you understand that is actually the expression of what he has called for at the beginning of verse six?

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 42:5-11.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter 5:5-7.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Peter 5:7.

How do I humble myself under the mighty hand of God? I humble myself by casting all my cares upon him. That is how I humble myself so that the answer for the anxious heart is humility.

Or, we could turn it around and say this. Why do we have anxious hearts? Answer Pride.

Now I just want to ask you before we go any further. If I would have asked you tonight: Do you struggle with anxiety? Do you struggle with worry? Do you struggle with discouragement? If I were to ask you do you think the root of your problem is pride, would that be the first thing that would have come to your mind? Probably not, right? Because most of the time if someone is dealing with discouragement, depression, despair, how do they usually think that they think about themselves? They think that they think about themselves in a lowly way, right? In fact, the cycle analysis of such a person would say they struggle with a poor sense of self worth.

So man examining man would say that his problem is not pride. His problem is that he doesn't think more highly of himself. But here is the great physician of the soul. Here is the only one who accurately knows the heart of man, right? Jeremiah 17:9.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”<sup>11</sup>

And the next verse tells us who can know it and who is that? It is God. Only God accurately understands what is going on in your heart tonight. And almighty God who has breathed this book tells us that the answer for the anxious heart is to humble one's self and you humble yourself by casting your cares upon him. So as much as it may surprise us, the one who knows our hearts tells us the problem with the anxious soul is pride. How can that be?

Well, think about it. If you are a child of God what has the Lord told you about whatever it is that is going on in your life right now? What has the Lord told you about his attitude and his mindset concerning you? Does the Lord love you? Is he sovereign? Is there anything going on in this world tonight that God does not know about?

And so I am going to guess he absolutely understands your current situation. Do you agree with that? All right. Is there anything in the world tonight that God is powerless toward? I mean, his hands are tied. He can't help you. Is there anything like that?

What is the answer, beloved? Is there anything too difficult for God? So your God not only knows your situation perfectly, he is absolutely on his throne tonight. He is absolutely in control. Amen?

You say, “Well, God is all knowing and he is all powerful and he controls all things.”

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<sup>10</sup> 1 Peter 5:6.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremiah 17:9.

Well, let's take it another step. That would not necessarily make you safe, would it, unless he really does love you, unless he really does care about you. And then if he really loves you, if he really cares about you, then you have this one who knows all things and controls all things always looking out for your best interest. In fact, if we believe Romans 8:28 through 30 we know this. He is always at work causing all things to work together for good to those who love him and are the called according to his purpose.

Is that true? Which means when you, when I are afraid, when we are worrying, when we are down trodden, what are we actually saying to God? I don't believe you. Either I believe he doesn't know about it, or I believe he has no control over it or I believe he doesn't really care about me.

In fact, whether we recognize it or not, do you know what we are saying to God? I trust me with me more than I trust you with me. I trust me to take care of me more than I trust you to take care of me.

Now I want to put it to you that way. If tonight someone stood up in this place and said, "I am better equipped to take care of myself than God, would that be pride? So when we worry, when we are fully of anxiety, is that a pride problem? It is, isn't it, which is why he says we humble ourselves by casting our cares onto God.

Guess what? Until we do that, until we stop thinking that we handle us better than God handles us, until we stop thinking that he really doesn't know or he really isn't in control or he really doesn't care about us, until our mind and heart changes about that and we put away our pride, we are actually shutting ourselves off from God's help.

You say, "Where do you get that from?"

Look at verse five.

"Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud...'"<sup>12</sup>

Stands against the proud. But what does he do with the humble? He gives grace to them.

Next statement.

"Humble yourselves, therefore..."<sup>13</sup>

In view of that truth, you:

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Peter 5:5.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Peter 5:6.

So the answer to anxiety is as simple as this word, “humility.” The problem with the trouble filled heart is pride. What does this humility look like? I told you the answer is single, but the application is multiple. What does it look like to walk in this humility? This is good for us to do, because what we do sometimes is we imagine that we really are walking in humility. But then as we begin to look at the application of this, perhaps the Lord will expose to us that there are areas in our life where we are actually walking in pride. And that may discover for us why it is that our heart is so full of troubles, because there are areas where we haven’t really humbled ourselves before the Lord.

So what does this look like? First of all, where there is humility there is submission to authority. The beginning of verse six, “Humble yourselves, therefore,”<sup>15</sup> takes us back to verse five, doesn’t it?

Something mentioned in the previous verses ties in to this discussion that he is giving us here about how to handle anxiety. In chapter five verses one through four he has given clear instruction to elders, how they are to handle their responsibilities in the congregation. Then in verse five he addresses the congregation and he says to those in the congregation:

“Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.”<sup>16</sup>

Well, why does he address younger people? Well, in general, elders are going to be older people than many in the congregation. But we also know that younger people struggle with authority. It is not true across the board, but it is a general statement that is true, that younger people in many cases chafe at authority and so young men especially are encouraged to submit themselves to the elders. And that is an expression of humility, submission to human authority, to recognize that in human authority, verse six, is the mighty hand of God.

Romans chapter 13 tells us that the authorities that exist have been ordained by God. So where there is humility there is a recognition that where there is God ordained human authority there is the hand of God. And a humble heart says, “I see the need to submit to authority and I want to submit to authority.”

But the proud heart says, “I have no need of authority and I will not submit to authority.”

You say, “What does that have to do with anxiety?”

Well, stop and think about it. What is it that often troubles people in this world? It has to do with their relationship concerning someone who is in authority over them. Young people troubled by their parents. Wives troubled by their husbands. Employees troubled by their employers and on it goes.

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Peter 5:6-7.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Peter 5:6.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Peter 5:5.



And I have got a question for you tonight. Do you believe that sovereign God is to be trusted and believed when he tells us in his Word that he ordained authority structures and that he is at work through those authority structure? That, in fact, even when you have unjust authority over you, we are still to be a submissive people to the full extent that we can be, right, so long as we don't disobey the ultimate authority in our lives, God. So long as we can be submissive to that authority we need to be because God ordained it and in some way he is working through it.

How many people tonight would have their worries go away if they really believed that God was at work in their life through the person who is over them right now in a position of authority? How many of our anxieties would go away if we would trust God with that relationship and say, "Lord, you have ordained this for a reason and though at times it is not pleasant to me or maybe it is difficult to me, you know what? You are at work in this and your will is being accomplished in my life and you have called me to reflect a faith in you by the way that I relate to this person who is an authority over me"?

Humility in a congregation is expressed by submission to elders. But notice that is not where humility stops. Not only is humility expressed by submission to authority, humility is also expressed by a proper view of authority or we could say the proper use of authority. Do you think people in authority ever have anxieties? Is it just people under authority or do people in authority have anxieties?

Let me ask you this way. Is it possible to have someone godly in a position of authority who has been called to lead a people who are ungodly? How about Moses? When he was alive the Bible says that he was the most humble man on the face of the earth. Isn't that an amazing statement from God? No one more humble than Moses.

Now, was he ever accused of not being humble? How about the great showdown with the rebels, right? Who made you a ruler over us? You take too much to yourself. You exalt yourself in the midst of the people.

The most humble man on the face of the earth was accused of pride. And, listen. Here is the temptation for those in authority to make abuse of authority. You are trying to lead a people who are stubborn, who are unteachable, who won't follow. So the temptation is not to exercise authority in a Godly way and trust the Lord to do what only the Lord can do and leave the results to him. Even if they don't follow, you do what God has called you to do. That is the right thing to do. But the temptation is. No, let me exercise authority in such a way that I get what I believe is right, I just do it in the wrong way.

If you wonder where I am getting this from, look at the very next statement. Right after saying the younger are to be subject to he elders he says this.

"Clothe yourselves, all of you..."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

That includes elders and those under their authority.

“Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”<sup>18</sup>

So if you are in a position of authority tonight, you are to put on the garment of humility. Even though you have a responsibility to lead, you are responsible to lead with a humble heart. You can’t abuse authority.

In fact, look further up the list there at verse two.

“...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion.”<sup>19</sup>

Not because you have to.

“...but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly.”<sup>20</sup>

And then he says this.

“...not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”<sup>21</sup>

How many worries would go away in the lives of people in authority if they would say to themselves, “Lord, you have ordained that I should lead this people and even if they won’t follow I am responsible to honor you and to glorify you in the way that I lead them. And, Lord, if I have done my best, that is all that I can do.”

So submission to authority is an expression of humility, a proper view and a proper use of authority is an expression of humility.

There is a third way we can see this played out in these verses, an acceptance of the divine will.

What does humility look like? It is an acceptance of God’s providences.

See verse six? He says:

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Peter 5:2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Peter 5:3.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Peter 5:6.

God's mighty hand expressed in these relationships we have already talked about, but God's mighty hand goes beyond just those relationships. I think, particularly what he has in mind here was the suffering that these people were going through. Because when he goes further on in his section, look at verse nine.

Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.<sup>23</sup>

What are they doing? They are suffering. And as a result of their suffering, what are they tempted to do? To be filled with anxiety, just like the writer of Psalm 42 who is facing adversaries and, as a result, his heart was cast down within him. He says:

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.”<sup>24</sup>

The sovereign hand of God.

Do you believe that God is sovereign? Do you believe that your current circumstances reflect the providence of God? That is, God has you in the place where you are right now. Will you humble yourself right there or will you, trying to take care of yourself, fight in every direction to escape your present situation.

What does humility look like? Lord, I trust that where I am right now is not by accident. What I am dealing with in my life tonight it is not by accident. And so I will trust you right here.

Does that mean you can't try to improve your situation if the Lord allows it? Of course, you can. But the real issue is not your circumstances. The real issue is do you trust the Lord? If you can't change your circumstances, are you going to despair or will you have joy? The real issue is not a change of circumstances, the real issue is the change of you, acceptance of the divine will, acceptance of the providences of God. That is humility.

Joseph, standing before brothers who sold him into slavery ends up in prison and now there he is, the second highest in command in Egypt and his brothers stand before him absolutely frightened out of their wits because he has the power to do them harm. And yet Joseph is not filled with bitterness toward them, is he?

How is it that that man could not be so angry with them that he would want to see them punished for what they did to him? Do you hear Joseph's perspective?

You meant this for what? Evil, but God meant this for good.

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Peter 5:9-10.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Peter 5:6.

Which gets to the fourth expression of humility here. It is seen in verse seven.

You humble yourself by turning your cares over to God. You cast your cares upon him. That particular word translated “casting” it is used also in Luke chapter 19 verse 35 and it says this.

“And they brought it to Jesus...”<sup>25</sup>

The colt, right, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

“And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.”<sup>26</sup>

So when they threw their cloaks onto the colt, that is the word here, like throwing a blanket onto something. This is a transfer. It is like you take all your worries tonight and you bag them up and you throw them onto the Lord.

And note it is a total transfer, isn't it? Casting some of your anxieties on him. Is that what the text says? Those things that you think he is able to handle. No. What does it say? Casting what? All and in the Greek text there is a word there for all. All your anxieties, all your cares, all your worries, all those things that have you afraid tonight, all those things that have got your heart weighted down. You bag them all up and there has got to be this total transfer. That is humility. I am going to cast them on the Lord. That is, I am going to give them to him. I am going to leave these things in his care knowing that that is what he would have me to do.

That is humility.

By the way, how would that be humility? How would casting your cares onto the Lord be the way that you humble yourself? Because if you don't do that tonight, if you don't take all these worries and throw them on to him, just think about what you are saying, that you actually have these things under control. You don't need to give them to God, because you have got it under control.

Do you realize, beloved, what many of our hardships actually do for us? They actually wake us up from a dream. We dream, we imagine that we have some measure of control over our lives and God allows things to come into our life to wake us up and help us to realize we don't control anything.

What is it that you think you control?

You say, “Well, I control a lot. I set my alarm this morning and I got up and I went to work and I did this and I did that. Here is what I accomplished and all the rest.”

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<sup>25</sup> Luke 19:35.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

And listen. If God didn't grant you life and breath and heartbeat, you wouldn't have accomplished any of it. If he didn't give you the ability to think, you couldn't have done any of it and if you don't think you are totally dependent upon him, just remember Nebuchadnezzar who went out and celebrated all that he had accomplished in his kingdom and God in a moment reduced that man to a beast like existence. And he only got up and cleaned himself up when God granted him a right mind.

You don't control anything.

So listen. When you cast these things on the Lord, all you are really doing, you are not really giving him anything, are you? Not in the truest sense. You are simply acknowledging what he already has in his control.

Jesus told us about worry, didn't he? He says by worrying about things what can you change? Can you change anything? Can you change the height of your stature? Can you change one hair on your head? You can't change anything. So you are just acknowledging what he already controls.

If you don't give these things to him, if you don't cast these things onto him, what you are really saying is God has nothing to do with this. There is no divine purpose in this. God has sort of separated himself from what is going on in this world, so there are spiritual things and there are secular things and God handles the spiritual things, but this is something I am supposed to handle, because this falls into the secular realm. There is no divine purpose for what I am going through right now. And I have got news for us on tonight on the authority of Scripture. Everything you are going through right now has a spiritual purpose. It is all spiritual. God is sovereign. He controls it all. It all has a purpose.

You would also be saying, if you don't cast these things on to him you are saying, "You know what? You are able to handle them, but you just really don't care about my situation." You have left me to handle this, God, because you don't care about what I am going through.

Isn't it interesting that he specifically tells us at the end of verse seven that we are to cast all our anxieties onto him because he cares for you. You can give it to him because he cares. You can trust him with it because he really does care for you. He doesn't just know about it and have it within his powers to do something about it. He is at work in all of it conforming his people to the image of his Son. He really does love you and care about you. You can trust him with it.

So does humility look? You submit to authority. Are you struggling with authority somewhere in your life tonight? Is that what has got your heart weighed down? It means you have the right view of authority. Are you struggling with someone under your authority right now? Does that have your heart weighed down?

It is an acceptance of God's providences. Have you been treating your life like it is an accident or do you realize there is a purpose for what you are facing tonight? And have you yet taken all those cares, all those anxieties, all of them and bagged them up and thrown them into his lap and said, "God, they are yours"?

I want to be very careful. We are not talking about irresponsibility, are we? We realize the Lord works through means. We are talking about who you are trusting. We are not talking about inactivity or passivity. We are talking about who are you trusting to take care of you?

There is a fifth expression of humility in these verses. You see it in verses eight and nine. If you are humble you are spiritually watchful. That is, you recognize something and you see this throughout the Scriptures.

When you are in a stressful situation, when you are in a situation where you are tempted to be afraid, tempted to worry, tempted to be full of anxiety, you are at that moment from Satan's point of view, in a vulnerable position. He takes advantage of people who are filled with fear and worry and anxiety.

Is verse eight just thrown in there or does it have something to do with the whole subject matter? Verse eight.

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.<sup>27</sup>

This has to do with someone who is hurting, someone who is suffering, someone who is tempted to be full of anxiety. He says, "Be alert, be watchful."

Because you can bank on this. There is an attack coming. There is an invitation coming your way from the enemy and the invitation is always this. Do not believe God. Do not trust him. Take matters into your own hands. Try to relieve your own fears. Try to relieve these pressures in your own way, in a way that is contrary to the Word of God. This is why how do you resist the devil in this situation. He says:

"Resist him."

How, verse nine?

"...firm in your faith."<sup>28</sup>

You resist the enemy in these situations by believing God, by believing his Word, by trusting God. What is faith? It is trust. You trust him. You trust what he says.

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<sup>27</sup> 1 Peter 5:8-9.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

The enemy comes along and these stressful situations and he says, “I will offer you a way that doesn’t involve waiting. It doesn’t involve submission. It doesn’t involve relying on the Lord. You need to handle this situation your own way. Forget the biblical way.”

And you resist the devil by standing firm in your trust toward God which gets to a sixth expression of humility. You humble yourself in these situations by recognizing and practicing the fact that you are spiritually connected. This begins in your mind, but it also must be true in your life.

Listen. When you are going through a hard time, when you are going through something that has you tempted to be afraid and to worry and all the rest, you have got to stop he and recognize something. You are not alone. And I am not just talking about God’s immediate presence. I mean this. You are a part of the body of Christ. You are a part of the family of God.

One of the most consistent and prideful temptations presented to believers by Satan is the thought that they are alone, that you are special. That is to say no one can understand you because no one has ever been where you are right now.

Oh, it is easy for that preacher to talk about trusting the Lord and humbling one’s self and all the rest and I have heard all that. But do you know what? You just don’t know what I am facing right now. You just don’t know what I am going through right now. You just don’t know how I feel.

By the way, not only can the individual who is in the situation be tempted that way, but people around them can be tempted that way. Well, you just don’t understand this person because you just don’t know what they are going through right now.

Isn’t it interesting? Listen. Isn’t it interesting? Right in the middle of this section we are told to be alert to the devil’s activity and resist him firm in our faith that we are also told this, verse nine.

“...knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”<sup>29</sup>

You are not alone. You are not special. You are not the first person who has walked through something like this. You are not the first person who has been called to be faithful to God right in a situation like the one you are in. You are not alone. It is a prideful thought to think that you are the only one who has ever been tempted this way. You are the only one who has ever suffered this way. You are the only one who has gone through such a thing as you are going through right now. You are the only one. What a proud thought.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Isn't it interesting that the devil is compared in verse eight to a roaring lion? Anybody ever watch lions run down a victim? What do they do? What do they try to do? They prey on the weak, the sick, the young and they get the stragglers. That is, they get the ones that are separated from the herd. They separate out their victim and chase them down.

And, believer, you are in a dangerous place when in the midst of your pain and the midst of your sorrow, in the midst of your anxious heart, you begin to separate yourself out from your brethren, either in your mind—or this happens—in your life. You begin to separate yourself out. You begin to isolate yourself. That is a dangerous thing. Humility recognizes that just the opposite is true.

We all go through these things. We all face these struggles. It may not be the exact same struggle, but it is enough like it that we all face it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 says this:

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”<sup>30</sup>

What does that tell you, believer? When we fall prey to temptation it is not because it was too strong for us. God wouldn't allow us to be tempted by something too strong for us. It is because we were not relying on him. We did not humble ourselves. Instead we walked in pride. That is why we fall.

Proverbs 18:1 says this:

“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.”<sup>31</sup>

Going through a hard time? You say, “I just don't feel like being at the church. I just don't want to be around God's people. I just want to work through this on my own.”

And I say to you on the authority of Proverbs 18:1 that is a foolish course of action. You are not alone. And you need the Lord's people.

Which gets to the seventh expression of humility. You see it in verse 10.

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:13.

<sup>31</sup> Proverbs 18:1.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Peter 5:10.



You have humbled yourself when you are confident in God's gracious, good plan. It is gracious. He is the God of all grace. I don't deserve for the Lord to take such care for me. Who am I to deserve that God would superintend, that he would watch over all the details of my life so that it is being worked out at all times as something that is good for me? Who am I to deserve that? And yet that is what he does. He is gracious and he is good so that I can have this confidence that whatever suffering it is I am going through, it is temporary. Even if it is for a lifetime, verse 10 is true which says:

“And after you have suffered a little while...”<sup>33</sup>

If it is for a lifetime it is still a little while. And God tells us and promises us that at the end of our suffering as believers, what awaits us? Eternal glory in Christ.

“...[who] will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”<sup>34</sup>

You read the book of Job and you realize what is going on in his life. But never forget to stop and remind yourself he didn't have the book of Job. Job lived the book of Job.

So as Job is going through that, what does he know? Does he know about the conversations in heaven? Does he know that the Lord said to Satan, “Consider my servant Job”? Does he know that?

So he walks through all that hardship and be amazed at what God produced in this man's life. When he is able after losing everything to say:

“The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”<sup>35</sup>

I trust him.

“Though he slay me, I will hope in him.”<sup>36</sup>

And when you get to the end of the book of Job does God restore him? Does God reward him? Does God confirm him? Does God establish him? Is that just Job? Or is that you, too? Which gets to the last thing. Verse 11.

“To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”<sup>37</sup>

To God belongs the power forever. That is, you humble yourself when you acknowledge and you rejoice in his sovereignty.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Job 1:21.

<sup>36</sup> Job 13:15.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Peter 5:11.

God, you have the power. It is your prerogative to do with me whatever you will, to put me wherever you want me to be, to walk me through whatever circumstances you want to walk me through, to demonstrate your work in my life in whatever way you choose to do it, whether it be in celebration or in sorrow, whether it be in you giving to me or taking from me. It is your right to do with me what you will because you possess all authority forever and ever amen.

And never forget. This is put forth in the form of praise. Is God's sovereignty sweet to you? Do you rejoice in the knowledge that you are not in control, he is? So that you will humble yourself by taking all those things that are represented in that word "anxieties" all the worries, all the fears, all the discouragement, all the depression, all the despair, all the dissatisfaction, all the unhappiness. Will you take it all and bag it up and cast it onto him tonight, knowing that he cares for you?

I say to you as I close tonight you can't do that if you are not saved. You can't trust someone you don't know. Do you have the capacity tonight to be anxiety free? Do you know that he is trustworthy so that you can trust him?

Perhaps one of the greatest evidences that you don't know the Lord is you don't know any peace and never have. Would you come to the one who is trustworthy and trust him not only for the forgiveness of your sins, but for all of your life both now and for eternity evermore. He is trustworthy.

All God's people would say...

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, we rejoice in your love for us. We are amazed by it. We don't deserve it. But we thank you for it. I pray for myself and I pray for my brethren that even in this moment, in this hour, in this room we would take whatever it is that has our heart troubled and weighed down and we would acknowledge who really holds it in his hands so that we would cast our cares onto you and leave them there, Lord, and trust you with them. May your Spirit apply this to us in a way that is right. Keep us, Lord, from any misapplication of it. And glorify you name in our lives we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*