*COUNSELS TO CONVERTS.*

V.

I

WISH, my beloved Christian friends, to direct your attention to two passages in connection with prayer. The first you will find in the commencement of Psalm cxvi., “I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.”

MAKING ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

The Psalmist states, that he loves Jehovah, because He hath heard his voice and his supplications. Now this cannot be the case with us, except we mark the hand of God, and except we observe that He hath heard our supplications, and that he hath answered our prayers. The Psalmist had marked the hand of God, and he says, “I love Jehovah, because He hath heard my voice.”

Very few of God’s dear children are aware how much this marking of the hand of God, with regard to answers to prayer, has to do with increased love to their heavenly Father. We are so apt to leave unnoticed the hand of God, and to pass over what God has been pleased to do in answer to our prayer.

I would particularly advise all, but especially the younger believers, to use a little book, in which they may note down on the one side the requests which they bring before God. There are certain matters which God has laid on our hearts, and we should note them down. It would be helpful to us to write, at such-and-such a time I began to pray for such-and-such a thing; and then to continue to pray with regard to this matter. If we do so, we shall find that sooner or later the prayer will be answered; and then let us mark on the opposite side, that it has, at such a time, pleased God to answer that prayer.

REVIEWING ANSWERED PRAYERS.

After some time, read over the memorandum book, and you will find how again and again it has pleased God to answer your prayers; and perhaps regarding matters about which you little expected the answer to come; and soon you will find the wondrous effect of this on your heart, in increasing your love and gratitude to our heavenly Father. The more careful you are in marking what you ask, and what God has given, the more distinctly you will be able to trace how again and again it pleased God to answer your prayers, and more, you will be drawn out to God in love and gratitude. You will find precisely as the Psalmist found it when he says, “ I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.”

THE EFFECTS OF THUS REVIEWING ANSWERED PRAYERS.

We ought to love God, even though we have not answers to our prayers; but all this will greatly increase our love; and it is not only once, but if we mark the hand of God, we shall soon find that we have scores and hundreds of answers to prayer. And thus we shall be led to love Him more and more for all he has done. And as we mark how we have been helped, and how gracious and bountiful our Father has been, and how He takes pleasure in listening to the supplications of His children; the heart will be filled increasingly with love and gratitude to Him.

Another affect of all this on the Psalmist: we find in the second verse, “Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.” The more evidence we have of His power, and of His willingness to help us, the more our hearts should be determined to call upon the Lord. The more our prayers have been answered, the more should we be stirred up with new determination to ask yet greater things. We should be encouraged to come again and again, in order that He may incline His ear unto us.

Is this, my beloved friends, the case with us? Are those two points found in us, and can we say with the Psalmist, “I love Jehovah, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications?” And do our hearts say, “because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live”? Verily it should be so with us, if we are believers.

FREEDOM FROM ANXIETY.

The second passage to which I desire to direct your attention you will find in the epistle to the Philippians, the fourth chapter, and in the sixth and seventh verses, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ doses.”

“ Be careful for nothing.” This by no means signifies that we may be careless, thoughtless, or unconcerned about everything. That is not the meaning of it. The meaning is, not to be anxious about anything. This is one of the privileges of the children of God, that they are permitted, and not only permitted but invited, and not only invited, but commanded, to bring all their cares, sorrows, trials, and wants to their heavenly Father. To roll all their burdens upon God; to cast all their cares upon Him.

And because they are permitted, yea, commanded so to do, they have no need to be anxious about anything. However many or varied our difficulties or necessities, we should commit them all in believing prayer to God; but we should not be anxious. And why not? Because it is impossible to be anxious without dishonouring God.

If the men of the world see that we Christians are anxious, like themselves, they will have ground for saying, that our profession of having an Almighty Friend and Helper in heaven is only is profession; and, therefore, we dishonour God by not trusting in Him in the hour of need.

WE HAVE, HOWEVER, SUCH A FRIEND,

and He is willing and able to help us and to deliver us in His own time and way. This is the very reason we need not be anxious about anything.

But you say, how can I, a wife with a husband given to drinking, not be anxious? No, I say, my sister in Christ, you are to pray for your husband; you are to pray for that husband very earnestly. But remember to look out for an answer to your prayer; and it is the will of our heavenly Father that you are not to be anxious even in such circumstances. You are earnestly seeking that he should be converted, that is right and proper; but still, be not anxious even in such circumstances. If you roll the burden upon God, and cast all your care upon Him, you will be free from anxiety even regarding this.

And thus with every matter; regarding our children, for instance, who are unconverted, we have to be careful to train them in the fear of God, to set a holy, good example before them, to pray much for them, and, at suitable times, to bring the truth before them; but even regarding them, we are not to be anxious. We are to roll the burden—the whole burden upon God, and He will carry the burden for us.

So—literally—this is to be taken, Be anxious about nothing. And thus we shall walk in holy confidence. Trust in your heavenly Father, looking to Him, confiding in Him, knowing that He will help in His own time and way.

But, while the commandment is not to be anxious about anything at the same time, we are exhorted to bring everything before God. It is not to make us careless, but to teach its to

TO LEAN UPON HIM ALONE.

We are here exhorted to bring the matter before God. “In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known, unto God.”

Notice especially the word “everything.” It is not simply great matters we are to bring before God, not simply small things, but “everything.” Therefore, all our affairs—temporal or spiritual—let us bring them before God. And this for the simple reason, that life is made up of little things. If we attempt to stand in our own strength under little trials, we shall find them too heavy for us, and we shall fall, which is dishonouring to God.

THE FOLLY OF NEGLECTING THIS INJUNCTION.

Let me see a Christian man who attempts to carry the little burdens in his own strength, and I know that he will soon dishonour God. For we have not a particle of strength to carry any burdens, little or great; and, therefore, we must bring them all to God. And if we attempt to carry them, we shall find that they will increase in weight.

To speak after the manner of men, God puts a pound weight of trial upon us, and if we take it up and lay it on the shoulders of our heavenly Father, it is gone; but if, on the other hand, we attempt to carry it ourselves, what is the result? Soon it will increase to ten pounds, and if we still try to carry it, it will increase to a hundred-weight, and if we try still to stagger under it in our own strength, it will increase still more, in order to lead us to cast it upon God.

Now our wisdom is just this, when we have any little burdens, let us tell our heavenly Father, “I have no strength for this weight, I cannot carry the burden.” Well, our heavenly Father is ready to do this for us; He has commanded us to roll all our cares on Him, and not to attempt to carry them in our own strength. Let it then cast all our cares and burdens upon God, and He will carry them for us.

“SUPPLICATION”

Therefore it is so deeply important “in everything, by prayer, and supplication, to let your requests be made known to God.” With prayer; and not only with prayer, but with supplication; that is, with earnestness and with entreaty, just as the beggars sometimes act. They ask for alms; well, you seem not to listen and pass on, but they go after you; perhaps twenty steps, and sometimes even a hundred yards or more. They follow you, still asking, until they obtain the alms they desire.

Now this is what we have to do; not simply to mention our request before God, but to go on asking again and again, with earnest prayer and supplication, until we receive. Just ask as a beggar would do; and will not our heavenly Father give it to us, seeing that He hath bestowed His greatest gift, even His Son upon us?

“THANKSGIVING”

Again, we have specially to notice that prayer and supplication is coupled with thanksgiving. That is, if I may say so, that we should lay the foundation in the way of thanksgiving, and upon that, place the superstructure of prayer and supplication. We should praise the Lord for what He has given us already; while asking Him for more blessing.

We are frequently very remiss in this; we forget to render pause for the mercies already received from our heavenly Father. This should not be so.

THE CERTAIN EFFECT OF ALL THIS.

In the next verse we have the precious result of all this, “The peace of God,” what a precious result of such a way of acting is this; our hearts are at peace, instead of hurrying hither and thither, as men beside themselves. and instead of great excitement. Instead of all this, the result of prayer and praise will be our hearts will be at peace.

We shall have the peace which passeth all understanding. And that peaceful calm which is so precious, and which no words can describe, and which is called “the peace of God” shall be in our hearts. “The peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

“KEEP YOUR HEARTS”

The idea of a garrison, is in that word “keep.” And the meaning is that our hearts shall be kept by the peace of God, as by an occupying garrison.

There is much in these verses; and whilst the men of this world, and even some children of God who know not these truths, and do not ask thus, are wretched, and anxious, and hurrying about like people beside themselves, when trouble or excitement come; we, the children of God, who know these precious truths, are able calmly to wait on the Lord, and to leave ourselves quietly in the hands of God. Thus the peace which passeth understanding will rule in our hearts and minds, and we shall not merely find help, but we shall be kept from false ways, and bring honour to God before the world, and shall thus comfort greatly the children of God, to the praise and honour and glory of His name.