

Antidote to Anxiety

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

- [0 : 00] Our last new song we'll sing after a brief meditation from God's Word. Turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 7.
- 1 Peter 5, 7. Some of you know it by heart. It's one of those texts that we might think we know all that we need to know, but you know Peter keeps saying in his letters, I'm going to see to it that you remember these things after I'm dead and gone.
- We need to be constantly reminded of old things, and these are precious old things that we need to be newly reminded of. Cast all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you.
- Let's pray. We have just sung of the greatest expression of your care for us, Lord Jesus. And yet, we sometimes doubt it, that you really do know and that you do care about the things we're going through.
- And we pray that again, just singing of it, would drill into our hearts deep the wondrous care that you have for us. Now teach us this passage afresh, we pray.
- [1 : 21] Even as each of us need it, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, the verse breaks easily into two parts. The first is a helpful instruction, and the second is an encouraging promise.
- So the helpful instruction, cast all your anxiety on Him. What are these anxieties? They're worries. They're distracting cares.
- The American Psychiatric Association defines anxiety as an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes, like increased blood pressure, or a tightening in our stomachs, or a shortness of breath, increased heart rate, nervous tension.
- We could be uptight, on edge, a stress headache, and then even exhaustion because worries drain our energies. Someone said anxiety is one of those things that are better felt than telt.
- But we all know what they are, don't we? What worry is and anxiety is. And from this we can see again the tight body-soul connection, that what we're thinking up here can have effects through the whole of our bodies.
- [2 : 41] That's the way God made us. And so we even learn that anxiety is a great contributor to heart disease and other physical complications. And one could almost conclude from this alone that we obviously weren't made to carry around all these burdens.
- That's something foreign to it. That's not the way we were made to be, carrying heavy burdens of worry and care.
- But anxiety also has negative spiritual effects. Just to start with, it's a sin against God, isn't it? The Bible is clear on that. Our Lord tells us it's a command to not worry.
- Just as God said to Adam and Eve, you shall not, do not eat of the tree that's in the midst of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So he says, do not worry.
- Matthew 6, 25, Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you'll eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. The things that we need for life.

- [3 : 46] He says in verse 34, Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. So tomorrow will have enough troubles to deal with tomorrow.
- So you're going to have to deal with trouble tomorrow, but why get double punishment by bringing tomorrow's worries into today and suffering today and tomorrow?
- You'd be better off just to suffer at once. We have all sorts of commands not to worry. Philippians 4, 6, Do not be anxious about anything.
- You remember the parable of the four soils, how our Lord showed how the cares of life can choke out the Word, making it unproductive.
- Now, that's given of lost people, and when they receive the Word, it's the cares of life. The normal cares and worries of life can so control them that they don't give further thought to the Word, and so it chokes out the Word.
- [4 : 50] But I find that the same thing can happen in Christians' lives. That worry and care can choke out the Word in our lives as well. Well, we too can become so distracted by the cares and anxieties of life that the comforts and promises of God's Word don't reach us.
- They don't touch us. They don't affect us. They're choked out because of our worrying. So worry is itself a sin, but it also leads to other sins, choking out the Word, unfitting us for our other duties, like rejoicing in the Lord always.
- That's something that worry will unfit us for because it turns us inward on ourselves, and it doesn't allow us to look outward and to love others as the Lord has loved us.
- So this problem of worry, it can choke out the Word. It can have spiritual consequences in our lives that are negative as well.
- You remember when Jesus and His disciples came to that home that was such friends to Him, of Lazarus and Mary and Martha, and Mary's sitting at Jesus' feet, just soaking up His every word.
- [6 : 12] We read that Martha, she was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. And so her worries about all that needed to be done and distracted her from profiting from the Word, as Mary was doing, and got her all worked up and fit to be tied to where she finally comes to Jesus and asks, Lord, don't you care that my sister's left me to do the work by myself?
- Tell her to help me. She's even bossing Jesus, isn't she? She'd like to boss her sister, but she gets Jesus to try to boss Him, and she's bossing Jesus. You tell her to help me.
- Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you are worried and upset about many things. You see, He traced her problem back to worry.
- Her legitimate responsibilities as the hostess for the day had gotten to her, to where she was distracted, worried, and upset.
- And in her anxiety, she is ready to call her sister to task, and even our Lord, for not caring that Mary wasn't helping her, and He hadn't even told her to help.
- [7 : 30] So, legitimate concerns can ripen into worry, pressing duties, legitimate things can develop into distracting, upsetting, worrisome cares.
- It's just right to be concerned about your health, isn't it? Your job, and your finances, and the national concerns for the economy, the terrorism, the war, the future direction of the country, the moral freefall we're in, the breakdown of law and order, the loss of common sense.
- We could go on and on. We can even worry about how worry contributes to heart disease. And there's hardly anything that worry will not feed upon these ordinary cares of life that all people must deal with.

But there are peculiar concerns that can lead to worry in the Christian. For instance, before you were Christian, you weren't all that concerned about sin. But now sin can become a matter of worry to you.

Now you're concerned about lost loved ones. And that can turn to worry. So we not only have the normal cares of life as believers, we have some additional ones because we are Christians now.

[8 : 48] We're living by a higher standard. And so we can see that these things too, even legitimate concerns, can turn into worry.

One of the major points in this letter of Peter was the fear of suffering, persecution from the world. That too, we can look at our future and wonder what persecutions might we or our children or grandchildren going to be facing.

Well, these are some of the worries then that Peter is speaking of here. So worries are damaging to our physical health.

They're damaging to our spiritual health. Not only harmful to us, but others around us, as Mary caught it from Martha and Jesus caught it from Martha, but harmful to the reputation of our Lord. This is our refuge in times of trouble.

And when we're just as worried and upset as the worldling who has no God to care for them, it doesn't speak well of him. This is the one who has promised to work everything out for our good.

[10 : 02] And so when we are worrying, it's saying, well, you really can't trust him to work everything for our good. So we can see the problems that come from worry.

So what are we to do with them? Well, cast all of them on him. The him refers to God, who is spoken of in the previous verse, verse six, and it's also made explicit in Psalm 55, 22, which I think that Peter might have had in mind when he wrote this.

It says, David says, cast your cares on the Lord. There he spelled out, the Lord. Not just him, as Peter says. The Lord.

That's who the him is. It's God, the Lord Almighty. So, cast them on the Lord. This word for cast is a compound word made up of two words.

The word that means to throw and upon. To throw upon. The only other place it's used in the Scripture in the New Testament is the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

[11 : 08] It tells us what the disciples did with their coats after they brought the borrowed colt to Jesus. Luke 19, 35 says, they brought it to Jesus, threw their coats on the colt, and put Jesus on it.

That's what you're to do with your anxiety. To throw it upon the Lord like they threw their coats on the donkey. Now, how often do you need to cast your cares on the Lord?

Well, just as often as you pick them up. As you know, worries are things that can just keep coming back to us. You may have cast it on the Lord, and ten minutes later, you find yourself just going over the same worry again.

Well, it's time to cast it again. And then it comes back again, and it's time to cast it again. Cares don't want to let you forget about them. And so, we've got to keep on casting our cares upon the Lord as often as they come up.

I remember an early job in my teenage years of picking up rocks for a farmer. How many of you have done that? I know you have, Scott. Oh, wow, there's a lot of you. So you're walking along.

[12 : 27] The farmer's on the tractor driving with the wagon, and you're in the back as the slave, and you're picking up these rocks. Some of them can be very heavy, and they're so heavy that you can't carry very many, maybe just one.

And as soon as you've got it, you've got to throw it off onto the wagon. And that's what we're to do with our worries. We're not to keep carrying them around.

As soon as they come, we're to throw them over onto the wagon, onto the Lord. And so as soon as these thoughts, worrisome thoughts, weigh down our minds, we don't wait.

They don't go away on their own. They only grow and multiply. So we've got to throw them off onto the Lord. It takes a conscious act.

It's not something that happens unconscious. No, we consciously have to take the trouble, just like we would take that rock and throw it onto the wagon. We must take our burden and throw it upon the Lord.

[13 : 37] And if it returns, you do it again and again. You get rid of these worries like heavy rocks or like hot potatoes. You don't hold onto them. You throw them off to the Lord.

Now, how do you do that? What is this conscious act of throwing them onto the Lord? Well, you do it by prayer. By prayer. Philippians 4, 6. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made unto God.

So that's what it means to cast your cares on the Lord. You pray to Him. You go to Jesus and tell Him all about your troubles. You pour out your heart to Him. You bear soul to Him.

You tell Him everything that's bothering you. That's bringing your burdens to the Lord and then leaving them there. Let go of them. Throw them onto the Lord.

Commit them to Him. Here, Lord, You take this. This isn't for me to bear. You are my great burden bearer. And so you unburden your heart, one burden at a time, one rock at a time, one worry at a time.

[14 : 45] We cast our cares on the Lord by prayer and secondly, by the Word of God. By the Word. You take the promises with you and you trust Him, taking Him at His Word.

Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him. That's it. You commit it to Him. Here, you take this. Proverbs 3, 5, and 6.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight. So the promises of God's Word.

Like what? Well, how about the encouraging promise that is the last part of our text? That He cares for you. Can you think of a better reason to follow this instruction of casting your cares on Him than this encouraging promise?

Because He cares for you. Now just as you are to open your heart and to tell the Lord all your troubles, here our Lord is opening His heart to us and revealing that He loves and cares for us.

[16 : 00] And it's because He loves and cares for you that you are to cast your cares upon Him. I think it's a similar antidote to worry that's found at the end of the worry passage in Matthew 6 where Jesus says in verse 33, Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these other cares and concerns and worries will be added to you as well.

So you make me your priority and I'll make your cares my own. That's what our Lord is saying to us. Now you may think that the things you're worrying about are too small to bother the Lord with.

Appreciate Jim, you often remind us of that in prayer. There's nothing too small or too big to bring to the Lord. And why is that? Because He would respond, if it's a care to you, it's a care to me.

I care for you. And so if that little thing is a concern and worry and a care for you, I'm concerned about it too. Such is His loving care that whatever's bothering you is His care and concern.

Now sometimes it can look like He doesn't care. Life can look that way. His silence can feel like He doesn't care. Martha obviously thought that.

[17 : 21] Don't you care that I've got all the work? Well, of course He cared. But she has something to learn too. You remember the disciples on the stormy Sea of Galilee in the boat taking more water in than they could throw out about to sink and they wake the Savior.

Don't you care that we're perishing? Carest thou not that we perish? Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace behind a frowning providence.

He hides a smiling face. The frowning providence, Mary's not helping me. I have all this work to do and all by myself. The frowning providence, the storm threatening to take us to the bottom.

The smiling face, He does care. He does love you. And He loves you so much that that's to be the reason you throw your care upon Him.

Why was Jesus even in the boat that day with these disciples? In other words, why wasn't He in heaven where He belonged enjoying the glory with His Father and with the Holy Spirit and the angels and perfected saints?

[18 : 37] Why was He even down in the boat with them? Why did He become a man and come to this earth if it wasn't because He cared for them? He would soon show them a few years later just how great that care was when He went to the cross.

But even in a few moments, He showed that care when He just spoke to the wind and the waves and they were gone. Silence. Peace. Does Jesus care when my heart is pained too deeply for mirth or song?

As the burdens press and the cares distress and the way grows weary and long? Well, yes, He cares. I know He cares. His heart is touched with my grief.

When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares. Now, if we had nothing else in our Bible than 1 Peter 5-7, we could say, I know my Savior cares.

But we have so many references to the cross that every one of them shouts, I know my Savior cares. He went to the hellish cross out of His loving care for us.

[19 : 52] And it's that loving care that more than anything else should cause us to open our hearts up to the Lord and pour out our burdens to Him. You know, the more you know that someone cares for you, the more confident you feel telling them about your cares.

And so it is with our Savior. He has already told us and shown us His care. Now He says, come and cast yours upon me. So 1 Peter 5-7, though you've known this verse by heart for many years, many of you, though you may have cast your cares upon Him many times, it just could be that you've picked up a few of those cares along the way and are carrying the same old ones again, or you've got new ones.

And they are weights. They're like a rock that you're carrying extra weight around. And it's not good for you or those around you or for the reputation and glory of Christ.

And so He says, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, you see, whatever it is, sin, cares, of any kind, heavy burdens.

Come to me, I will give you rest. Soul rest is waiting for you. So stop carrying your cares. It's time to cast them upon me again and so to know that promised peace that passes all understanding that will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

[21 : 23] Well, I've told you the story before. It's the parable that J. Adams tells from this text of the worrisome Wally. Always worry about everything.

And one day his friend said, Wally, something's happened to you. You're not worrying anymore. He says, No, I'm not. What happened? Well, I hired someone to worry for me. What?

I said I hired someone to worry, do all the worrying for me. Well, what did it cost? That's \$500 a day. \$500 a day?

Where are you going to get that kind of money? Yeah, you've heard it before, haven't you? That's not my worry, that's his.

Well, that's our Savior. Cast your cares upon me. Why? Because I'll do it. I'll do the caring for you. And the Savior's got bigger shoulders than you do, and he's got greater resources to draw upon than you do.

[22 : 26] And that's our privilege, not for \$500 a day. It's free. It's his way of caring for his children, his brethren. He cares for us.

So let's make use of our burden bearer, who daily bears our burdens. And that's what we're doing. So let's make use of our burdens.

So let's make use of our burdens. So let's make use of our burdens.