

'Cast all your cares upon Him', 1 Peter 5. 7. Bethesda Coffee Morning. 7 April 2010.

Our Bible reading for this morning consists of just one verse, taken from the closing chapter of Peter's first epistle, 'Cast *all* your cares upon Him, for He cares for you'.¹

As Linda knows, as late as Sunday evening, I was planning to talk today about something else. But I didn't sleep at all well that night because I was concerned about our daughter Susanna and her husband Mark. Briefly, they are currently in Kenya visiting several churches. They went thirteen days ago and are due back next Monday. And over the first five days, until last Wednesday, we had heard from them four times. But late last Wednesday they were leaving Nairobi by night train for the coast. And we hadn't heard from them since.

We could only assume that Susanna and Mark were in an area from which they were unable to get in contact with us – which we discovered only yesterday afternoon was the case.

But, lying awake in the early hours of Monday morning, I became more and more anxious about them. So I did what you would expect me to do – I talked to God about it ... more than once. And as I did, it was as if the Lord dropped into my mind my text for this morning: 'Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you'.

And I remembered how much these words meant to Linda and me many years ago ... about six months before Susanna was born. But that is another story!

This morning I want to underline three simple points from what Peter wrote.

First, the little word 'all' ... 'Cast *all* your cares upon Him'.

Peter's original readers had every cause for anxiety – for they faced far more than their fair share of trials. In the present, many of them suffered persecution simply for being Christians, and for the future their prospects were even worse.²

Indeed, within a few months of Peter writing, a violent storm broke. For, on the evening of 19th July in A.D. 64, a great fire destroyed many of the congested districts of Rome, which fire Nero, the then Emperor, blamed on the early Christians. As one of the Roman historians of the time expressed it, 'Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class ... called Christians ... Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt'.³

But even as Peter wrote, he and his readers could already see the storm clouds gathering. Small wonder then that the apostle included – and indeed emphasised – that word 'all' ... 'Cast *all* your cares upon Him'.⁴

Second, I want you to note Peter's words 'upon Him' ... 'Cast all your cares *upon Him*'.

Earlier in his letter,⁵ the apostle had referred to the well-known words of Isaiah 53, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way', which passage continues, as Peter knew well, 'and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all'.⁶

And was He ... the Lord Jesus of whom the prophet Isaiah wrote ... was He able to carry – to bear – the weight of all the iniquities – of all the sins – which God laid *on Him*? Oh, yes – most certainly He was! His very resurrection, on which many of us focused this past Easter Sunday, is evidence enough.

And now Peter insists that his persecuted and suffering readers themselves cast their cares where God once laid their sins ... 'on Him! And I remember telling myself in the early hours of Monday morning that I should do just that – that I should place *my* anxieties where God once placed my iniquities ... 'on Him' – the Lord Jesus – knowing that the One who at great cost bore *all* my iniquities can surely bear *all* my anxieties!

And thirdly. I want us to notice the promise which God makes in our text. We can confidently 'cast all our cares upon Him' (the Lord Jesus), Peter says, 'for He cares for you' – literally, 'for it matters to Him about you'. What an amazing thought ... that it matters to the Risen, Living Lord – to the One who upholds and controls a universe of a hundred billion galaxies – that it matters to Him about me.

In John 10, Jesus spoke about 'the hireling' – about the man paid to look after another's sheep. 'I am the Good Shepherd', He said, 'the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But the hireling, who is not the shepherd ... sees the wolf coming ... leaves the sheep and flees. ... The hireling flees', Jesus added, 'because he is a hireling, and does not care for the sheep'.

'It doesn't matter', Jesus was saying – using the same word as Peter does in my text ... 'It doesn't matter to the hireling about the sheep'. It matters to the hireling only about the hireling! But Peter assures us that the sheep

most certainly matter to the One he had spoken of earlier as 'the Shepherd'. 'You were like sheep going astray', he had written, 'but have now returned to the Shepherd ... of your souls'.⁷

And if we have truly returned to that 'Shepherd' – to the 'Good Shepherd', who, on that first *Good Friday*, laid down His life for His sheep⁸ – then with confidence we can cast our every care where our every sin was laid.

Let me read something to you I quoted here one Sunday evening three years ago. The extract comes from a small book written by Corrie Ten Boom, who, as Peter's readers, knew a lot about suffering ... having come through a German concentration camp in which her sister Betsie died.

'Many years ago, shortly after World War II had come to a close, I was invited to speak in a Japanese church in Tokyo. The nation was still reeling from the impact of the war ... two of their greatest cities had been destroyed by the atomic bomb. If ever a people had reason to worry, it was the Japanese.

Because of the language barrier, it seemed sensible for me to give them an object lesson. "Do you know the feeling", I began, "when your heart is like a suit-case with a heavy load?" The sad-faced people in the little church all nodded. ...

I picked up my suitcase and put it on the table ... I told them how weary I was from tramping all over the world, carrying that suitcase filled with heavy objects. "My heart was like that until just last week, when I read a glorious verse in the Bible, which says, 'Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you'. And I did that. I brought all my burdens to the Lord—all my cares—and I cast them upon Him".

I opened my suitcase on the table to demonstrate. "Lord", I continued, "here are my co-workers. They are so tired". I reached down and took two items out of the suitcase and laid them on the table. "And here is my trip, Lord—the one I have to make next week to the town where I don't know a single person. You know how worried I am about that ... I cast this care on you too, Lord". I took a big package out of the suitcase and laid it on the table next to the two smaller packages. "Here are my friends at home, Lord. They wrote about a car accident" I took out one more object and placed it on the table. I took object after object out of the suitcase, mentioning each one as a particular burden or worry.

In the end, the suitcase was empty. I closed the empty suitcase and pretended to walk out of the room, swinging my light bag as though it were made of paper. The people immediately got my point, and the light of understanding broke on their faces

After the meeting I quickly threw all the items back into the suitcase and dashed off with my host, to go to the home of the wonderful Japanese Christians who entertained me until it was time to fly on to Hong Kong.

Many years passed, and then I found myself in Berlin, at an international congress ... After one of the morning seminars, a distinguished-looking Japanese evangelist approached me. "Corrie ten Boom", he said with a broad smile, "every time I hear your name, I think of your trouble suitcase?"

"Oh", I said, flattered, "I am glad you remembered what I said that night". "It was not what you said that I remember", he smiled courteously, "it is what you did". "Oh, taking all those objects out of my suitcase", I said, "and laying them on the table as an illustration of how to pray?"

"No, that is not what I remember most", he said. "What I remember most is that after you finished your talk, you took all the objects, put them all back in your suitcase, and walked out of the hall just as burdened as when you came in!"

And I have a sneaking suspicion that the Lord often has occasion to peer into *my* 'trouble suitcase', and to ask, 'Malcolm, why do you insist on slipping your cares back into this suitcase almost as soon as you empty it?'

In closing, I can do no better than to repeat what I said earlier ... if we have truly returned to the 'Good Shepherd', who, on that first *Good Friday*, laid down His life for us – with confidence we can cast our every care where our every sin was laid. 'Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you'.

Footnotes

¹ 1 Pet. 5. 7.

² In rather ominous words, the apostle warned them that the time had come for 'judgement to begin with the house (or 'household') of God', 1 Pet. 4. 16-17.

³ Tacitus, *Annals* XV, 44.

⁴ Peter was alluding to Psalm 55 verse 22. Although this verse is more familiar to *us* through the language of the King James Version as 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee', *Peter* would have read it in his Greek Old Testament – which rendered the opening of the verse, 'Cast your *care* (your anxiety – the word of 1 Peter 5 verse 7) on the Lord'. But to stifle any remaining doubts on the part of his suffering and persecuted brethren, Peter adds – and indeed emphasises – the word 'all'.

⁵ 1 Pet. 2. 25.

⁶ Isa. 53. 6. And so Peter prefixed his quote with the words, 'who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree', 1 Pet. 2. 24.

⁷ 1 Pet. 2. 25.

⁸ John 10. 11.