

THE CURE FOR ANXIETY: CAST YOUR CARES UPON THE LORD

5 Likewise, younger men, be submissive to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another; because "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 6Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, (so that he may exalt you at the appointed time), 7by casting all your cares upon him, because he cares for you. (1 Pet. 5:5-7)

Introduction

What makes you anxious? Is it an unstable economy and an uncertain job situation? Is it concern for a missionary son and his family serving the Lord in the wilds of South America? Is it concern for an ailing mother and what will become of her?

In this life we encounter many anxiety-producing situations and we need to know how to deal with them in a God-honoring way. The Apostle Peter instructs us to cast all of our cares and anxieties upon the LORD—this is God's counsel to us and His command to us, because He cares for us as His children in Christ.

I. Cast Your Cares upon the Lord, ...as an Act of Submission to God

When we read 1 Peter 5:6-7 carefully, we find a very amazing and unexpected truth: anxiety is directly related to pride. We are instructed, "*humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;*" and the way in which we do so is "*by casting all your cares [or, anxiety] upon him.*"

How is anxiety related to pride? At first glance the two appear to be the extreme opposites. When we hear the word "pride," what picture comes to mind? Is it not the picture of a man who is confident that he is in control of the situation; so confident, that he may be boastful or arrogant? When we hear the word "anxiety," what picture comes to mind? Is it not the picture of a trembling little fellow, biting his fingernails, totally overwhelmed by the situation, fully aware that it is out of his control?

Do you see how pride and anxiety are, indeed, related? They both have to do with a sense of control. Pride stems from the delusion of being in control; the kind of attitude the Apostle James rebukes:

Now listen, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. 14Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15Instead, you ought to say, If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that. 16As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. (Jas. 4:13-16)

Anxiety is the desperation that accompanies the realization that you are not in control; the kind of desperation Peter experienced when he followed Jesus out onto the lake in the midst of the raging storm:

Lord, if it is you, Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water. ²⁹Come, he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, Lord, save me! (Matt. 14:28-30)

The next time you experience anxiety, look beyond your sense of apprehension and examine the cause. Is your anxiety due to your inability to solve a problem? Is your anxiety due to your inability to handle a crisis? Is your anxiety due to the knowledge that you are about to face a threatening and unavoidable situation? Inevitably, you will find that anxiety can be traced back to the realization that you are not in control: not in control of the circumstances; not in control of your situation; or not in control of your environment.

When you confront anxiety for what it really is, this is what you discover. You are resisting, rather than submitting, to what God has appointed for you; and you are doubting, rather than trusting, what God will do for you. Consider the teaching of our Lord as recorded in Matthew 6:24-34,

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Who of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹So do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we wear? ³²The pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and its righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matt.6:24-34)

Three times in this passage the Lord Jesus speaks the words, "*Do not be anxious*" (vs. 25,31,34.) We must bear in mind that when Jesus speaks these words they come to us not only as loving counsel from the Good Shepherd, but also as a commandment from the Lord of glory.

“But,” we are tempted to say, “it’s impossible for me to avoid being anxious. It’s impossible for me to stop being anxious!”

That is not true. Remember these two things: First, remember that the cause of anxiety is resisting (rather than accepting) what God has appointed for us; and doubting (rather than trusting) what God will do for us. To combat and overcome anxiety, we need to accept the sure testimony of the Psalmist when he writes: *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; ²therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea"* (Psl. 46:1-2.) Second, remember that overcoming anxiety, like everything else in the Christian life, is a maturing, growing process that requires our reliance upon the Holy Spirit. One of God’s goals for us is that our lives become increasingly characterized by confident faith in Christ and be delivered from debilitating anxiety. Consider Joanie’s story:

My life was filled with anxiety and worry ... I had nothing left of my own inner resources. I didn’t seem to have the strength, physically or emotionally, to go on.

I had become agoraphobic, which is a dread of open spaces, a fear of going out. For me, it was a fear of going into the supermarket. It was so intense that I would panic and go into a sweat..

So sometimes I would interrupt my shopping, shove my cart into a corner, and run home. As soon as I was in the house, I would have this sudden relief of being safe and secure again.

My eating habits changed, my sleep was erratic, I was trembly and shaky, and I was generally anxious about life and all its responsibilities. I couldn’t face anything.

From my own experience, and also in observing other people who are in this painful situation of running out of their resources, one of the characteristics is a need to control—the need to control life, circumstances, people, and unwittingly, God—because we feel afraid of what might happen. We feel that if we can control things and make things go a certain way, we will be less afraid.

My problem was that I couldn’t feel in control of my self-protection—protection from the things that I was afraid of. So I began to build a cocoon around myself. That cocoon became as small as the word implies. I had a tiny space in which I felt safe and secure—the four walls of my house. In fact, I so cocooned my life that it contained a population of one—me.

During this time ... God ... had no scope in my life. I was terribly unhappy.

I had hit rock bottom. I had to come to the end of myself before I could discover the sufficiency of Christ and allow Him to change me. God began to rehabilitate me according to what Paul described in Philippians 1:6, "*he who has begun a good work in you [which starts at conversion] will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" The process doesn't take six easy lessons or six months, but continues "*until the day of Jesus Christ.*"

Early on in my progress toward wholeness, God showed me four disciplines, which still have a profound effect in my life ... **Read the Bible** ... **Pray** ... This goes beyond the boundary of a little time of prayer. It goes out into the marketplace, out into our cars, out into our circumstances. **Trust**—trusting God for the things we cannot control. Releasing them, not into thin air but to God. **Obey**.

As I began to incorporate these disciplines into my daily living, I found that it cultivated an intimate relationship with Christ that developed confidence in Him. He began to prove His sufficiency to me at small levels. And as He continued to come through for me, I began to trust Him more and more.

I began to find less and less reason for worry. It became superfluous. I began to realize that whatever He led me to undertake, even if it were something that stretched me, He would come through for me. [The preceding account was taken from an interview with author Joanie Yoder, which was recorded for the RBC television program, *Day of Discovery*.]

Let us cast our cares upon the Lord, as an act of submission unto God. The Psalmist assures us, "*Cast your cares on Jehovah and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall*" (Psl. 55:22.)

II. Cast Your Cares upon the Lord, ...with Confidence in God

Peter continues this teaching on the cure for anxiety by assuring us of the Lord's compassion and care for us; he instructs us to cast all our care upon the Lord, "*because he cares for you*" (v. 7.)

Do you question His concern for you; do you question His care for you? If so, all you need do is look to Calvary! Consider the following testimony:

A man in Dundee, Scotland, who had fallen and broken his back, was confined to his bed for forty years. He never had a day without pain, but God gave him the grace and strength to keep going. His cheery disposition and great love for the Lord inspired all who visited him.

One day a friend asked, "Doesn't the devil ever tempt you to doubt God?" "Oh yes, he tries—especially when I have to lie here and see my old schoolmates

driving by, having a good time with their families. At times it's as if Satan whispers, 'If the Lord is so good, why does He keep you here? Why did He allow you to break your back?'"

When the friend asked how he handled such attacks, the man replied, "I point him to Calvary and to the wounds of my Savior and say, 'Doesn't He love me! The devil can't answer that, so he flees every time.'" (*Our Daily Bread*, 12/2/92)

Do you question the Lord's concern for you, do you question His care for you? Remember the words of our Lord Jesus: "*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. ³⁰And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows*" (Matt. 10:29-31.) Take into account, too, the assurance given by the writer to the Hebrews: "*God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'* ⁶*So we say with confidence, 'The LORD is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"* (Heb. 13:5b-6.)

When Peter writes these words, cast all your care (anxiety) upon him, he may well have had in mind Psalm 55:22, "*Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.*" The first half of the verse literally says, "*Cast upon the LORD what he has given you.*" We must recognize that whatever comes into our lives is under the sovereign control and at the sovereign commission of Almighty God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our heavenly Father. The Psalmist instructs us to cast our cares upon the LORD with the assurance, "*he will sustain you.*" If we were to picture this verse as a two-panel picture (similar to a cartoon in a newspaper), this is what would emerge: In the first panel we encounter a man who is staggering under a heavy burden; this man is instructed to transfer his burden to the LORD's keeping, which he does. But in the second panel we do not see the man walking away without a care in the world; on the contrary, we find the LORD upholding him, helping him to bear that burden or care or anxiety to a successful conclusion.

Let us cast our cares upon the Lord, with confidence in God. Let us take to heart such passages of Scripture as the following:

But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me ... and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. ¹⁸The Lord will deliver me out of every evil work and will save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Tim. 4:17-18)

... we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, those who have been called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

Our light and momentary afflictions are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we focus our eyes not on what is seen, but on what

is unseen; for what is seen is temporal, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

Conclusion

You may say that it is very hard for you to overcome anxiety—it's extremely difficult to accept and submit to what God brings into your life and to trust God concerning the matter. You may even say that you cannot do it.

But that is not true! As a matter of fact, we all are very skilled and very good at accepting what comes into our lives and trusting God concerning the matter—we do so on a daily basis!

Is this a surprise? You may wonder, "When do I exhibit these attributes of submitting to what comes into my life and trusting God concerning the matter?"

The answer: We do so every time we yield to temptation. Rather than resist the situation that is presented to us, we accept it and submit to it, not worrying about the consequences—this is the essence of what it means to yield to temptation. As we do so, we are trusting God to take care of the matter for us; we are trusting that He will excuse us, or forgive us and restore us.

We do know how to deal with anxiety—our problem is that we exercise submission to circumstances at the wrong time and trust in God in the wrong way and for the wrong purpose.

What we really need is to ask the Lord to transform—to realign—our thinking, so that we more and more resist what God forbids us to experience (by way of the temptations that confront us) and accept what God ordains for us to experience (by way of the trials that confront us.) What we really need is to ask the Lord to transform—to realign—our thinking, so that we do not to presume upon His grace as we deny His will (in yielding to temptation;) but rather we trust in His grace as we accept His will (in submitting to trials.)