

The Care of God for his People

1 Peter 5: 5-7

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"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." Over a period of some weeks these precious words seemed to be constantly upon the lips of the brethren, both in private conversation and in the gatherings together. What immeasurable comfort such words convey! How very many of the Lord's people have experienced the precious import of them in times of sickness, bereavement, and pressures of varying kinds and extent. Those sleepless nights of pain; days of concern for loved ones; the disappointments of youth; the trials and weakness of advancing years; family problems; business setbacks; increasing lawlessness and apostasy. Does God *really* care? How blessed to exclaim, not only by the repetition of this wonderful text, but by *actual personal experience* — indeed He does!

Spiritual help and enlargement should result from a closer consideration of these words and their context. Peter is writing to believers who, although scattered in various provinces, were nevertheless "Elect . . . of God," and were moving on to "an inheritance . . . reserved in heaven." Peter, unlike the apostle Paul, does not enlarge upon the present blessings of the believer as seated "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," but speaking of the sufferings of Christ (of which he had been a witness) as the basis for all blessing, he then looks on to the manifestation of the glory, and of the portion the saints will enjoy "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." He has already assured them of the "power of God" and its ability to keep them right on to that day, and now in the chapter before us he adds this precious testimony to the care of God for His own. Graciously would the Holy Spirit assure us that the God who cares thus for those to whom Peter writes is the same blessed God who in matchless love cares for His people today.

A prayerful consideration of verses 5 and 6 will give us a deeper appreciation of the context of verse 7. Peter's choice of words (especially his verbs and their tenses) are of immense importance, and would well repay a careful study; here we can but briefly refer to one or two outstanding examples. In verse 5 he stresses the thought of *humility*, and in so doing makes use of words which are peculiar to this passage of Scripture — "be clothed with humility," or as the marginal reading — "bind on humility." These words contain a great challenge as to our relations with our fellow-believers — the suggestion is the girding of oneself with the badge of servitude — a token of true and real deference one towards the other. The perfect example, as always, is seen in our precious Lord — He took "a bondman's form" serving here in the perfection of unchanging love. The beautiful incident of John 13 impresses the affections with the glory of One who in His Person "is over all, God blessed for ever," yet in holy Manhood would gird Himself to serve so wondrously in love. The practical carrying out of Philippians 2: 1-4, would establish the foundation for unity amongst the people of God.

Peter proceeds to say, "For God resisteth the proud." The love of God for His own neither ceases nor wanes — but if we are to know the *nearness* and blessedness of His solicitude and care, the feature of humility must of necessity displace that of natural pride, for "He looketh upon the lowly, and the proud He knoweth *afar off*" (Psalm 138: 6). The apostle exhorts us to humble ourselves "under the mighty hand of God." The word "mighty" implies not only power and strength but also dominion; the name EL (the mighty One) occurs some 250 times in Scripture, and there are many references to the might of His *hand*. The beautiful words of Isaiah 40 shew us something of its majesty and power — "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out the heavens with a span, and

grasped the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance, and the hills in scales." Men at tremendous cost and labour and risk penetrate into the fringe of outer space — but God covers the whole of the heavens with the *span of His hand*; and the seas with all their power and vastness are held in the hollow of that same mighty hand. But, beloved brethren, that hand of power is the hand of love — "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." Well might this precious chapter commence "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." The whole chapter should be read. From the powerful, loving hand of the Father (and that also of Christ Himself) no power can wrest any one of His flock! Jehovah Himself, the Lord Almighty, is to be known as Father, all the love and care which that relationship involves is made available to every individual saint (2 Corinthians 6: 17, 18).

"Casting (or, having cast) all your care (every anxiety) upon Him." The word "casting" is an emphatic word — it really means "to fling" — to entirely part company with — and is so used in Luke 19: 35, where the people cast their garments upon the colt, letting them completely go!

How often do we pour out our anxieties to the Lord, and then seek, after all, to carry them ourselves! Would not this suggest that the import of the preceding verses has not been fully grasped? Some element perhaps of self-sufficiency, a lack of that feature of "lowliness" which the eye of the blessed God delights to "look upon." Perhaps, too, an insufficient appreciation of the power of that "mighty hand" — the hand of One who "cares about" us? If the first mention of care in the text refers to anxiety and difficulties, the second reference is to the wondrous love and solicitude of God Himself for His saints. He is interested in us; He is concerned about our every problem, they *matter to Him* as the original word suggests.

Beloved brethren, the words and deeds of the precious Saviour in His present service in the glory, the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit of God, our present access to the Father Himself; the glorious prospect of being raptured from this scene to be "ever with the Lord," all bespeak the blessedness of divine interest in, and care for, every saint of God. The covering of God's mighty hand, the unceasing solicitude and loving concern in every step of our pathway! Let us seek earnestly that spirit of true humility so that the blessedness of the words "He careth about you" may calm our every fear and foreboding, and call forth from our hearts a deeper note of praise and thanksgiving to the blessed God. How precious are the words of our beloved Lord — "For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God" (John 16: 27).

The appreciation and enjoyment of God's unceasing care would be reflected in our daily work and testimony. In the book of Ezra we have a remarkable instance of this. Vessels of gold and silver and other precious things were to be carried from Babylon to Jerusalem, a long journey beset by many dangers. Apparently Ezra could have had a military escort from the king for protection by the way, but in true humility he besought of the Lord "a right way;" His testimony before the king had been clear and uncompromising — "the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him." He knew the might of that hand, and the goodness of the heart of God. In humility and dependence upon the God he had proved he, in full and happy confidence "cast all his care upon Him" — refusing help from man and thus honouring God before all. The silver and the gold and the vessels were all safely brought to the house of his God (v. 32). What privileges are ours! In quietness and the confidence begotten of faith to enjoy the illimitable resources and tender care of the heart of God, as in humility and thankfulness we seek to magnify His Name in a world barren of joy and hope.

Yes! "He cares about us;" "underneath are the everlasting (eternal) arms;" "His banner *over* us is love," and "goodness and mercy" are our attendants all our days. "Yea, happy is that people, whose

God is the Lord" (Psalm 144: 15).