

1 Peter 5:7

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[0 : 00] Let me draw your attention again to this seventh verse found in 1 Peter and chapter 5, a passage which we read just a moment ago, 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 7.

And this is what we read in the New International Version. The authorised version has it, casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

If there has been a sermon heading, well here it is. You've got two parts found in this verse. The first part is the exhortation, casting all your cares upon him.

And the second part is the promise or the cause or reason he cares for you. Let's then first of all look at the first part of this particular verse, where we are told to cast all our care upon him.

Now the very exhortation, of course, presupposes that Christians know something about care. After all, this whole epistle is addressed primarily, although perhaps not exclusively, to believers.

[1 : 25] And believers as such are addressed both collectively and individually, to cast all their care upon him. That is God, and the reason is given because he cares for us.

In a very true sense, you could say and argue that when you become a Christian, the trouble really begins. That if you have never been a Christian, you know very little about what it is to have care and worry and anxiety.

At least that seems to have been the case with the readership of 1 Peter. Now, I'd like to perhaps give you just one example. If you turn back for a moment to chapter 4, and look at verse 3.

It says here, you have spent enough time in the past, that's before you were converted, doing what pagans choose to do. And then he gives you a list of different vices.

And then in the next verse, in verse 4, Peter tells us something about the response of the world to this change that has been brought about through the conversion of these believers.

[2 : 34] They, the world, think it's strange that you do not plunge wisdom into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. You see, a Christian who has been changed and transformed also lives a new lifestyle.

And you could argue and say that the gospel has got ethical implications. And that as Christians, to some extent, we no longer can run with the world.

Indeed, we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We're not allowing the world to let it squeeze us into its own mould. And so this causes problems, difficulties, and friction.

Here in verse 4, we are told that the world is surprised, and therefore they abuse us. What an embarrassment Christians can be to unbelievers when we do not go along with all these evil vices that are listed here.

And so Peter, throughout this epistle, actually, reminds them of various things that have sort of brought about a change. And then he reminds them also of the world's reaction.

[3 : 40] There's a price, there's a malign us, there's a slander, there's a evil to us. We've been harshly treated and insulted, and we're reviled for good behavior, and we're reviled for the name of Christ.

These are just a few things that are found throughout this epistle. Ultimately, of course, the Christian is called to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

And if Christ had to suffer, so must we, as believers. It is in this particular context, I think, that the exhortation in chapter 5 and verse 7 makes sense.

After all, anxiety very often is relation-orientated. Take, for example, that example found in chapter 2, where the slave is ill-treated by his unbelieving master.

Now, in those days, as you probably know, a slave didn't have any rights, at least not a Roman slave. With Jewish slavery, it was slightly different, slightly more humane.

[4 : 43] But a Roman slave or a Greek slave, whatever, was owned by his master, and he could do as he pleases. But let's imagine that there is a slave who is no longer willing to do something which conflicts with his conscience.

Well, he would suffer, and he would be anxious to see how he can cope. He might be tempted, perhaps, to do something which his father and Christian should please his master.

And so he is told to cast all his care up on God. Another example is furnished from the domestic realm in chapter 3. We read about a woman that is married to an unbelieving husband.

And the husband may require something of her which she is unwilling to comply with. For example, it says in chapter 3 that women are to dress modestly. And perhaps in those days, a woman would have been unwilling to dress in a way that would have been pleasing to her husband, which she would have considered immoral, and that would have caused friction in a marriage.

And as you know, the woman in those days was underprivileged, and the husband could have destructed her, so to speak, and then she would have been left on her own, which would have caused a tremendous amount of anxiety.

[5 : 53] Who is going to look after her? No social security in those days. And so Peter is saying that in the context of all these different relationships, whatever the anxiety may be, let's cast it upon him.

As believers, we are not to think that it is strange when the world hates us. We are not to be ashamed. We are not to retaliate. We are not to conform to the world. We are to be sober and alert. All these things are spoken by way of exhortation throughout this epistle. But generally and broadly speaking, whatever a problem may be in the context of these relationships, we are to cast all anxiety on him.

And one may also say, perhaps, that this is a starting point. It's not the only thing, but it is something which we are commanded to do. Perhaps one can put this verse slightly differently by saying that this really is a call to prayer.

We are to cast all anxiety on him. In other words, we are to pray to God, whatever our circumstances may be. Now, there are various reasons that sort of spring to mind as we look at this particular verse in its immediate context, why believers should pray with regard to care or anxiety.

[7 : 13] The first reason is actually found in verse 8, which follows on from this verse. Let's read it together. Be self-controlled and alert.

Your enemy is a devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Peter is saying one reason why you should pray and cast all anxiety on you is this.

But you have an enemy, and the enemy is called the devil, and the devil prowls, and the devil is keen to devour you, and the devil is stronger than you. The Bible tells us throughout that the devil is powerful, that man is unable to resist him.

Adam, in his pre-fallen state, was unable to resist him in his own strength, just as much as Jesus was unable to resist him in his own strength, apart from the help of the Spirit who sustained him throughout his earthly ministry.

And Peter is saying to us that we are not to be foolish, that we are to realize that there is a devil who is after us, who wants to destroy these relationships, who will try and worry about things, and so on.

[8 : 22] And so therefore, we are to cast all our anxiety upon God. The devil is real. I think it was C.S. Lewis who says in his introduction to these screw-taped letters, a very useful book, and I don't quote C.S. Lewis very often.

I have an axe to grind with him about one or two things. It's a good book, and I recommend it to you if you haven't read it. And C.S. Lewis says, it writes the effect that some people are too preoccupied with the devil, and others just do not believe in him at all.

When have we last heard a sermon on the devil? But the devil is a real enemy, and we are to pray that he may be kept abey. You remember that great passage in Ephesians 6, where it talks about the spiritual armor which we are to put on ourselves.

Prayer is also mentioned as a weapon, and so often it is forgotten. We do not pray because we think we are strong. We fail to realize how strong the devil is.

And so it is very important to know that we are weak, and that we must come and pray when we are anxious, and not give in to the enemy. It's a very interesting thing that one could not just speculate, but also argue that Peter has written these words from his own experience.

[9 : 47] And good theology and good experience, of course, must never be separated. You remember that day when Peter spoke to Jesus very boastfully and proudly, as often he did, and he

would say that if I leave you and forsake you, I never will.

I will stick up for you. I will always be your friend. Jesus, who knew the heart of Peter, who knows your heart and my heart, said, that the devil is after him, his desire to sift them as wheat, but that he would pray for him that his faith may not fail.

And of course, Peter betrayed the Lord three times, because he didn't reckon with the devil, the enemy, who managed to sift them three times on a particular occasion, when Peter denied the Lord.

And someone has suggested, whether rightly or wrongly, that Peter, for the rest of his life, always remembered that he betrayed the Lord whenever he would hear a cock crow. But Jesus goes on in the same verse, and says that when you are converted or turned again, oh Peter, strengthen the brethren.

And it seems to me that Peter is doing this here, as he is fighting to these believers to cast all their cares upon him, because Peter knew from first-hand experience that the devil is real.

[11:10] And one may argue that 1 Peter itself is a pastoral epistle. So often the term pastoral is only applied to 1 Timothy and Titus quite wrongly, I think.

1 Peter 2 is pastoral, and Peter's writing is someone who knows from bitter experience, and wants these believers to know that one reason why they are to pray, to cast all their anxiety on him, is because of the devil, their human weakness.

So the devil is strong. But then in the previous verse, in verse 6, we are told that God is strong. If the devil is powerful, God is all-powerful.

Peter says, Humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Again, there is another folly which we can commit as Christians.

Not only can we underrate the reality and existing power of the devil, we can also forget the power of God. And sometimes we have problems and difficulties, and we think we can manage, and we can solve them ourselves, which is given in to the devil.

[12:21] And we are really resisting God, and we are fleeing from him, rather than resisting the devil and flee, that he will flee from us. So Peter is saying, Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

If you have problems, difficulties, cares, concerns, you are to pray to God, to that mighty God who is able to help and sustain you in time of need.

It says, of course, in verse 7, that we are to cast all our anxieties on him. This may be very obvious, but as you realize they are professing Christians, we do not just pray to God, we pray to departed saints, we pray to angels.

All such prayers are no prayers at all. The only prayers that the Bible speaks of are prayers to God and to God only. We do not pray to angels or departed saints, they cannot help us.

Only God can. We are to pray on him, we are to call upon him, and we are to cast our cares upon him, because he is strong and he is powerful.

[13:32] There is something else which stands out in this particular context with regard to the exhortation, which I'm afraid is not clear in the New International Version.

It says in verse 6, humble yourselves. In the original, that is an imperative or a command. In other words, Peter is telling the readers what to do. And in verse 7, the verb that is used for casting is used in a tense that goes together with verse 6.

So it reads something like this, humble yourselves by casting all your anxiety on him. Peter is saying, if you want to be humble as a believer, you cast your care upon him.

In other words, if you do not pray, you are proud, you are self-sufficient, you are unwilling to humble yourselves. So the humbling goes together with the casting of all anxiety on him.

In the author, our version is to be preferred when it says, casting all your care upon him. You could say that Peter's almost assuming it. Sometimes it can have the force of an imperative or simply a command or simply an assumption.

[14:43] And Peter here is exhorting them, casting all your care upon him. It could also be an assumption, something which Peter takes for granted. Someone who knows the strength of the devil and the omnipotence of God and his own weakness will always come and pray and thereby humble himself under God's mighty hand.

The unbeliever will not pray. He does not believe in the power of the devil. He does not believe that God is able to help. He is self-sufficient and thinks he can cope and manage on his own.

Not so the believer. We are conscious of our weakness. We come and we must pray. The person that never prays is not a Christian. And so we come to God in a frame of humility, knowing our own weakness, but also knowing God's strength and his ability to help us to cope with whatever anxiety may be.

Another very interesting thing with regard to the exhortation is what we may call a piece of directive counselling. There is a tremendous discussion going on in different churches on counselling and people no longer want to be counselled from the pulpit.

They want to be counselled on an individual basis. And very often people are very happy to unburden themselves, to share every single problem with others and instead of casting their care upon God, they like to pour it into the ears of a priest or some professional counsellor.

[16:19] I fear that this is something which Scripture does not tolerate, at least not in an extreme sense. Confession, of course, is good for the soul, a very true saying, but we are nevertheless to confess to God.

Not all sharing is helpful. We may have anxieties and problems and difficulties that perhaps relate, to our own personal makeup, which may not be terribly helpful and edifying and we should be careful not to share them in the sense that we burden other people with our own problems.

Father Peter is saying, redirect your anxieties, cast them upon God who is able to help. You know that very well-known saying, that altruism, that man's extremity is God's opportunity and so we can say that God specializes with difficult people, that he is able to help us, whatever our anxieties may be.

And Peter is telling the leaders here what to do. It is not that he is saying, well, here are just think about it, and if you like, you can do it, and if you don't like it, well, you're just a carnal Christian. Not at all. He's telling them what to do, but to cast all your anxiety upon him. Now, we're not told in particular what this anxiety is, although, as I've indicated, it is relation-orientated, but it may be all sorts of things.

[17:47] It may be anxieties about the past, the present, the future, it may be problems relating to our own particular situation, whatever it is, Peter is saying, whatever category there may be, all of anxiety, cast it upon God.

Let that be your starting point. Pray about it. Pray to him who is able to help you, casting all your care upon him.

I came back from a wedding yesterday in Glasgow, and as I was waiting at the station, I noticed someone that was playing with a ball. It's one of these modern rubber things, and you bounce them onto the floor and they jump back again.

Or they jump wherever you don't want them to jump. And there was a piece of string attached to it. And so what you can do is you can bounce this ball onto the floor and it would just come back again because you had this string and you could just pull it up again.

I like to think, does this perhaps be a picture of how sometimes we view prayer so wrongly? We cast the problem away from us, but we have a piece of string and we pull it back again and we want to hold on to it.

[19:00] We are unprepared to let go of it because we want to be in control rather than allow God to be in control of anxiety. We are to learn to detach ourselves from it.

And Peter is directing us by saying we are to cast all these problems away from us onto God. the actual word that is used as a strong one.

It is not just the idea of throwing, but it is jerking, hurling, detaching, to get rid of, not to hold on to, but to let go. And it is quite possible that our anxiety, our care, may absorb us.

And the word in the original suggests this idea of being ripped apart by it or torn into two different directions. And some of our traps are more prone than others.

We are given to some kind of temperament which harbors these anxieties and dwells on it and feeds on it and then considered as a mark of humility or spirituality.

[20:05] What God says, if we humble ourselves, we cast these things away from us. I think it was Rabbi Duncan who said that there is a fascination about a melancholy temperament it is something which perhaps some of us are given to more than others.

And so we need these comforting words to know that we can come to this mighty God and cast all our care, whatever they be, upon him. And then there is another reason why we should do these things.

I would say that this is quite a powerful testimony to an unbelieving world that cares about things. We did earlier on in the Sermon on the Mount how the pagans care about things. They too have worries and concerns and anxieties. What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Where shall we live? Where shall we spend our holidays? What car shall I buy next? All these things, Jesus is saying, we're not to worry about. God cares for us. And so as believers we need to learn to solve and handle our difficulties and problems in a manner that is pleasing to God and that complies with his will as it is revealed to us in the scriptures and in this injunction, casting all our anxiety upon him.

[21 : 30] And if we do so, we shall know the peace of God in our own lives. And if that's one final point before we move on to the second part, something again which I think is so very often forgotten, is that the Bible is a very practical book.

I wouldn't perhaps go as fast to say that the Bible is a manual for counselors. There are many things in the Bible that are not addressed. We think of medical ethics for example, to mention one thing, one particular area one can look into.

But there are always principles and we're never left without guidance on these things. So one can see that all scripture is profitable for correction.

It's given to us not that we can preach clever sermons or just study Greek tenses all the time, but it's also been given to us to help us in our Christian living to please God in all things and to bear testimony not just by display in our orthodoxy, but also living out the Christian life and to follow the instructions that God has so clearly given to us.

And in one sense we can say that when we read these things again, we're left without excuse, we cannot plead ignorance. God has told us what to do with our care, with our anxiety.

[22 : 52] We're to get rid of it by casting it upon God and leave it as a throne of grace. It is our responsibility that we are to obey and do so gladly as believers.

So much than for the first part, the excitation, casting all the anxiety upon him. Now the second part really is a promise or a reason or you may say it's an incentive.

We're to do so, we're to obey what Peter is saying for one reason only, we're to do so because God cares for you, what the original has, because to him it matters concerning you, because to him it matters concerning you and the you is in the plural, the church is addressed collectively and its members individually.

And notice the close connection between the exhortation and the promise by this little word, because if we do not believe that God cares for us, then we will not pray to him.

And if we do not pray to God, if we do not cast our care upon him, it is simply because we do not believe that God cares for us.

[24 : 14] And so these two are inseparably linked. Your prayer life, you could almost say, is a reflection of your theological understanding of God.

We're not to separate our practical behavior from the view we have about God. We can be guilty sometimes of misrepresenting God. We can act as believers as if God did not care for us and grumble and complain to unbelievers about our lot, about our low wages, about our car, about our wife, about our marriage, about the church.

All these things that will concern us, we should pour them into the ear of God. The Puritans used to ever say that we're to sue God for his promises, the promises here he cares for you, were to sue God and to throw all our care upon him.

And so these two parts of this verse are really linked together. It is also comforting to know that the God that cares for us is a God that is intimately involved in the lives of his people and also of individuals.

So often we do not care for one another, but God will always care for us. I've looked up the confession and I like to read a section to you which deals with this particular aspect of God's providence and I'll tell you in a moment why I've chosen to read from it.

[25 : 52] The most wise, righteous, and gracious God does oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruption of their own hearts, to justice them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled, and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.

this is a part taken from chapter five in God's providence. I've read this section because it brings out very strongly why God sometimes allows us to have these cares and anxieties that he may teach us to pray and to come back to him.

And may I say in passing perhaps that perhaps one of these days we should look forward to an article in a monthly record which will deal with the pastoral theology of the confession.

I think sometimes the free church has been guilty of over-emphasizing orthodoxy, but the confession itself of course, as far as it reflects the mind of scripture, also gives us a very good account on pastoral theology, and the section which I've read from chapter five is very worthwhile studying on its own.

Those who would have us believe that the confession is sterile and static. I wonder whether such people have ever read the confession at all. It is practical and helpful, it is not infallible, but it is something which can help us to understand the word of God.

[27 : 41] So God may allow us to go through difficult times, to press us again unto himself.

Perhaps a very good illustration is the one taken from Luke 15, which must be my favourite parable, where the prodigal son, remember, he runs away from his father, and then things are getting worse and worse, and eventually he decides to turn back.

And what is it that causes him to turn back to the father? Surely it is the belief that God is able to help, that his father is one that cares for him and will meet him at his point of need.

God is able to come to God if we humble ourselves, if we recognise our own failure, if we believe that God is able to sustain us and to help us.

So we are to come to God in faith, believing that what he has said is true, that he does care for us. We have preached about these things, we have looked at the word of God, let us now come to the God of the word.

Our gracious Lord, we thank you that your word has been given to us, to teach us more about yourself and also about our own selves. Forgive us when we hug our problems, when we are unwilling to depart with them, when we are not willing to humble ourselves, when we try to manage our own affairs without considering your aid and your assistance.

[29 : 24] Forgive us our folly and our foolishness. We pray for those amongst us who have hearts that are burdened with a conviction of sin, with guilt, with things that are related to the past, of those who have got burdens to bear that almost seem impossible to bear.

We pray that such a one may learn to cast all their care upon him. Forgive us also, Lord, when we do not reflect your character in our own lives. You are telling us that we are to be holy just as you are holy, and that we too must be caring, just as you are caring.

We thank you for your love which shows to us that you care for us, and we pray that we may learn to help one another. Grant to us a prayerful spirit, that as we meet together for prayer collectively, or as we meet with you individually, we may learn afresh to unburden ourselves, to make use of that great privilege, to cast all our care from him, knowing that you do care for us.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.