

Light Brings Salt

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Iron Range Bible Church

Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



Our Source of Strength!

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Can you say that your life is without any cares, i.e., without a burden, a concern, or a worry? You have probably heard someone say, "that guy doesn't have a care in the world." But is that true? Not on your life! We all have things we are concerned about to one degree or another. In fact, the carefree person is probably covering up a host of cares by his or her carefree demeanor. Even if we are not wringing our hands in worry, we all have things in our lives that we are concerned about. The Apostle Paul, for instance, spoke of "the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28).

If, however, you have been a Christian for any length of time, you are probably well aware of 1 Peter 5:7, "casting all your anxiety (care) on Him, because He cares for you." In fact, many Christians know this verse by heart, have claimed it in their lives, and even shared it with someone with a burden. It is a wonderful verse, but unfortunately, we too often apply this verse apart from its context and in particular, apart from verse 6 to which it is linked and dependent.

Why do we tend to do this with God's word? Well, first, we are simply not as careful with the use of God's Word as we should be. We tend to pull out isolated verses and apply them apart from the context and purpose of the passage in which the verse is found. Second, we all want God's care, but we too often want it on **our own terms**. We tend to dissect His care from His purposes and plan. In our consumer-oriented society, we tend to treat God much like a vending machine where we drop in a certain amount of change and then choose what we want to satisfy our hunger as we

perceive it. We think, if I just had this or that, I would be secure, or significant, or satisfied. But the promise of 1 Peter 5:7 must not be taken like this.

There are four Scriptural propositions that we need to consider which I believe are important to our understanding and a proper application of this passage and its counsel concerning our cares.

First Proposition

One of the great purposes of God for you and me is that we might be transformed into the image and character of His Son, the Lord Jesus. This is plainly declared for us in For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, Romans 8:29.

Plainly, God wants to make us like His Son. This transformation is part of the "good and perfect" will of God that He has for each one of us (Rom. 12:1-2). Why? Because this is the place of peace, joy, fruitfulness, and real meaning in life. Only in this way can we be restored to God's purpose for us as human beings.

Unfortunately, however, we are often more interested in our own will which is usually wrapped up in our personal wants and plans, and in our comfort and pleasure. **We want God to care for us, but we want it on our terms and according to our agendas.** We ask God to bless our plans rather than seek His direction according to His purposes.

Second Proposition

Perhaps nothing manifests the fallen condition of mankind-and is also true for even regenerated people-like to operate independently of God. But how do we do this? By trusting in our own resources through which we seek to handle life find happiness, significance, security, satisfaction, and deal with those problems in life that threaten

our agendas or whatever stands in the way of **our** plans.

The Old Testament prophets often addressed this very issue and to do so, they sometimes used certain word pictures to illustrate this inborn tendency that lies stubbornly in each of us.

(1) The Picture of filling One's Life With the Substitutes of the World: Like one fills an empty bottle we often seek to fill our emptiness with the world's substitutes to meet life's needs rather than trusting in the Lord and filling our lives with Him and His Word (Isa. 2:5-12).

(2) In Isaiah 2:6, the word "filled" (Heb. = male) suggests the idea of attempting to remove a void, the problem of personal emptiness, but this is something which only God can fill. This word was used of filling something like a pitcher or a bottle with some needed substance.

(3) The Picture of Lighting our own Firebrands by which we seek to direct our way. Rather than trusting God by walking in the light of His Word, we tend to fabricate our own sources of light (Isa. 50:10-11).

(4) The Picture of Sheep which go astray because they are prone to wander and go their own way rather than follow the Lord who is our Shepherd (Isa. 53:6; Ps. 23).

(5) The Picture of the Arm of the Flesh. I am reminded of the picture of the arm and hammer on a baking soda box with the implicit promise that this product will do the job, but the arm of the flesh will not (Jer. 17:5).

When the term "flesh" is used metaphorically like this in Jeremiah 17:5, what exactly does it mean? It stands for human resources with the OSN ruling rather than God's resources.

The "flesh" may be defined as that strong and rebellious disposition in people to operate out of their own resources to meet their needs and wants, the things they perceive they must have for security and significance. Rather than trust in God, the flesh points to a spirit of independence, a commitment to do one's own thing, in one's own way, and from one's own resources. The flesh represents man's attempt to find security, significance, peace, and satisfaction, and purpose apart from God, or at least apart from total dependence on Him.

Third Proposition

The Bible defines the pursuit of life by our own resources by the word, PRIDE or ARROGANCE! And what is pride? It is man's attempt at becoming his own god which is pure idolatry. Pride is the position of a swollen estimate of one's own powers, resources, and abilities which causes us in turn to ignore God in one way or another. Several passages of Scripture are instructive here:

* Deuteronomy 8:11-16 cf. with 8:2-3

* Hosea 13:4-7.

* Habakkuk 2:4-5. The proud live not by faith, but by their own solutions like strong drink to deaden their emptiness or pain. In the process they develop an insatiable appetite for the details of life which never truly fill their emptiness.

* 1 John 2:16. The Greek word for "life" is bios. Bios refers to that by which life is sustained-the resources needed to live life. The phrase "pride of life" refers to "a boasting or an arrogant independence in one's own resources." It takes an insolent and empty assurance which trusts in its own power and resources rather than in God and His resources.

Fourth Proposition

Out of God's wisdom, love, mercy, and grace, He wants to draw us to Himself as the only true fountain of living waters, the only source of true refreshment, life, and fruitfulness. However, because of our proneness to wander and to go our own arrogant and independent way, God must operate as a heavenly Father who chastens His sons and as the Vinedresser who cleans and prunes the branches to cause them to abide and make and keep them healthy and productive.

In essence, what is God doing when He prunes or disciplines? He is humbling us. He is working to bring us from the arrogant position of self-dependence, of going our own way and using our own resources to a place of faith/dependence on Him (cf. again Deut. 8:2, 16).

* As the Vinedresser, God prunes us to cause us to abide in the vine, the place of blessing and fruitfulness.

* As our loving Father, He disciplines us to bring us to the place of greater and greater faith in Him (Heb. 12:5, 6, 7 with vss. 14, 15a and 3:7f; 5:11f; 10:24-25).