

Care and Its Cure

Russell Elliott

online: 02.12.2022, updated: 02.12.2022

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“Dost Thou not care?” — the cry of the human heart.

“He careth for you” — the divine answer.

Care: a little word of only four letters, yet how weighty! Its pressure at times is almost intolerable. Everybody is more or less affected by it, for probably there is nothing on the face of the earth more common than care. It is seen in the merchant’s face; it furrows the cheek of the widow; it sits upon the forehead of the great; it dogs the steps and hovers around the bed of kings, for we are assured, “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.” Men of all classes and conditions are victims of care. It calls upon all alike and has a habit of making itself at home, though never welcomed. Indeed, try as we will to get rid of this unwelcome visitor, it clings to us as if it were the best of friends.

Go where you will you find it. There is not a continent or country or town that is free from its presence; every village and house knows something of its dark shadows. Is there an individual you could meet, who has come to any years at all, who could truthfully say, “Care and I are unknown to each other”? It has a habit of creeping in everywhere. Sometimes it will present itself on the most festive occasions, and it has been known to cast its shadow even over a marriage scene. Almost every day is marked by it, the day of death not always being exempt, as though care were the first thing we carry and the last thing we lay down. How can we escape from it? No barriers can keep it out. Bolts and bars are useless here, for if you lock the door it will creep through the keyhole, and if you succeed in turning it out of the front door it will find its way around to the back. It seems as all-pervading and penetrating as the atmosphere. As well attempt to exclude the air as to exclude care.

Yet although everybody is thus more or less familiar with this painful malady, how few seem to know the real cure. Many and various are the methods adopted to escape from its clutches, but they are not often very successful. Some think wealth can buy it off, but an increase of money often means that the sources of care are only multiplied. Others try pleasure, but how often the weight comes back, with something added, when the pleasure is over! “Do you not know I am dying of melancholy?” wrote Madame de Maintenon, the wife of Louis XIV, a woman who had the opportunity, if anybody ever had, of seeing and enjoying life. Some try work as a remedy; this is good as far as it goes, but it is not enough. Not a few try to banish it with the wine cup or some other form of indulgence.

The reason none of these is successful is because they all lose sight of the cause. Care has a cause, and unless we find out what that is and deal with it, we are never likely to be successful in our struggle with what it has produced.

Care is the result of the present condition of the world, and the present condition of the world is the result of a wrong attitude towards its Maker. The evil thing called care flows from want of harmony with the Author of our being. Sin introduced the element of distrust; man became alienated from his Maker and, as a consequence, has lost the sense of His goodness and protection, and the baneful effect is care, with all its gloom, unhappiness and unrest.

What seems, then, to account for all the care in the world is that the human heart has lost the sense of God’s care. When Martha uttered that pitiful complaint in the ears of Christ as He sat in her house at Bethany, “Dost Thou not care?” she was not only voicing her own sentiment, but that of the entire human race. Is not this more or less the cry of every heart at some time or other, though not uttered perhaps with all the distinctness with which Martha uttered it? Oh, how often the uplifted eyes and heart have spoken thus to God, even if the words never escaped the lips! How much there seems in the course events are allowed to take, whether in general or in regard to each of us in particular, to confirm the suspicion that God does not, after all, care what becomes of us or how things turn out! As if, after all, there was no one to

look after the world! Nurses there may be to look after babies and parents to provide for children and policemen for general protection, but as to the deepest concerns of life, grown men and women seem left to themselves. And so the majority of suffering, toiling humanity, perhaps, is quite ready to adopt the language of the elder sister of Bethany, "Dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" This is the cry that seems to burst from the heart of one sensible of being wronged. Have not our own hearts sometimes told us that Martha is not alone here?

"Dost Thou not care?" This striking utterance reveals two things — man has lost the sense of God's care, yet from his inmost soul he calls out for somebody to care for him.

Is there any response to this appeal, sometimes expressed, sometimes only mute? Is there anyone to respond to those who are:

"Infants crying in the night,
Infants crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry?"

And will the response be satisfactory? These are the questions that we have to answer, and, in doing so, to intimate what is the true and all-sufficient cure for care, for care has a cure, and we must now proceed to show wherein it lies.

The cure really lies in the discovery that there is a Being, all powerful and beneficent, who makes those who trust Him the object of His care.

Over against the human cry, "Dost Thou not care?" that goes up from generation to generation and always has gone up, we may place the divine answer, "He careth for you." Let us put these two statements side by side, the one the human utterance, the other the divine, and take a good look at them:

"Dost Thou not care?" (Luke 10:40) — the cry of the human heart;

"He careth for you" (1. Peter 5:7) — the divine answer.

The one seems to come as direct from the heart of God to man as the other goes from the heart of man to God.

This divine answer contains within itself the unfailing cure for care. Rightly understood and believed, it becomes at once the universal remedy for a universal disease. Perhaps some reading these lines may be tempted to think that only when the grave closes over them will any relief be obtained from the particular form of care that oppresses them. This is, after all, a mistake, for He who tells us that He cares invites us at the same time to cast all our care upon Him.

What a profound truth this is that God cares! It shows that He is not unmindful nor indifferent, and where shall we find it better enforced or more fully exemplified than in the parable that immediately precedes, and is intended to accompany, the story of Martha?

Have you ever read and pondered that wonderful parable recorded in Luke 10 about the man who fell among thieves? After wounding him and taking away all he possessed, they left him half dead by the roadside. The priest and Levite passed by, but the most they did was to look upon him and leave him as he was. At length came a Samaritan, and he went to him and bound up his wounds. And more than that, we read, he "set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." But even this was not the limit of his goodness. The words (addressed to the host) that fell upon the astonished ears of the heretofore benighted traveller were these: "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

It will be seen at once that the story illustrates far more than how forgiveness of sins is to be obtained. The guilt of the sinner is implied, no doubt, for the man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho: from the place of blessing — Jerusalem means the vision of peace — to the place of the curse. With one stroke the moral tendency of the race is exposed! But one comes along who can reverse all this. He brings the oil and the wine, the balm of Gilead. Man is a prey to enemies, but here is a friend. But there is more. A threefold need on the part of the man is met by a threefold action on the part of the Good Samaritan. The man is wounded, he is weak and he is in want. His wounds are bound up, oil and wine being poured in. This meets the first need. The second is met by his friend placing him upon his own beast. The third, by bringing him to the inn and taking care of him. This last is the climax of the parable.

If, however, we are refusing to recognize our true condition and our need of Christ and His work, if we think that by our own efforts and goodness we are going to merit heaven and have no need of One to “come where we were” and take our place, then freedom from care can never be ours in the truest sense, for the simple reason that the parable we are considering loses all its meaning, if we are not wounded and strengthless and in need of a Friend to care for us from first to last. Outside of Christ we can never know what God can be to us. And it is just this, what God is to the one who obeys Him and therefore trusts wholly in Christ, that enables the believer to rise above all care.

The man by the roadside might have borne his fate with stolid indifference and succumbed at last without a murmur, but he never would have known how much another could care for him. And so, today, are there not those who assume an attitude of indifference in regard both to their present need and the future? They try to shut their eyes, and in a measure they may succeed, but they miss one thing — they never can know, while in that attitude, what God is waiting to be to them, how much and how well He can care for them, or what the ministry of Christ means.

It is just at this point the striking connection with Martha's history comes into view. She said to the Lord, “Dost Thou not care?” Could the man in the inn have addressed such words to the Samaritan? Had he not heard the injunction, “Take care of him”? Had Martha known the teaching of that parable, could she have ever used the words she did? Can we, who profess to believe that Christ was really drawing a picture of Himself, ever question His care? Is not the whole parable of the Good Samaritan just an answer to this touching appeal of Martha's? And in the light of this fact, the story Christ tells assumes a meaning wonderful and grand in the extreme. For does it not assure us that there is One who cares and that the deepest cry of the human heart has been anticipated? There is One who thinks of us and is capable of providing for our every need.

Another point in connection with Martha's utterance is anticipated by the parable. She felt her loneliness. “Dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?” Alone and uncared for! This is what she felt at that moment, and hers is not an isolated case.

Deep down in the innermost recesses of every human spirit the same thing is felt, until the truth is known that God cares. Man has lost God, and he is bound to feel alone until God is met with again. He is to be met with in the person of the One who portrayed Himself as the Good Samaritan. “A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.” The underlying truth here is that God is ever seeking man, and seeking him in order to help. For it is as true that God has lost man as it is that man has lost God. Man without God! It is an anomaly, since God made man and gave him all his powers, moral as well as physical. Try as he will, man cannot get on without his Maker, any more than he can get on without his fellow-man. Martha's utterance therefore expresses the truth, however much we may try to disguise it. A

feeling of loneliness and neglect will steal over us some time or other, and it is just this feeling of loneliness and neglect that is the fruitful source of all care. Life is too great for us alone, its strain too severe, its demands more than we can meet, and the final issue too wonderful and far reaching for any of us unaided.

It is just this which helps us to see how marvelously the teaching of Christ fits into the existing state of things, for does not the parable present to us a picture of absolute loneliness and neglect, and introduce to our notice one who relieved both? Who could be more lonely and uncared for than the man who fell among thieves? They stripped him; they wounded him; they left him. Especially must he have felt his loneliness when others came near and, having looked on him, passed by on the other side. Yet, who could be less alone or better cared for afterwards? Taken to the inn and left in the charge of the host, nothing was to be lacking. "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." If only we would believe that this represents God and that He is perfectly willing to pay as much attention to everyone who will allow Him, could we have any care?

No doubt we are ready to say: It seems too good to be true. Is there One so great, so mighty, willing to take care of me? There is only one answer: He is willing and He is able. Then perhaps the question will become intensely personal: Will He do it for me? I have no claim upon such kindness. Neither had the man by the roadside any claim upon the Samaritan, except that necessity always has a claim upon love. And this is the whole point. God is now acting from Himself, according to the dictates of His own love. It is not law now, but grace, and the parable is intended to show us the difference. Under law, God demanded that which He had a right to ask for — our love. Under grace, He is showing us what we could not demand and did not deserve — His love. We did not love God with all His perfection. He is demonstrating now the fact that He can love us in spite of our imperfection. The action of the Good Samaritan was all of grace. This is how God would deal with us. How slow we are to understand it! Martha did not understand it, and consequently she was careful and troubled about many things. Within her own little sphere she thought she had to look after everything, as though there was no one at the head of affairs and no one to look after men and women. She was doing her best, but she was not at rest. She represents not a few, who, while desiring to please God and to serve Him, have not learned how great a pleasure it is for Him to serve them and that His service must precede theirs. The difference between Martha and Mary — the one cumbered, the other at rest at the feet of Jesus — was mainly the difference between the man by the roadside and the man in the inn. The man by the roadside might well have said to the priest and the Levite, "Do you not care that I am left alone?" The man in the inn could not have said so to the Samaritan. We could not imagine such a thing. We can imagine him sitting at the feet of his benefactor, looking up into his face, and perhaps wondering in his mind, Is there anything I can do for him when I become strong enough? Christ does not ask us for one bit of service until we know from personal experience how He has served us. It is a striking fact that although the wounded man had received so much kindness and was to receive more, he is not asked by his benefactor to do one single thing in return.

Have we learned the threefold lesson of this parable? Have we made the acquaintance of One who can remove our guilt, give us strength and relieve our care? In the words of the parable, "He bound up his wounds"; "he set him on his own beast"; "he brought him to an inn." If so, shall we not have less care? God would not have us bear our cares any more than He would have us bear our sins. "Casting all your care upon Him," He says, "for He careth for you." Does not this one verse of Scripture meet the twofold need, that of being lonely and uncared for, expressed in Martha's appeal, "Dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve

alone?” “Casting all your care upon Him” — this meets the loneliness — ”for He careth for you” — this meets the care. We have Him, whoever else may go, and He cares.

“Never alone and always cared for” describes the happy condition of the man in the inn while he waited to see the face of his friend. It may be and ought to be the experience of those who wait to see His face.

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