

## *A Stop by Quiet Waters*

*Dick Germaine*

### **“Freedom From Anxiety”**

In his first letter Peter wrote, “*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*”<sup>NIV 1 Peter 5:7</sup> Anxiety is defined as an unpleasant complex combination of emotions that includes fear, apprehension and worry. The hundreds of products on drug store shelves and the burgeoning number of counselors reveal that it’s endemic in our culture. I want to ask a few questions about Peter’s statement regarding anxiety.

**Does Peter actually mean what he says here?** Is it truly possible to cast all our anxiety on Christ, which implies getting it out of our hearts, or is this just nice religious language with little substance to it? What do you think? You and I both know how easy it is to spout pious platitudes. We’ve all done it. We also know how easily anxiety can hold us in its stomach churning grip over one thing or another.

**Is this just Peter speaking, or is he supported by similar declarations elsewhere in the Bible?** David tells us to, “*Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.*”<sup>NIV Psalm 55:22</sup> The Lord Jesus invites all who are weary and loaded with burdens to come to him and he will give them rest. “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*”<sup>NIV Matthew 11:28</sup> Jesus also says, “*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.*”<sup>NIV Matt. 6:25</sup>

**What does Peter mean when he tells us to “cast” our anxiety on the Lord?** The Greek word he uses is used only one other time in the New Testament, in Luke 19:38, where the disciples “threw” their garments on the back of the donkey Jesus was about to ride into Jerusalem. The word refers to a specific action one takes to rid oneself of something so that it’s no longer in one’s possession.

**How do you “cast” something on the Lord?** Paul tells us how in his letter to the Philippians. “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*”<sup>NIV Phil. 4:6-7</sup> He uses two different words for prayer here, one refers to prayer in general and the other refers to intense prayer with a specific request. We don’t pray with intensity in order to get the reluctant attention of the Lord but to convey the depth of our struggle over that which is making us anxious. Anxiety of the kind Peter refers to is anxiety at the deepest possible level – over health, safety, job, persecution, ministry, reputation, shelter, etc.

As we pour out our heart to the Lord over whatever is causing our anxiety we are also to thank God for hearing us. The Lord Jesus is eagerly ready to hear and respond to our cry for deliverance from anxiety, and will replace it with his peace. “*Peace I leave with you;*

*my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" NIV John 14:27

Let me illustrate how deliverance from anxiety works. Imagine you are holding a large black basketball. Standing opposite you is the Lord Jesus holding a large green one. He wants you to toss (cast) him the black basketball and he will toss you the green one. As soon as you release your black ball he tosses his green ball to you so that they pass in the air. You can't catch the green ball as long as you keep holding the black one. Your hands aren't large enough to hold both balls in your grasp at the same time, you can only hold one or the other.

In the same way it's not possible for us to have his peace in our heart and a heart full of anxiety at the same time. It's one or the other. Paul describes this peace as a peace which goes beyond human understanding. That is, you can't comprehend how you can be filled with such wonderful peace with trouble present, but because you have cast your anxiety on the Lord you joyfully know it to be true.

I live over 700 miles from my mother, who has Alzheimer's disease. We've had her in an assisted care facility for the past 2 years, but now she can no longer communicate, has become somewhat aggressive, and is losing control of some body functions. I have three brothers who live near her and see that she is adequately cared for, visited, etc. But I had become increasingly guilt-ridden over my lack of on-site involvement, and filled with anxiety over the ongoing disintegration of my mother's mind. I kept asking myself what she was going to be like in the next several months. I couldn't shake the guilt and anxiety which was building up inside me.

As I was praying for her recently the Lord brought 1 Peter 5:7 to mind. I pondered it but felt as though I didn't have a right to cast my guilt and anxiety on him, that somehow or other I needed to feel guilty and suffer on her behalf because of all she was going through. How could I "*honor my mother,*" as the 5<sup>th</sup>. commandment teaches, if I wasn't even anxious over her? After a lengthy struggle with my emotions I finally did cast it onto him in prayer. As I then sat quietly in his presence I gradually felt the guilt and anxiety leave and a wonderful peace come into my heart and mind. I still care deeply for my mother, and talk with my older brother about her condition regularly, but the guilt and anxiety over her circumstances are gone! Does it ever come back? It tries to, but as soon as I sense this happening I once again toss it to the Lord and receive his peace in return.

### **What are you anxious about right now?**

**Can you** cast your anxiety on the Lord?

**Will you** cast your anxiety on the Lord?

**Will you do it now?**

*"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things (including peace in place of anxiety)?"*

Romans 8:31-32