

Casting Our Cares upon the Lord

*“Casting all your
care upon him; for
he careth for you.”*

—*I Peter 5:7*

THE CARES OF THE BIL-
lions of people living on
earth at this time are many.

Heightening this is the fact that we live in a world today which has become more complicated and distracting to the mind and soul than that of any previous generation. Sometimes these conditions can seem overwhelming to the human spirit, even to those who claim to be followers of Christ.

Yet, we must consider the fact that God is, most assuredly, not unaware of these conditions, and to those who put their faith and trust in him, he is ever near to assist and help. Concerning those who implicitly rely on the Heavenly Father for grace and strength, the psalmist says, “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.”—Ps. 46:5

The sentiments of our opening text are often found as a motto in Christian homes, serving as a reminder of God’s constant care. The Apostle Peter was able to give us these words of encouragement

because of his experiences, from which he learned valuable lessons with regard to the matter of leaving his burdens with the Lord. Thus, he instructs us also to rid ourselves of unnecessary cares and, instead, to place them in the hands of our all-wise and loving Heavenly Father.

PETER'S EXPERIENCES

The Apostle Peter has often been viewed as impetuous and impulsive. At one time, he wanted matters his own way and was very willful in carrying out his ideas. In doing so, he burdened himself unnecessarily with many kinds of cares. Yet, when Peter had a conviction, he pursued it relentlessly and worried considerably about making it a reality. This was true about his belief that Jesus was the Messiah.

When Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" it was Peter who quickly responded, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Because of his answer, Jesus told Peter that he was blessed, stating that "flesh and blood" had not revealed it to him but that the Father in heaven had given him this insight.—Matt. 16:15-17

However, Peter was an anxious man. He could not comprehend why Jesus spoke of suffering if he was Israel's Messiah. Above all, he could not understand that Jesus had to go to Jerusalem to die. The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon the disciples to give them an appreciation of these things. Thus, such statements by Jesus worried Peter. In turning these thoughts over in his mind he finally gave vent to his concern, and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." (Matt. 16:22) Peter became even more perplexed when

Jesus rebuked him with the words, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."—Matt. 16:23

It might also appear that Peter lacked courage, because he denied Jesus three times. Yet, while the other disciples fled after their Master's arrest, Peter trailed the mob and the soldiers who had taken him into custody. In answer to why he did not also flee, it has been suggested that Peter had not given up hope of seeing Jesus acclaimed as the Messiah, and thus he sought an opportunity to turn matters in that direction.

There is no doubt that Peter was eager to fight for our Lord. It is assumed that it was Peter who said to Jesus, "Behold, here are two swords," as recorded in Luke 22:36-38. The occasion was when Jesus told his disciples that a sword should be purchased. When they came with two swords, Jesus replied, "It is enough." His purpose in having them take the swords was to show that when taken captive he would not offer resistance, even though he had the means to do so. Peter evidently had one of these swords and sought to use it in defense of his Master. He swung it and cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest. "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear." (John 18:10) Peter wanted to fight for the Messiah and was perplexed by our Lord's willing submission to the authorities.

Several hours earlier, at the time of the last supper, when Jesus established the memorial of his death, he said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift

you as wheat.” (Luke 22:31) Satan’s attacks are subtle and are directed at the mind. His strategy in this instance was to confuse Peter’s mind with anxious thought and to convince him that his actions were right. Satan confused him with other opinions, resulting in more anxiety, and by doing so, he was almost able to sift him as wheat. However, Peter had a fully loyal heart, and by the grace of God, finally was successful in casting all his anxiety upon the Lord. He came to the realization that God’s providences in his life would ultimately prevail.

FAITH DID NOT FAIL

Jesus had prayed that Peter’s faith would not fail, and it did not. (Luke 22:32) Peter had resisted the devil by being steadfast in the faith, even with limited understanding. Hence, later he was able to strengthen his brethren by writing: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. 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, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” (I Pet. 5:6-9) *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott* translation of verse 7, our opening text, indicates previous action on our part. It says, “Having cast all your anxiety upon him ... ,” suggesting that we are to begin doing this as soon as we enter the way of Christ.

Peter was thorough. He not only learned to cast upon the Heavenly Father all his anxieties relating to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, but

he also turned over to God all his fears and anxious thoughts as to what was to befall him personally. In so doing, he was humbled and fully ready to suffer for Christ. A few verses earlier, he shares with us what he had learned in this regard: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."—I Pet. 5:4,5

This "care" that Peter tells us to cast upon the Lord is a translation of the Greek word *merimna*, which denotes anxiety, to the point of distraction. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount this Greek word is translated "thought" in the *King James Version*: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; ... nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matt. 6:25) A better translation begins this verse, "For this cause, I say unto you: Be not anxious for your life."—*Rotherham Emphasized Bible*

CASTING AWAY ANXIETY

In this marvelous sermon, Jesus directed his listeners, and us, as readers, to God's creation and nature, such as the birds and flowers, seeking to teach us reliance upon God. What simple, direct lessons are found in God's natural realm! "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single

hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”—Matt. 6:26-34, *English Standard Version*

Anxious worry in any form causes impairment, both physical and spiritual, as well as distraction, making us easier targets for Satan’s attacks. In the Parable of the Sower, the seed that fell among thorns was choked by the cares [*merimna*, anxieties] of this world as well as by the riches of this life. (Matt. 13:22) On another occasion Jesus, in warning his disciples about the day of the Lord, again referred to the anxieties of life: “But take heed to yourselves, lest your souls be weighed down with self-indulgence and drunkenness or the anxieties of this life, and that day come upon you, suddenly.”—Luke 21:34, *Weymouth New Testament*

Luke’s Gospel account also tells of a visit Jesus made to the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. Martha was overly busy in her task of entertaining our Lord, while Mary sat listening at the Master’s

feet. Finally, Martha could contain herself no longer and said, “Master, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do all the waiting? Tell her to assist me. Martha, Martha, replied Jesus, you are anxious and worried about a multitude of things; and yet only one thing is really necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion and she shall not be deprived of it.”—Luke 10:38-42, *Weymouth*

The usual lesson associated with this incident is that we should prefer obtaining spiritual food and should seek it over and above other duties. This is true. However, if we should carry this thought to an extreme, no one would do the serving. Perhaps the real lesson is not in the choice that Martha had made—to serve—but rather, concerning the agitated state of mind she developed. The gentle chiding of Jesus called attention to the “good part” and that she should not be overanxious about the necessary duties of life.

DECEITFULNESS OF MAMMON

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus associated anxiety with that of serving mammon, or the riches and wealth of this world. “No man can serve two masters: ... Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matt. 6:24) Men serve mammon because of self-concern, selfishness, or even fear. In his sermon Jesus was introducing the people to a new “master,” one they could rely upon and trust—his Father in heaven. This new master would take care of them. They were not to devote their lives to the “mammon” of earthly gain and selfishness as their master. Rather, they were told: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matt. 6:33

This was not an easy lesson for the disciples of Jesus' day to learn, nor is it for us. Mammon has always been an untrustworthy master. Generally, as long as there is a profit for a business concern to which one is giving his service, he has a job. As soon as profits cease, he is not needed, and his job is lost. When we analyze the philosophy much of the world lives by, including the "survival of the fittest," it is little wonder that so many people worry themselves to the extreme. On the contrary, Jesus tried to convey to his disciples and us the idea that we should have confidence and trust in God. We are not to be like the seed that fell among thorns, failing to seek first his righteousness, but permitting anxious cares of this life to stunt growth and make spiritual fruitage impossible.

Another "master" closely associated with anxiety is fear. Satan has succeeded in making the people of the world very fearful. There are many kinds of fears—fear of want; fear of distress; fear of not being successful; fear of illness; and fear of death. We, as God's people, are to learn how to overcome this fear, even as Paul wrote to Timothy, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (II Tim. 1:7) By placing our trust in God, it is possible for us to overcome the fears that plague the world around us.

FAITH AND TRUST, NOT CARELESSNESS

Is there any way in which anxiety can be considered permissible? Certainly, anxiety about material things for ourselves is wrong. We should strive to be unselfish, not more selfish. Truly unselfish anxiety might be directed toward the things of the Lord,

our service to him, or our relationship with him and our brethren. Yet, even in this God does not want us to be overanxious.

We also must not go to the opposite extreme of thinking that God wants us to be careless. This thought might be derived from Philippians 4:6 which, as translated in the *King James Version*, states: "Be careful for nothing." This rendering implies being careless or giving no thought. A better translation reads, "Do not be over-anxious about anything." (*Weymouth*) Other Scriptures also make it clear that we are not to be careless. For example, the Apostle Paul says, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." (Rom. 12:11) Solomon said, "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster."—Prov. 18:9

We are also told by the Apostle Paul, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (I Tim. 5:8) Is it possible for a Christian to work in providing for his own, and for needful things of others, and in doing so not to be serving mammon? The answer is yes. The evil associated with serving mammon is not money itself, but the love, desire and ambition for money, riches and wealth. The Christian, in earning his daily bread, is doing so to the praise, honor, and glory of God, and not for the love of money. He is a steward of the Lord's goods and must not be careless. In fact, he must be the most careful of persons, because there are many snares and pitfalls which are set by his three opponents: the flesh, the world, and the devil.

If we cannot completely avoid anxiety, let us try to channel it to the right things. The Apostle Paul tells us how this can be done. In II Corinthians 11:23-27 he enumerates all his sufferings for Christ and adds: “Apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.” (vs. 28, *ESV*) Here we have *merimna* used in a favorable way. Having anxiety for the people of God is proper. The Apostle Paul says that such anxiety toward one another would prevent divisions in the body of Christ. “That there might be no disunion in the body, but that all the members might entertain the same anxious care [*merimna*] for one another’s welfare.” (I Cor. 12:25, *Weymouth*) Furthermore, proper concern for each other in the body of Christ would lead to the strengthening of the bonds of love. “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” (vs. 26) Hence, if we must have anxiety, let it be for the people of God.

GOD DESIRES TO HELP

Notwithstanding those times and circumstances when anxiety might be considered proper, the best advice is that which is given by Peter and Paul. Cast “all your care” upon God, and be anxious “for nothing.” (I Pet. 5:7; Phil. 4:6) Anxiety of any kind, therefore, should be avoided as much as possible, even by consecrated Christians. The burden is too much to bear, and all of us are weak in our imperfect human frames. Hence, starting early in our Christian lives, we are to cast our cares upon the Lord, because only he is able to bear these cares for us.

In the context of Philippians, chapter four, we also read, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” (vs. 4) These words are a proper setting for the thoughts expressed by the apostle in this chapter. If the Lord’s people, having the advance knowledge of the joyful times ahead for all people in Christ’s Messianic kingdom, should be sad in these troublous days, who then can be joyful? Indeed, there are times when we too must mourn, but at other times we should bring good cheer and encouragement to all we meet.

Notice, too, that the Lord, through the Apostle Paul, does not admonish us to be anxious about nothing without giving us advice as to how to make this a reality. In the remaining words of verse 6 he supplies us with the practical approach to its accomplishment. “But in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” The apostle says “every thing.” Whatever the problem causing our anxiety—whether one of our brethren, or a family member, or personal failings, or a matter at home or at our place of employment, whether big or small—we are foolish to bear these burdens alone.

If we have not done so already, we must learn how to unburden our hearts in prayer to the Lord. This is an absolute necessity, or else we can break under the strain of heavy burdens by unnecessarily trying to carry them alone. When we try to carry a burden alone, one of two possibilities exists. One is that we are forgetful of the knowledge that God cares and is willing to relieve the burden. The other is that we lack confidence in the Lord’s ability

to carry the load. Both of these situations give evidence of a lack of faith.

WATCH AND PRAY

Many times these scriptural promises of help and assistance from God fail to console the Christian because fulfillment does not occur in the precise manner or time expected. It is necessary to watch and pray, and as we unburden our hearts before the Lord we will find in time that these words are fulfilled. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”—Rom. 8:28

Most assuredly, there are matters in our lives, and there are events in the world, which could cause us much anxiety. We live in a very troubled and perplexed world, full of fear and foreboding concerning the times which lie ahead. Are we fearful? Is anxiety troubling our mind and spirit? Let us not become panic-stricken, but realize that our Almighty Creator and his Son are in full charge of all things, both in the world around us and in our personal affairs. In these days, we may not always be able to avoid disconcerting cares and worries, but we should know how to relieve the burden. Take them to God in prayer. May the words of Peter lie in our hearts as we face the experiences of life, that we might thus cast all our anxious cares upon the Lord, knowing with certainty that he cares for us. ■

“To Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

—Ephesians 3:20,21, New American Standard Bible