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“The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light”

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CASTING ANXIETY ON GOD

BY D. M. PANTON, M.A.

(Read 1 Peter 5: 5-8)

Anxiety can be one of the most powerful weapons of Satan. It clouds the mind, chills the heart, and paralyses the hand. To Melancthon, harassed with anxieties over the Parliament of Charles V at Augsburg, and what it might produce, Luther wrote noble words for a great crisis:—"Thou art killing thyself with immoderate cares; forgetting that the cause is Christ's, and that as He needs not thy counsels, so also He will bring it to pass without thy anxieties." Anxieties are pressing hard upon the Church of God— anxieties concerning our own spiritual growth; anxieties concerning our service; anxieties concerning the Church of God; anxieties touching national crises; international anxieties of universal upheavels and world-war. Suicides and lunacies are mounting enormously throughout a harassed world.

Let us glance at the setting in which we master anxiety. *Behind* us is a prostration under the hand of God which is ready for anything in view of the great exaltation that is coming—"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time" (verse 6): *in front* is tremendous battle—"the devil as a roaring lion, walks" (v. 8): therefore, *in between*, is an utterly unloaded Christian, who has disembarked his entire anxiety upon God—"casting all your care upon Him" (v. 7). We are to be unloaded, unencumbered, confronted as we are with hell. In the words of the Psalm (55:22) which the Apostle may have had in mind: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord,

and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous"—that is, those who *do* so cast their burdens on God—"to be moved".

But we need to ponder for a moment exactly *what* it is we are to cast on God. There is a carefulness, a prudent devotion to duty, which God has cast on *us*: for example, Paul says—"Be careful to maintain good works." As Spurgeon has put it:—"There is the care to love and serve Him better: the care to understand His Word; the care to preach it; the care to experience His fellowship; the care to walk with God." But the word here in the Greek is totally different: it means fretful apprehension; a troubled and distracted mind; as the Revised translates it, anxiety—cares grown to cancers. The French version is, "*Unload* your care upon God." We have seen in England a coal cart unload: The man removes a little iron pin, and the cart is so balanced on its axles that, with a slight pressure on the back of the cart, it tips up and the whole load slides on to the ground, and the horse trots away with a light step. So are we to discharge our black anxieties upon God.

We are to cast nothing less than *all* our care upon God: not some cares, or only great cares, but all cares. Many of our anxieties are personal to ourselves; some relate to others; it may be broken health, impoverished circumstances, business anxieties; our children's future amid a darkening world; our stand under persecution. It is not, cast *away* your cares, as the worldling does, drowning them in dissipation and sin; but cast them *on God*, in an immense act of glorious faith. Somebody must carry these cares: myself they can only crush and kill: whereas, if God has lifted off us our greatest load, fundamental sin—it was laid on Christ on the Cross—is there any load He cannot lift off us? Dr. F. B. Meyer puts it beautifully thus: "He can smite rocks, and open seas, and unlock the treasures of the air, and ransack the stores, of the earth. Birds will bring meat, and fish, coins, if He bids them. He takes up the isles as a very little thing: how easily, then, your heaviest load."

So now comes the tremendous command. Its extraordinary force comes out if we simply use another word:—"Throwing all your anxiety upon God." The anxious believer, convinced of his heavenly Father's all-power, all-wisdom, and all-love, decides

to leave all that gives him concern—and therefore all that makes him anxious—in the merciful hands that are shaping his whole destiny. We are to forbid ourselves anxiety by discharging ourselves on His love. “*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*” (John 14:27).

God never would send you the darkness
 If He knew you could bear the light;
 But you would not cling to His guiding hand
 If the way were always bright;
 And you would not learn to walk by faith,
 Could you always walk by sight.

The Apostle Paul, in a strikingly parallel passage, tells us exactly *how* we are to cast. “In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving *let your request be made known unto God*. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard [garrison] your hearts *and your thoughts*”—in which are our anxieties—“in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6, 7, R.V.). Prayer tells God what the care is, and faith gets up, care-free, and walks away *leaving care on God*. So Hezekiah took the threatening letter from Sennacherib and spread it before God in the Temple, and left the Temple in perfect peace (see Isa. 37:14–22 ff.). As an old commentator sums up Paul’s word:—“Be careful for nothing; be prayerful for everything; be thankful for anything.”

The Apostle adduces one powerful argument, and one alone, to convince us of our happy duty: “BECAUSE HE CARETH.” If God cares for us, it is manifest that, committed to Him, our anxieties are in the best and safest hands, and infinitely safer than they can ever be in our own. And the word beautifully changes. “Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He”—not, “is anxious,” for God cannot be anxious: but—“careth”; supervises and fosters, in loving interest. In the ever recurring crisis of the Reformation, Luther would say to Melancthon:—“Let us sing the 46th Psalm, and let them to do their worst! ‘God is our refuge and strength . . . therefore will we not fear, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.’” Our faith is being plunged in fire; and, like the goldsmith, God’s care is for the gold, not for the fire.

Moreover, the argument to prompt us to lay our burdens on God is intensely personal. "Because He careth FOR YOU." Our Lord uses the same argument:—"Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what we shall put on; *for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things*" (Matt. 6:25, 32). Christ says it as much to you and to me as He said it to any saint of all time: because God cares for me, He will unload me of my anxiety. How exquisitely God's individual care is revealed! "*I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine*" (Ps. 1:11): "the young lions . . . seek their meat from God" (Ps. 104:21): "not one sparrow shall fall on the ground without your Father: fear not therefore, *ye are of more value than many sparrows*" (Matt. 10:29, 31). Two little boys were talking of Elijah's ascension. One said: "Wouldn't you be afraid to ride in a chariot of fire?" "No," said the other, "not if God drove."

So now we can sum it up. Today is a slender bridge which will bear its own load, but it will collapse if we add tomorrow's. In every year there are 365 letters from the King, each with its own message—"Bear this for me." What shall we do with the letters? *Open them a day at a time.* Yesterday's seal is broken; lay that letter reverently away: yesterday's cross is laid down, never to be borne again. Tomorrow's letter lies on the table; *don't break the seal.* For when tomorrow becomes today, there will stand beside us an unseen Figure, and His hand will be on our brow, and His gaze will be in our eyes, as He says, with a loving smile, "*As your days are, so shall your strength be.*" The golden summary of our life is to be this: as to the *past*, a record of gratitude; as to the *present*, a record of service; and as to the *future*, a record of trust.

Behold, God is mighty . . . He is mighty in strength and wisdom.

—Job 36: 5.

Help me, Lord, each anxious moment,
 Free from self to rest;
 Confident Thy boundless wisdom
 Worketh for the best.