

1st Peter 5:5-14

Casting Our Cares – How Is it Done?

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you – v. 7

It seems that when at least some of the NT Authors bring their epistles to a close they must become conscientious that they're either running out of paper and ink or perhaps running out of time so that they have to squeeze a number of closing exhortations into their final page or paragraph.

Paul does this on occasion in his letters – for example in 1Cor. 16:13,14 *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 14 Let all your things be done with charity.* And in Phil. 4:4-6 *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

Most notably in 1Thess. 5:16-22 *Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

It's not an unusual thing to see how any number of Bible commentators who provide outlines for the books they analyze provide headings for the last chapters in those books which read simply *closing exhortations*. And there can be a danger, therefore, in passing over those closing exhortations too quickly just because they're compressed into a short space and seem to occur in rapid succession.

And so we find Peter closing his epistle with a number of compressed exhortations also: *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God – v. 6; Casting all your care upon him – v. 7; Be sober, be vigilant – v. 8.*

I think these compressed exhortations show us something of the heart that the Apostles had toward the ones they addressed in their epistles. You could, I suppose, draw an analogy between their literary technique and couples that are about to part from each other possibly for a long time. They say goodbyes to each other a number of times and a number of ways and they give each other two or three last hugs and then they share their *don't forget this* or *remember to do that* messages, brief exhortations like these epistles and then they wave at each other until they're out of sight from each other.

Now when I consider these kinds of exhortations at the end of Paul's or Peter's epistles I have to admit that there is one such exhortation that stands out from all the others – perhaps because it's different from any other and most definitely because it contains some of the best advice a Christian can receive from the Bible, advice that is needed again and again and covers so many different kinds of situations.

You can perhaps tell where I'm going with this – I'm referring to the word that Peter gives us in v. 7 – *Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you*. Could better advice ever be given by an Apostle to those He writes to? And could better advice ever be given to Christians who like every Christian of every bygone generation carries burdens that weigh him down?

We don't find a chapter in Pilgrim's Progress, do we, that shows Christian's burden returning to his back. It seems that once he manages to be rid of it by looking to Calvary's cross, it drops off his back and rolls away for good. But alas, how often do burdens return? And though the burdens may be of a different kind from sinners under the weight of the guilt of sin, there are burdens nevertheless. There are burdens pertaining to our loved ones; there are burdens pertaining to our children and burdens pertaining to our jobs. There are burdens pertaining to our sanctification and burdens pertaining to the sorry state of the nation and the sorry state of the church.

In the case of those being addressed by Peter there was the burden of fiery trials that were to try their faith. Our experience as well as God's Word shows us that there is a definite and true sense in which a Christian is a burden bearer. And then along comes this word in 1Peter 5:7 that tells us what we're to do with those burdens – we're to cast them on God. We're to give them over to Christ. Sometimes the very thought of transferring the burden to God brings such a sense of relief that you're ready, like that healed lame man who entered the temple, you're ready to jump and leap and praise the Lord.

But let's face it – there are other times when this verse seems to amount to little more than a fancy saying embossed on a Hallmark card. The mere reading of the verse or the reciting of the verse or having the verse recited to you just doesn't seem to do much of anything for you except perhaps to lead you to sigh as you recount other occasions when the verse seemed to carry so much more power and refreshment to your soul than perhaps it does now.

What happens to the Christian when the verse just doesn't seem to work the way it use to? And perhaps more importantly how can you gain back the vitality and refreshment that such a verse use to bring? William Cowper, who was known for severe and prolonged bouts of depression asks the question in the 2nd stanza of the hymn: *Where is that blessedness I knew When first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul refreshing view of Jesus and His Word? What peaceful hours I once enjoyed! How sweet their memory still! But they have left an aching void The world can never fill.*

It may be that what you need – indeed, what we all need is a closer and more detailed look and analysis of this statement by Peter. I'd like to attempt that analysis this morning so that you'll come to see this exhortation, not merely as some kind of magic formula that needs to be recited, but you'll come to see how it's suppose to work and how you're suppose to put it to practice.

Casting All Your Care Upon Him; For He Careth For You

Would you consider with me first of all that in order to practice this verse:

I. You Must See the Fullness of the Directive

Casting all your care upon Him – our text reads. Do you see what the text supposes? It supposes that the Christian is going to have cares – or that he’s going to be filled with anxiety (the word means literally *anxiety*) or that he’s going to worry. I listened to a sermon in which the preacher shared with his congregation how he had taken the time in his study to trace every reference to worry or anxiety or care in the New Testament and he came to the conclusion that you could classify them under 3 headings.

I would give slightly different titles to the headings. I would say that there are the cares of this world. You could call these material cares. These are the cares that Christ addresses in Mt. 6 in the sermon on the mount and again in Mt. 13 that chapter on the parables. These are very real and legitimate cares. They are cares that pertain to the essentials of life. The things you wear, the food you eat, the shelter you abide in all come under this category of material cares.

And the category can be expanded to include your job – how much you make, how secure your employment is, how well you get along with people where you work, what kind of boss you have, what kind of customers you deal with. How easily or hardly you can pay your bills. This can be a very heavy burden to bear when your boss knows what kind of leverage he has on you especially during times when the economy might not be all that good and he knows as you know too how much you need your job. And so he’s able to make demands of you that perhaps he wouldn’t be able to make under different circumstances.

It’s amazing, isn’t it, how much we put up with because we think we have to. And it is this kind of care that Christ specifies in Mt. 13 as having the potential to choke the word in your life and make it unfruitful. Mt 13:22 *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

Can you relate to this kind of anxiety? You can tell when you’re gripped by it. You start your day with the Today Show or with Fox and Friends or with Facebook or Twitter or some form of social media instead of beginning your day with the Lord.

So that’s one category of care – material care. In a similar vein you may also carry with you relational cares. Paul references these kinds of cares in 1Cor. 7 where we read in v. 32: *But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: 33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.* And in the next verse: *The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.*

Now I wouldn't try to convey the impression to you that some Christians, so called, might convey, which is to say that Paul is speaking against marriage – not at all, but he is pointing out that with marriage there comes responsibilities and cares or burdens. And with children there come responsibilities and burdens. And it's usually with our children or our grandchildren in view that we bear the burden of the state of this present evil world. Oh, if it only pertained to me on a personal level maybe it wouldn't be so bad but what kind of a world will you be leaving here for your children and grandchildren?

This can be a very load to carry. I can picture myself on my deathbed apologizing to my children and grandchildren that I didn't function like I should have in this world as a light to shine in the darkness and as salt to prevent the spread of corruption.

And then there's a third category of cares or burdens that Paul references in that passage in which he recounts his sufferings. It's in 2nd Cor. 11 where he makes reference to his beatings and imprisonments and shipwrecks etc. And among the things Paul lists there comes this spiritual burden in v. 28 *Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

In close connection with this burden can come your personal burden for holiness and greater obedience to the Lord you believe in and serve. Do you find yourself at times burdened to the point of distress because you spend so little time in prayer and what time you manage to spend seems so tedious and mundane. You could wish that your soul would be revived and refreshed and that your faith could be strengthened and your zeal inspired and your love for Christ increased. So we discover that there is much that fits into the category of the Christian's cares or anxieties or worries.

But here's the point I'm aiming to make now, as I've elaborated these many kinds of cares – would you notice how comprehensive the directive is by Peter when he writes *casting all your care on Him*. That's what God wants – He wants all your cares, not just the material ones, not just the relational ones, not just the spiritual ones – He wants them all. Don't ever think that there's any such thing as an insignificant care that you are bearing. God calls for them all – whether they relate to very serious health issues or whether they relate to how you're going to get the car fixed. The directive is comprehensive in its scope. Your Savior calls on you to cast all your care on Him.

But let's move on now to the next point of analysis which pertains to how exactly this is done. It's one thing to read the verse, it's quite another to make it operational. And within this 7th verse I believe we find a very essential key that has to be utilized in order to be able to cast your care on the Lord. So that's my next point. If you would cast all your care on Christ, then:

II. You Must Recognize the All Important Key

Casting all your care upon Him our text reads and then note the second part of the verse for this contains the key – *Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you*. There's the key – *He careth for you*. To the degree that you believe that and you appropriate that

and you bask in that truth, to that same degree you will not find any particular difficulty in casting your care on Him. But to the degree that you harbor doubts about whether or not He cares for you, to that same degree you'll find this entire verse to be little more than a nice statement for a Hallmark card.

And if we're honest with ourselves this morning, before God, I think we'll have to acknowledge that there are times when we do harbor doubts about whether or not God cares. That was certainly a temptation the original readers of Peter's epistle would have faced. We've noted on several occasions throughout these studies of 1st Peter just what their condition was.

Back in 4:12 we have perhaps the most concise statement about their circumstances: *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.* They needed to be told to think it not strange because their natural instinct would have been to think it strange. They had, after all, confessed their faith in Christ and they identified with Christ and they were striving to follow after and serve Christ and spread abroad the glorious truth that He was risen and that He was the Savior of sinners. Should people that identify with Christ and seek to serve Christ expect the kind of fiery trials that they were now experiencing? Oh Peter had to tell them to think it not strange.

He had to explain to them that there was a connection between their sufferings and Christ's sufferings. There was an identification on their part with Christ's sufferings when they suffered for their faith. And they had to see and realize that God did care for them. Peter himself would have been able to relate to their doubts. All he needed to do was recall the time when he and his fellow disciples had been ordered by Christ to get into their boats and cross the sea of Galilee. On one occasion Christ would be with them in the boat and Christ would be sound asleep in the hinder part of the ship while a storm crashed all around that ship and everything shouted at them that they were going down.

And so we read in Mk. 4:38 *And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?* It's pretty easy for us these many centuries later to read that account and from the comfort of our devotions to chide those disciples for their panic stricken doubts. How could they possibly think that Christ didn't care? How could they possibly think that God Himself would let that boat sink when the very Son of God Himself was sleeping in the boat?

Know therefore that when your burdens grow heavy and the testing time seems long and you can't see past the storms of life when they come your way that you too will ask the question in your heart *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* And when that question arises in your heart the doubts that surround that question will make it impossible for you to cast your care on Christ. You'll be consumed with the wrong notion that you're on your own and you have to fend for yourself.

There's a sense, you know, in which the battle line is drawn in the sand on this particular point as to whether or not God cares. And isn't it interesting and noteworthy that right

after Peter's assertion that God cares for you he immediately addresses the issue of the Christian's spiritual warfare. Look at what he goes on to say in v.8 and the beginning of v. 9: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith...*

What do you suppose makes up the substance of the devil's roar? How is it that the devil seeks to devour the Christian? I would suggest to you that a big part of that roar would consist of the words – God doesn't care for you. God could not possibly love you. Look at how often you've failed God. Look at how ineffectively you serve God. Look at how much hypocrisy dominates your life. Look at yourself; look at your sins; look at others that must feel let down by you; look at how far you come short of what others have managed to do. God doesn't care. God doesn't care. God doesn't care and you belong to me, your real spiritual father, the devil.

Before you can ever cast your care on Christ you must first know how to contend against the devil's roar and his attempts to devour you. And how do you do that? It's not really as tough as you might think. In fact the answer or the solution is given to you back in v. 1 of this 5th chapter of 1st Peter. We looked at this statement last week and considered how it's not just a statement coming from an Apostle or an elder and it's not just a statement that applies exclusively to an Apostle.

Look at v. 1 again: *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.* How do you convince yourself that God cares? You become again a witness of the sufferings of Christ. God calls you back to that witness. This is not our communion Sunday, that comes next week but I wonder if we may be touching on the reason now that some churches see fit to have the Lord's supper every Sunday.

That supper calls you back to first principles; that supper calls you back to witness anew and afresh the strongest evidence you can possibly find that God really cares. Christ's broken body and Christ's shed blood says to you that He cares. Christ's willingness to go all the way to Calvary's cross in order to bear your sins and deliver you from everlasting destruction proves to you that He cares.

He's already met your greatest need by providing forgiveness and deliverance from sin's guilt and sin's dominion. Everything that presses on your soul – all your anxieties, all your worries, whether they be material, relational, or spiritual anxieties – they are all subordinate to your greatest need and your deepest need. Your greatest debt, you see, has been paid. I use to remind myself of that years ago when I was a student and I saw school debt begin to rise pretty high.

So See *from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down* – and ask yourself the question – *Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?* And when you plant yourself at the foot of the cross and see your Savior bearing shame and scoffing rude being condemned in your place, then be sure to hear from that vantage point the obvious – He cares.

And if He cares enough to bear the burden of your sin and to have your guilt imputed to Him then know that every burden you bear and every worry you carry and every anxiety you feel in your soul are not too heavy for Him to bear. He's already successfully borne the brunt of the weight of what concerned you most. And you know this. And by faith you've claimed His promise of life and glory.

So give Him all those lesser cares. He wants them. Peter has been directed by God to give you the directive to cast all those cares upon Him. What does it really mean to cast your cares? Twice in the Bible you find the term used in the context of a ship in a stormy sea.

In Acts 27:18,19 we read *And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.* And in the Old Testament we read in Jonah chp. 1 how, at Jonah's direction, they took him up and cast him into the sea. The contrasting settings in Jonah are really quite remarkable.

In one instance you find the sailors fighting the storm which only seems to grow in intensity. They do the same thing those sailors in Acts 27 do – they throw everything overboard that they can in the hopes that in so doing they can stabilize the ship. But when that doesn't work they eventually have to take up Jonah himself and cast him into the sea. God, you see, in a sense, called for a sacrifice – just as He's called for the sacrifice of His Son. And once Jonah is cast into the sea then we read in Jonah 1:15 *So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.*

In an instant everything went from black and stormy to clear and mild and blissful. It's no wonder we read in the next verse how pagan sailors feared the LORD exceedingly and offered sacrifices and made vows. You must do spiritually what those sailors in Acts and those sailors in Jonah did physically. Bring it to the Lord, cast it on Him. There is in the term *cast* a transfer of burden from you to Christ.

Your success in transferring that burden will be contingent on the realization that He cares for you. And if you're having trouble on that score (which we all do at times especially when the stormy seas are rough) then go to the cross. Sit yourself down with those soldiers of whom it is said in Mt. 27:36 *And sitting down they watched him there.* And don't leave that station until the sight of One dying in your place gets through to your heart. For once that sight does reach your heart you'll have no trouble casting all your care upon Him. You'll bring all your anxieties and all your worries and all your cares to Him because you'll know that Calvary's cross proves to you that He cares for you.