

Cast, Commit, and Chill

As I was praying this week about what to share this morning, I began to think about the headlines I had read in the business section of the Tulsa World. One storyline after another spoke of financial problems, bankruptcy, layoffs, downturns, recession. You have to look long and hard to find any good news regarding the economy. Those stories are not just about what is happening to corporate America. Those stories are our stories as well. It's our finances, our expenses, our employers, our retirement accounts and investment accounts that are being affected. We can't help but wonder what the future is going to hold with regard to our income and our finances and the future of our nation.

And then you look at the rest of the world. The ongoing war in Iraq, the threats that continue to come out of Iran, the trouble in Georgia, in Russia, in Afghanistan, Christians fleeing areas of Iraq and Christians being murdered in northern India, in North Africa, persecution and trouble everywhere. Whoever the next president is will have a huge responsibility and will be facing enormous problems.

It is amazing too as we look at the world around us, how things have begun to shape up just as the bible predicted. The financial problems in the past few weeks have clearly pointed out the fact that we have a global economy. How easy it would be with a one world global economy to suggest a one world government, one world monetary system, one world leader who would appear on the world political stage and negotiate and broker a peace in the hot-spots of the world. Last year we taught for several weeks about the possible scenario that is described in Ezekiel 38-39. We seem to be closer to those possible events. Are we nearing the end? Certainly we are closer to the coming of the Lord than we have ever been.

But what are we to do in the meantime? Jesus spoke of the events of the end time and said that men's hearts would fail them for fear "Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world..." Luke 21:26. Are we approaching that time? Are we giving in to fear? With all of this in mind, I want to share with you three simple things to do as we are faced with all of these crisis and problems. Jesus gave us some clear instructions when times were fearful and anxious. He told us "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me....Don't let your hearts be

troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:1, 27. What do we do to avoid being overwhelmed with fear? I’ve called this message, **Cast, Commit, Chill**.

Turn with me to 1 Peter 5:6-7. With all these problems, all of these sources of stress and fear and worry and anxiety around us, what do we do? What does the bible say? **“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7**

Cast your cares. The first thing we are going to do is to cast all of our cares on the Lord. Let’s look at this passage for a moment. Peter tells us that this process of casting our cares upon the Lord actually begins as we humble ourselves under God’s hand. We surrender to his purpose, his plan and his timing at work in our life. By accepting God’s plan for our life, we can then cast everything else, anything and everything that causes us anxiety and stress, we can cast it all upon the Lord. His plans are best, his timing is accurate, his purposes are holy and righteous and good, so we have no cause for worry or fear. We cast our cares upon the loving God who is causing all things to work together for our good. Humble yourself under God’s hand. Place yourself and all your cause for worry, all your cares, submit it all to Jesus.

Jay Adams wrote, “Part of humility is willingness to patiently wait for things according to God’s timetable.” There are seasons in our life and there are seasons in the plans and the economy of God. We may in fact be living in the closing days of a particular season of God’s plan. If we are, if the days we are in are those days the bible refers to as the beginning of sorrows, those days that are leading to the coming of the Lord, then we can expect trials, persecution, difficulties of all kind. But in the midst of that, we hear this word of comfort from the Lord – “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” He won’t ever stop caring for you and providing for you, regardless of the economic or political or social circumstances.

We are invited – instructed – to take everything that is producing anxiousness in us, everything that is stressing us, all of our cares and anxieties and cast them - throw them - hand them to the Lord. You can’t hold on to Jesus and hold onto all your cares and fears at the same time. Cast the cares and worries on to Jesus and then embrace him with both hands and all your heart.

It is not misplaced confidence when we cast our cares upon him because we are given the greatest of reasons to do so: He cares for us. One commentary on 1 Peter states, “All that creates anxiety for us, whether momentous or trivial, is a matter of concern to him.” He cares for us – when the stock market is up and when it is down, when the employment rate is high and when it is low, when the bills are paid and when the cut off notice comes in the mail, when we are healthy and well and when the doctor is running tests, all the time, in every circumstance, we can cast all those things that produce worry and anxiety and all of our cares directly upon him because we know he cares for us!

Don’t panic because things are difficult – cast your cares on him. Don’t panic because the future is uncertain – he cares for you, today, tomorrow and for eternity. Trust him. Rely upon him and cast your cares upon the Lord.

Let me show you one more thing. The next verse in this passage reads, “**Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...**” Decide you are going to cast all your cares upon the Lord and then exercise self-control and be alert. Don’t allow your self to give in to the fear. Don’t go back to that old way of thinking and living. Stand firm in the faith. Refuse to listen to the roaring of the devil. Cast your cares on the Lord and don’t pick them back up again - regardless of what the paper says, regardless of what Fox news or MSNBC says, regardless of how the devil roars, cast your cares on the Lord and rely upon him.

Commit your ways. The second thing we should do when times are difficult is to commit our ways to the Lord. Turn with me to Psalm 37. The opening verse reminds us to not worry because of the actions of evil men. There are plenty of evil men and wicked things going on, but don’t worry because of them. Then David tells us, “**Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: he will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.**” Psalm 37:3-

6

When we see everything around us falling apart, when the financial and social

and moral structures of our society are crumbling, what do we do? We commit our ways to the Lord. We trust in him and continue to do what is good and godly and right, knowing that the Lord will honor our obedience.

I don't have to spend any time this morning trying to convince you that these are difficult days we are living in. More than ever before we need to walk by faith rather than by sight. More than ever before we need to submit our lives to Christ and live according to God's word. More than ever before we need to trust in the Lord and do good. Notice what the Psalmist said in verse 3. "Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture." Once we decide that we will put our absolute trust in the Lord and obey him, then we take up residence in the promises of God and we can rest there knowing that we are safe in his love and his care. To dwell in the land is to reside in the promises of God.

In spite of the economy, in spite of a recession or depression or whatever the American economy may be facing when the people of God commit their ways to the Lord and live for him, when we delight ourselves in the Lord by obeying him, pleasing him, serving him, living for him, we don't have to be afraid because he will give us the desires of our heart. And what does that mean? First and foremost he will give us himself - the knowledge of the Lord and his abiding presence and peace in our lives. In addition to that, because we trust him and commit our ways to him, we know he will take care of us. He will supply all of our needs according to his riches in glory. I can't always trust the desires of my own heart, but by knowing Him and loving Him and trusting Him, my desires change. My desire is to please him and serve him. And the good news is as we serve him and commit our ways to him, He will grant us the desires of his heart, according to his plans and his timing and that will be the absolute best for us.

I have to share a personal testimony with you this morning. Something amazing that has happened to Paula and me. We were married in May of 1975 and began working here as youth pastors in January 1, 1976. For almost 33 years we have been serving this church and for almost all of that time we have been living in a church parsonage. I remember years ago when we were associates, Frank Higgins told me we should buy a house. He said, 'someday you'll be old and you won't have a home to live

in, you won't have any equity built up and it will be difficult for you." I told him then we didn't have any kind of downpayment for a house and really couldn't afford a house payment. It was great living in a parsonage and you all have continually blessed us with a lovely home to live in.

Over the years Paula and I have talked and prayed and wondered about trying to own our own home, but we never saw a way to do it. Last year when the doctor told me I had cancer we began to think even more seriously about it. If something were to happen to me, Paula wouldn't have a home to live in and wouldn't have the means to purchase or build one. We knew we needed to do something and thought perhaps we could find a lot to buy and then someday maybe we could build a home. We used to look at those manufactured homes at the fair every year and think, "if we had some land somewhere maybe we could buy one of those and move it out there when we retire." Most folks hope to have a home paid for by the time they retire and we were thinking we would have to start trying to buy a home after we retired.

We really didn't know what we would do, but we were convinced that if we trusted in the Lord and dwelt in the assurance of his promises, his faithfulness, if we would commit our ways to him and trust him, he would take care of us and somehow it would all be all right. He would give us the desires of his heart.

Last year in the midst of all the cancer stuff, a couple of families in this church came to Paula and to me and told us they thought we needed to have our own home. We told them we had been thinking about that. They then told us that they felt they were to purchase a home for us and give it to us. After disbelief and tears and protest, they convinced us this was what the Lord wanted them to do. After looking at several homes and wanting to stay on the Westside of Tulsa, they finally decided to build us a new home. So by next spring we hope to be living in a brand new home, paid for by some incredibly generous and dear friends, and not costing us or the church any money.

I can't explain it. No one deserves such kindness. But I know this, if you commit your ways to the Lord and trust him and delight yourself in the Lord, he will take care of you and even give you the desires of your heart.

Throughout this chapter the Lord tells us over and over again, "Don't fret and

worry about the wicked, don't panic about all the terrible things happening, trust in the Lord. In verse 19 he says of the righteous, of those who have committed their ways to the Lord, **"In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty."** **Psalm 37:19** Don't you think the Lord is able to take care of you and your family in these days? Don't you think he can take care of you in your retirement years? "Wait for the Lord and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land..."

Psalm 37:34

Don't worry about all the stuff happening around you. Trust the Lord. Cast your cares upon him, commit your ways to him and know that he will work it all out for you, for his glory and for your good.

Finally, in the words of my generation, chill out. **Chill out.** Look at verse 7. **"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him..."** **Psalm 37:7** Don't worry. Be still and know that God is faithful. He won't let you down.

Turn to Psalm 46 where we hear the psalmist speak of this once again. **"Be still and know that I am God."** **Psalm 46:10** We are so stressed out, so frightened, so focused on the negative and what is wrong with the world and the economy and our circumstances we forget who is in control. Stop. Get still and quiet and wait on the Lord. Wait to hear his reminder once again that he is God and it's going to be all right. Wait patiently, trusting in God.

Psalm 46:1 begins, **"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea..."** **Psalm 46:1-2** That's about as bad as it can get don't you think? When the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the sea, I hope I'm not around to see that. That sounds like plenty of reason to panic and fear. But the psalmist says we won't be afraid. Why? Because God is our refuge and strength. He is an ever present help in trouble. We have no cause for alarm. God is with us.

The psalmist said of the city of God, **"God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day."** **Psalm 46:5** May I tell you, God loves you more than he loves that ancient city and he dwells within you so you will not fall either. God is going to help you at the break of day – or in the midnight hour. He is our refuge and our strength and our fortress and we don't have to be afraid.

Chill out. Cease striving. That's what the psalmist is saying when he says "be still." Cease striving. Chill out and know that I am God. But what about....? Be still and know that I am God. Yes, but what about....? I am God. But... I am God.. I know, but... I am God.

Cast your cares upon him because he is God and he cares for you.

Commit your ways to the Lord and delight yourself in him and he will give you the desires of your heart. He will take care of you when you trust in him and obey him, regardless of the economy or any other circumstance.

Chill out. Be still and know he is God. While everyone else is pacing and in a panic, just get quiet and remember that he is God. He is your refuge and your strength and your fortress in a time of trouble and it's going to be all right.

Cast, commit and chill.