

September 21, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Overcoming Anxiety

1 Peter 5:7

1. Say Your Prayers (verse 7a).

2. Know He Cares (verse 7b).

This morning we will be looking at over verse of Scripture: 1 Peter 5:7. Last week, I preached a message from verses 5-7. The main point of these verses is humility.

Young men are to demonstrate their humility in being submissive to the elders (according to the first half of verse 5). All of us are to demonstrate our humility toward one another, which is spelled out in verse 6. And, we are to demonstrate our humility before the Lord, in casting our burdens upon the Lord, demonstrating that we need help, which is the thrust of verse 7.

Now, last week, I don't believe that I did justice to my last point--about casting our cares upon the Lord. We simply didn't have much time to spend on the verse. It's not like I neglected the verse. I think that I dealt with it well in the context of the passage. We show our humility before God by casting our anxiety upon Him. One of the biggest ways that pride is manifested is in a self-sufficiency that refuses any help, thinking that your resources are sufficient for the task. By letting go of our anxiety and giving it to the Lord, it's a demonstration of our humility before Him.

In many ways, a short treatment of verse 7 is entirely appropriate, as the verse is merely a continuation of verse 6. Look there at verse 7, "casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." Verse 7 isn't even a full sentence. It's a dependent clause, which goes back to the concept in verse 6 of humility. I know that some of your translations make verse 7 a new sentence (like the NIV in particular). But, it's not. In the Greek text, it reads just like the New American Standard, "casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you."

If I want to do anything in my preaching it is this: emphasize the main points of the text. Let's major on the majors and minor on the minors. However, I do think that it would be good for us to slow down and consider this one verse this morning. But, the reason that I want to look only at this verse is because of the prominence of anxiety in our culture today, even as it relates to us in the church.

In 2005, the National Institutes of Health published a report that demonstrates how many people in our country are affected by anxiety. They reported that 6.8 million Americans have Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). That is, they have "unrealistic or excessive worry about a number of events or activities ... for at least six months." This report also indicated that about 6 million American adults ages 18 and older have Panic Disorder. These people experience "an intense, terrifying fear, similar to that caused by life threatening danger. The unexpected panic attacks are followed by at least one month of persistent concern about having another panic attack, worry about possible consequences of having another panic attack, or a significant behavior change related to the attacks." Additionally, it was reported that some 15 million American adults have Social Anxiety Disorder. Those with this problem have an "overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in everyday social situations."

Now, I didn't even know that these anxiety disorders even existed until this week. But, there are more sorts of anxiety problems that people have identified. There is the Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), which is characterized by "recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and/or repetitive behaviors (compulsions). Repetitive behaviors such as hand washing, counting, checking, or cleaning are often performed with the hope of preventing obsessive thoughts or making them go away." There is the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, which is "an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened."

When you add up all of these disorders, this report indicated that some 40 million Americans suffer from all anxiety disorders combined. Furthermore, one in every four people will experience one of these disorders at some point in their lifetime. [\[1\]](#)

Now, the Bible doesn't mention any of these disorders by name. But, it does have a name for all of them. It is called, "sin." Scientists and doctors may identify all sorts of disorders surrounding anxiety, but a rose by any other name is still a rose. And anxiety by any other name, whether it be Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) or Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) or Panic Disorder or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Social Anxiety Disorder ... is still anxiety. And the Bible calls it sin. It is wrong. It ought not to be characteristic of the people of God.

Over and over and over and over again, the Bible calls us not to be anxious. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "do not be worried" on four different occasions (Matt. 6:25, 27, 31, 34). Isaiah 41:10, "Do not fear for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God." Isaiah 35:4, "Say to those with an anxious heart, 'Take courage, fear not.'" Philippians 4:6, "Be anxious for nothing."

Anytime that we are anxious, we are in sin. Anytime that we worry, we are in sin. And I know how easy it is to sin in this way. And I know how pervasive it is among Christians. Those sins that are so common among us, that we accept them believing that it's OK to sin in this way. But, it's not. Jerry Bridges identifies the sin of anxiety as one of those "Respectable Sins" that the church has accepted, rather than dealing with.

[\[2\]](#)

We must come to hate all sin. We must battle against every sin that we encounter. Just because it's prominent doesn't mean that it should be acceptable. Just as I spoke last week of the prominence of pride in all of us, so also there is a prominence of anxiety in all of us as well. I'm not excluded, I see more anxiety in me than I see in any of you. For this reason, it will serve us well to focus an entire Sunday upon this topic.

Now, as we begin, I want for us to think about how many things there are for you to worry about. You can worry about your finances. Am I going to lose my job? Will the money be there this month to be able to pay all of the bills? Will I have enough money for my retirement?

You can worry about your family? Will I ever get married and have children? Will my children remain true to the faith? Will my children ever get married? Will my children run with the wrong crowd?

You can worry about your health. How long will I live? Will I keep my mind as I get older, or will I have Alzheimer's? How will I die?

You can worry about tragedies coming upon you. Will my children die in a plane crash? Will I lose my house in a tornado? Will I have a car accident which paralyzes me?

All of these worries and all of these questions are merely the tip of the iceberg in the number of things that you can worry about. But, "Worry is like a rocking chair; it will give you something to do but it won't get you anywhere."

Worry won't help you keep your job. But, diligence and hard work and trusting the Lord with the economy will help you keep your job.

Worry won't help you have enough money at the end of the month to pay all of your bills. But, hard work and tight budgeting and trust in the Lord's blessing will help you have enough at the end of the month.

Worry won't help you to be married in the future. But, walking with the Lord and trusting Him to bring a spouse will help you. Worry won't help your children to turn out right. But, living as a godly example before them and pleading with the Lord to shepherd their hearts will help them walk the narrow path.

See, in the end, worry and anxiety won't help change things. And for that reason, God calls us not to worry.

I love the way that Jesus put it. He said, "Who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" (Matt. 6:27). You can't. In fact, if anything your anxiety will remove hours from your life. Anxiety can bring on high blood pressure. Anxiety can cause ulcers in the stomach. Anxiety can cause anorexia and bulimia. Anxiety can cause insomnia. Anxiety can cause heart attacks. Anxiety can cause early death. So, it's important to overcome our anxiety. Not only for our spiritual health, but also for our physical health.

I would recommend that you do all you can to reduce your anxiety, so as not to have to deal with so much. Much anxiety is caused because of a lack of planning. How many times do you rush out the door, being late for some event, being stressed out in traffic, trying to push the speed limit and make every light, so as not to be late. But, if you planned ahead and left home some ten minutes earlier, you wouldn't have such problem. Life would be at ease.

Much anxiety is caused by a failure to plan. If you plan ahead and save for the future, there is less anxiety in your older years. If you plan out your meals, there is less anxiety over your dinner plans at night. If you plan out your schoolwork, there is less anxiety for the homework due on Monday. For me, if I would plan out my week, there is less anxiety on Saturday night before preaching on Sunday morning.

But, as much as you plan anxiety will come. Those in the world have several options available to them to conquer anxiety. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, medication options are available. They even suggest that psychotherapy may be a help. Personally, I think that one of the best solutions that the world has to offer is the one that Bobby McFerrin offers. He wrote a song which goes (in part) like this, ...

Here is a little song I wrote
You might want to sing it note for note
Don't worry be happy
In every life we have some trouble
When you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy.....

Ain't got no place to lay your head
Somebody came and took your bed
Don't worry, be happy
The landlord say your rent is late
He may have to litigate
Don't worry, be happy

Does it work? You bet it works. The problem is that it only works for four minutes. You can't go around all day singing, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." After the song, the anxiety is still there. Ultimately, all of the world's solutions to solving the problem of sin are useless.

But, I have good news for you this morning, Peter gives us the divine remedy for anxiety. They are found here in 1 Peter, chapter 5, verse 7. My message this morning has two points. They are derived here from 1 Peter 5:7. How can you overcome your anxiety?

1. Say Your Prayers (verse 7a).

This comes from the first phrase here in 1 Peter, "casting all your anxiety on Him." The picture that Peter gives here is of taking something in your arms and throwing it far from you. Like a farmer bailing hay, so ought we to throw our concerns up to God. Like a garbage man throwing the contents of a garbage can into the truck, so we ought to pour our anxiety to the Lord. Like a man digging a hole throws the dirt up and out of the hole, so we ought to shovel our cares and concerns out of earth and into heaven.

See, it's not so much that we ought to set our concerns aside or put them in God's hand. Rather, we are to take our concerns and cast them from us. Let them have some distance from us. Get them off of our souls and into God's care. If at all possible, we are to heave them away from ourselves.

This is what Peter is visioning for us here. He's envisioning us taking a load off of our back and laying it upon God's back. And how do you do this, but to pray? In many ways, it's the only way to handle such situations.

"God, I'm concerned about my job. I'm worried that it might be a casualty of the economy. I pray that you would take my worry upon yourself. Give me a care-free attitude over these things. I promise to work hard at my job. I'll seek to prepare for something else if I lose my job. But, I don't want to be anxious about it any more. It does me no good. So here, take it for me."

That's casting your care upon the Lord. Or, perhaps it's like this.

"O Father, I'm anxious about my son. He's going off to college soon. I'm concerned that he won't make the right choices in life. I have told him the way he should go. I have modeled before Him a love for You as best as I could. And yet, I'm worried that he will slack in His studies. I'm worried that he will get in with the wrong crowd. I'm concerned that he won't involve himself with a good church. Lord, these concerns are too much for me to bear. I give them to you and pray that you would show mercy to my son."

That's what I mean when with my first point, "Say Your Prayers." Now, there might be some more things that come along with casting all your anxiety upon Him than prayer, but there won't be less.

I read this week of one woman who often casts her anxieties onto the Lord in a very unique way. Linda Dillow writes, ...

"Heart-shaped and tied with a ribbon, my Anxiety Box sits on the bookcase above my desk. If I shake it, I can hear the pieces of paper rustling inside. When anxiety takes over my mind, I take a small piece of paper and write out what is causing my anxiety. I date the paper and put it in my Anxiety Box. As I untie the ribbon and open the lid, I pray: "God, I am giving You this worry that's tearing me apart. As I place it in the box, I'm saying to You that it's Yours. I give it to You. You can deal with it much better than I can." I close the box, retie the ribbon, and thank God that the worry is now His.

Every time I see the box, stuffed with my worries, I'm reminded that God is carrying them, not me. Once or twice a year I open my box and read through the worries. I thank God for the ones He has taken care of. The others I put back in the heart-shaped box and entrust them to His timing." [\[3\]](#)

This is what Peter is calling us to do. We need to take our anxiety and unload it from our soul and give it to the One who cares for us. And when you unload your cares and concerns upon the Lord, they are done. You no longer have to worry about them again.

Should your concerns creep back into your life, like some of the dirt that you just shoveled out of the hole, shovel it back again to the Lord. The idea here is that you give all of your anxieties over to the Lord, never to be concerned about them again. When Paul addressed the issue of anxiety, he used these words, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phi. 4:6). In other words, "Don't be anxious about anything. Rather, pray, pray, pray in every circumstance."

Think with me about how exhaustive Paul is, "Be anxious for nothing." There is not anything for which you need to be anxious about. This was Peter's message, "casting **all** your anxiety upon Him." All worries, big, small, near, far, real, perceived, significant, insignificant, solvable, unsolvable, personal, family, corporate, future, past, in your control, out of your control. They all are to cast upon the Lord.

When you are anxious, you need to get the burden off of your shoulders and place it upon the shoulders of one who can bear the load. Those of you who have small children know what this is about. You are walking along the path with your children. They are carrying something in their hands or they have a backpack on their backs. Over time, it becomes too heavy for them, and so, you take it from them, because you can bear the burden. And so, when you are anxious, give the burden to the Lord.

Psalms 55:22 says it this way, "Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken." Throw your burdens upon His back. He will care for you. He will "never allow the righteous to be shaken." What an incredible promise!

When is it that you are most susceptible to be shaken? When you are under the load of a burden! Imagine yourself, holding up the weight of a barbell, weighing 100 pounds. At first, you might be able to hold it steady. But, soon, fatigue will set in, and your legs will begin to shake. At some point, you will crumble under the pressure. But, God says, "Give me your burdens and I will never allow you to be shaken." We saw

last week in verse 6, "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God!" God is a mighty God who can bear your burdens. He can bear my burdens. He can bear all of our burdens, all at the same time.

The truth of the power of God ought to give you good reason to cast your anxieties upon Him, and not attempt to bear them yourself. The story is told of Bulstrode Whitelock, who lived in the 1600's in England. He was involved with the politics of England as a member of the House of Commons. At one point, Whitelock was experiencing a great amount of anxiety over the affairs of the nation. Charles the first had just been executed. The army and the government were at odds with each other. There was great disagreements among Presbyterians and Independents.

One night, he was nervously pacing about his room, unable to sleep. One of his trusted servants took notice of him and asked him a question:

"Pray, sir, will you give me leave to ask you a question?"

"Certainly" Whitelock replied.

"Pray, sir, do you not think that God governed the world very well before you came into it?"

"Undoubtedly" Whitelock agreed.

"And pray, sir, do you not think that He will govern it quite as well when you are gone out of it?"

"Certainly" Whitelock responded again.

"Then, sir, pray excuse me, but do you not think that you may trust Him to govern it quite as well as long as you live?" [\[4\]](#)

Do you see what the servant was doing? He was pointing Mr. Whitelock to the power of God. If God can create a universe that is vast beyond what you are even capable of understanding, then certainly, He can govern the affairs of this tiny world. If God can create a world in which life exists in delicate balance, with plants and animals living in dependence upon one another, then certainly, He can arrange the affairs of this world. If God can change a hardened heart and open blind eyes to the gospel, which He has been doing for centuries, then certain, He can turn the hearts of men wherever he wishes (Prov. 21:1).

These things ought to be great comfort to our souls. I encourage you to consider the greatness of God when you are tempted to worry about the issues surrounding your life. Think upon my recent sermon series on the greatness of God and find comfort in it.

But, notice how Peter argues in verse 7. He doesn't argue for casting our anxiety upon the Lord because of His mighty greatness (as sufficient as this is). Rather, in this text, Peter focuses His attention upon God's goodness to us. And this is where we ought to place our attention this morning.

Not only should you (1) Say Your Prayers, but, you should also, ...

2. Know He Cares (verse 7b).

He won't allow the righteous to be shaken. He will care for His people. He will help us. This is what Peter says in the second half of verse 7, "because He cares for you." God isn't in heaven saying, "Why are you giving me your problems? I don't want them. You can have them."

He doesn't take the hay out of the barn that the farmer had thrown up there and throw it on the ground. God doesn't take the garbage that has been deposited in the truck and stuff it back in your garbage can. God isn't in heaven with a shovel, trying to shovel the dirt back down upon us. No, God gladly takes these concerns upon Himself. He knows that we are weak and frail beings. He knows the damage that carrying around such things will do to our souls. He will gladly take them from us.

This is our God. He helps us and cares for us and saves us from our sin. God has a care for His children, for those who have placed their faith and hope in Christ. See, when Peter writes this epistle, he isn't writing to non-believers. Rather, he's writing to believers. He's writing to those who have repented of their sin and have embraced their Savior and are awaiting the imperishable inheritance in heaven someday.

Just think of all of the ways that God has shown His care for you. He has given you life. He has given you food, clothing, shelter. If you believe and trust in Christ, He has given you salvation. He has granted you the forgiveness of sins. He has given you Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (Heb. 12:3) He has given you "everything pertaining to life and Godliness" through Christ (2 Pet 1:3). God cares for You.

Here in America, we are so inundated with the theology that God loves us that I think we can lose sight of how wonderful it is that we have such a God who cares for us. I want for you to hear it afresh again, as though hearing it for the first time. God cares for You.

In recent days, our family has been reading through a series of missionary books, written by Thomas Hale, who served with his wife as a medical missionary to Nepal. This past Thursday evening, we were reading of a man named, Kamal. Thomas Hale writes,

[Kamal] was the son of a Brahmin priest and had received the necessary education to prepare him to follow in his father's footsteps. The medium of his instruction was Sanskrit, the ancient classical language of the Indian subcontinent. For some time he had carried out the duties of a Hindu priest under his father's watchful eye. But even as the major tenets of Hinduism were being inculcated in Kamal's mind, he was becoming increasingly troubled by what he learned. He was particularly disturbed by the fact that "the Hindu gods and their incarnations came mainly to punish and destroy" and that their own lives "were full of sin and treachery." He asked himself, "If all these gods are unholy, who will help me to be holy? If all came to destroy, who will save?" [\[5\]](#)

Thomas Hale went on to say that he was given a Bible and began to study it. In reading the command of Jesus, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," he was surprised. Later, he related, "I had been taught to seek out my enemies and destroy them. ... This teaching was just the opposite." [\[6\]](#)

When Kamal came to Matthew 18:11 and read, "The Son of Man came to save what was lost," Hale writes, "In a flash Kamal realized that this was the God who came to save sinners and not destroy them and that this was the God he must follow." Kamal said, "From that day on, I accepted Christ as God and determined to obey Him. I stopped worshiping idols and threw away my holy thread." [\[7\]](#)

That's our God! He isn't a god who seeks only to destroy. He is a God who loves and saves and actually cares for us. We ought to marvel at God's care for us. And when tempted to worry, we ought to realize that we have a God who will gladly help us with our anxieties. When Jesus taught on anxiety, this was His point: God cares for you.

For instance, consider the words of Jesus, as found in the Sermon on the Mount. Over and over in these words, Jesus is telling us not to worry. As you read these words, I want for you to notice how Jesus grounds His thoughts here on anxiety on God's care for us. Consider what He said, ...

Matthew 6:25-34

For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

People often think that you are anxious about life because you are thinking too much. How many of us know what it's like to have difficulty sleeping, because there is simply too much on our minds? I know what this is about. I can think of several times in my life in which trouble was brewing in my life. Perhaps I had some difficult meeting the next day. Perhaps I was hoping for something to take place that was out of my control. Perhaps I wasn't quite prepared for a sermon that I was going to be preaching the next day. My mind is racing and I can't seem to stop it. And so, sleep has eluded me.

At such times, it's easy to conclude that my worry is caused because I'm thinking too much. On the one hand, there is truth to this sentiment. But, on the other hand, it's not quite right. In actuality, my worry is caused because I'm not thinking enough. I'm not thinking enough about God's wonderful care for me. I'm not thinking enough about the way that God has been faithful to me in the past, and that He will be faithful to me again in the future. When you are worried, this is where you need to start forcing your mind to spend some time thinking.

Think about how He cares for you. As D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, ...

The trouble with the person of little faith is that, instead of controlling his own thought, his thought is being controlled by someone else, and, as we put it, he goes round and round in circles. That is the essence of worry. If you lie awake at night for hours I can tell you what you have been doing; you have been going round in circles. You just go over the same old miserable details about some person or some thing. That is not thought; that is the absence of thought, a failure to think. That means that something else is controlling your thought and governing it, and it leads to that wretched, unhappy state called worry. [\[8\]](#)

Isn't this what Jesus said? "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (Matt. 6:26). Think about God's care for the sparrows. They don't have any tractors or combines. They never plant any seeds. They never store up for the future in barns. And yet, do they ever lack? No. Your heavenly Father cares for them and feeds them. "Are you not worth much more than they?" Think about how much you are worth in God's sight. God will care for you. You have no need to worry.

Look again at verses 28-30, "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!"

Jesus told us to think long and hard about the prairie grass. Look out at the beautiful wild flowers that you see growing out there. They don't have sowing machines. They don't go to JoAnn fabric store to purchase their fabric. Yet, they are beautiful! In fact, they are more beautiful than the apparel of the most majestic of kings! But, these flowers will soon perish. By November they will be shriveled up. Some will be cast into the furnace.

But, if God has so decreed that you will live for "seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years" (Ps. 90:10), will not your heavenly father "clothe you? You of little faith!" Our anxiety isn't caused because we think too much. It's caused because we think too little about the right things.

The same thing takes place in verse 31, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

The Gentiles -- those apart from God eagerly seek and worry about what they will eat and drink. They worry about the economy. They worry about the income. They worry about the future. But, Jesus said, "Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (verse 32). The implication is plain for all to see. God cares for you. If God knows that you need all of these things, His care will help you in all of these things. So, what should we do? Verse 33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Cast your burdens upon the Lord and fret not about the worries of the day. Rather, seek Him and seek His kingdom! Say your prayers and know He cares.

This morning, I want to consider one more passage of Scripture that ties these two concepts together. It's found in Psalm 139. Consider David's words, ...

Psalm 139:1-18

O LORD, You have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar.

You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all.

You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it.

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night,

Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day

Darkness and light are alike to You.

For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.

I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;

Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written

The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!

How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand When I awake, I am still with You."

There's not a passage in the Bible that is more explicit regarding the care that God has for us than this passage. He knows everything about us. He knows when we sit down and when we rise up (verse 2). He understands our thoughts (verse 2). He knows all about all of our ways (verse 3). He knows what we will say before we say it (verse 4). We can't escape His presence (verses 7-9). Wherever we are, God will lead us (verse 10). It doesn't matter whether it's dark or light, God is still there caring for us (verses 11-12). He carefully created us (verse 13). He knew all about us before we took our first breath (verse 15). He has ordained our days, fixing the days of our birth and death (verse 16). Bottom line: He cares for us.

And then, beginning in verse 19, we see David's prayer.

Psalm 139:19-22

O that You would slay the wicked, O God; Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed.

For they speak against You wickedly, And Your enemies take Your name in vain.

Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?

I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies.

It seems as if David is in a very difficult situation. He has enemies who are all around Him. They are rising up against David (verse 19). They are rising up against the Lord (verse 20). David prays for their destruction (verse 19). Such things would obviously be troublesome for him.

David closes his Psalm by requesting God to reveal and remove his anxious thoughts from him, that he might walk in the everlasting way.

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;

And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."

David is "saying His prayers, knowing that God cares." What is interesting about this Psalm is how much time David spends on rehashing and rehearsing of God's great care for him. I think that there's a simple reason for it. Trusting in God's care doesn't come naturally to us. We need to work at it. Why do you think that there are so many in this world who suffer from anxiety disorders? It's easy for us to worry. We don't have to work hard to concern ourselves with the many things that might go wrong in our lives. But, we do need to work hard at entrusting ourselves to our loving Father.

Will you work hard at believing in God's care for you?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 21, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] See <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/anxiety-disorders/summary.shtml> and <http://content.nhiondemand.com/psv/HC2.asp?objID=100215&cType=hc>

[2] Jerry Bridges, *Respectable Sins*, Chapter 8.

[3] Linda Dillow, *Calm My Anxious Heart*, p. 134.

[4] Quoted by John MacArthur in *Anxiety Attacked*, p. 58. His footnote said "cited in Walter B. Knight, *Three Thousand Illustrations for Christian Service* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947], p. 740; cf. Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell: The Lord Protector* [New York: Donald I. Fine, 1973], p. 444)."

[5] Thomas Hale, *Living Stones of the Himalayas*, p. 124.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[8] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, volume 2, p. 130.