

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."
Deuteronomy 33:27.

These words come to us out of remote antiquity breathing the spirit of simple trust in the love and power of God. They constitute a portion of the farewell address of Moses to the children of Israel whom he had led and with whom he had suffered for forty long years. During these years they had been a nomadic and homeless people. The hardships along the way between Egypt and Canaan had sorely tried them. Many had fallen by the wayside to perish on a dreary desert.

It must have been a sad day for the Israelites when Moses, their leader, announced to them that the time of his departure had come. For their comfort and consolation, he pointed them to the eternal God, "who was their dwelling-place," and upon whose arms they should rely. More precious words would not have been spoken to a disconsolate people.

Just as the glory of a day is its evening, so the beauty of a great life is its close. We should place our estimate not only on the baby in the cradle but upon the man in the casket. We must estimate a year by its harvest rather than by its sowing. A promising spring does not guarantee a profitable autumn. Few lives have opened less auspiciously than that of Moses. He entered life branded as a bondman, and with a sentence of death hanging over his cradle, but when he departed, he left a trailing cloud of glory that thirty-five centuries have failed to obliterate, or even to dim.

Instead of being embittered by the trying experiences of the long period of strain, Moses boldly testified to the blessings of God upon him and his people. After the struggles, the anxieties, the incipient revolts, and the wearisome complaints of those years, Moses still had a word of praise for God and of encouragement for man. Moses reminded the people of the saving and sustaining power of God. He reminded them of how fortunate they had been that the divine care had ever been between them and disaster. They had been taught, redeemed, strengthened, and guided by God who was ever with them. Moses praised God, placing him above all others, and challenging all men to find one like unto Him. He not only extolled the eternal God, but he also congratulated those who were believers of God.

I. God Is Our Refuge.

Our text says, "The eternal God is thy refuge." All of us need a refuge from the vengeance of the law. Every one of us knows that he or she has violated the law. We must acknowledge the fact that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Therefore, we must meet the consequences. We need a refuge from the shame of sin, as well as the consequences thereof. Each of us has a consciousness of the fact that we have offended God.

1. God is our refuge from sin.
2. God is our refuge from Satan.

All of us have been confronted with the temptations of Satan; also, with the problem of battling both with our inward desires and with our outward circumstances. "What am I to do in the hour of temptation?" is a problem that confronts every pilgrim on the way to glory. Like our ancestors, we are no match for the enemy with whom we have to contend. We need to recognize the presence of Christ

in the hour of temptation.

3. God is our refuge from the perplexities of life.

Things so contrary to our desires and our expectations occur so continually that we are in danger of thinking we are both alone and helpless. The very refuge which man needs is provided for him by Almighty God.

II. God Is Our Sustainer.

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." These words carry us back in memory to the days of childhood--to those days when the arms of father or mother meant so much to the sick, the suffering, or the sorrowing child. Many childhood memories can never be erased. Many of them we would not want to erase, if we could. No matter how happy or unhappy our experiences have been during the intervening years, we have never forgotten mother's gentle and tender arms. When the heart was broken and troubles seemed unbearable, the child turned to mother and found comfort in her arms. When we were learning to walk, when our feet stumbled over rough places, or when the brow was burning with fever, we found refuge from those trying experiences in mother's arms. Many were the evenings when you fell asleep. Even today, after the passing of the years, you instinctively crave to turn to mother when troubles arise. No matter how big and strong a man may be, he never forgets his mother, he never wants to get along in life without her.

"The everlasting arms" concerning which Moses spoke are the arms of God. They meant something very definite in the life of that great man. He was speaking right out of the life of experience when he said, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Moses' mother had nourished him, and held him in her arms, and had fondled him during the days of his infancy. She taught him the love, the tenderness, and the power of God. The arms of God had saved him and had supported him. Doubtless, Moses recalled the forty years of wandering in the wilderness during which time he had repeatedly turned to God for strength and guidance in doing his duty as leader of the chosen race. Moses was a lonely man in those days, but God never deserted him, never left him alone. Moses had found the everlasting arms of God to be never failing. In all his hardships and trials he asked the Lord for support and was not let down.

God's children are in His hand. As to their security Christ said: "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28-29). In His hand we are molded as well as kept. He keeps us from perishing and then He uses our lives as instruments with which He overthrows Satan. Being in His hand we are not only protected and molded, but we are honored also. The real glory of a life is not so much in the thing that is done as in the person for whom it is performed. What will it matter whether you or I were in obscure or conspicuous places, if only it shall appear that we were weapons in the hands of our Lord when He won His most glorious victory.

1. The arms of God are strong.

They are able to supply strength when we are about to be overcome by weakness. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore comebolding unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

2. The arms of God are tender.

Strength and tenderness combine in our Heavenly Father.

3. The arms of God are faithful.

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." Through all of the varied experiences that befall the children of God, His arms are ever faithful. They will not fail. No matter how often we lean upon them, they never grow weary, and they are never withdrawn. God never fails His people.

3. The arms of God are sustaining.

They are ready to catch us when we stumble, to support us just when we begin to sink, and to lift us to our feet and to establish our goings. Had it not been for "the everlasting arms," many of us would never have come through what we have experienced. It is on the eternal God that we have leaned all of our weight in the trying hours, when we felt our need of a support, which no human friend or earthly object could supply, and He has undergirded us by divine love.

The very words "underneath are the everlasting arms" soothe our hearts. These inspired words carry the suggestion of intimacy and tenderness, the truth that we are held in a love-clasp as gentle as when a little child is folded in the loving embrace of the arms of his parent. We also find here a suggestion of strength and absolute security--"the everlasting arms."

"What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Oh, how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
Oh, how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Leaning, leaning,
Safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning,
Leaning on the everlasting arms."

III. God Is Our Satisfier.

Our text says "I shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them." God's child needs protection from danger, distress, defeat, depression, and all other enemies of the soul. The human soul is made for the Lord, and it is restless and uneasy until it is right with Him. When the soul is reconciled to God, responds to His love, and mercy, and trusts all in His care, it will come into the possession of perfect peace and complete satisfaction. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3). Only in the Lord can such satisfaction be found.

As a leader of His people, the Lord goes before them. He does so for a very definite purpose, namely, to thrust out the enemy. In the very beginning of our Lord's ministry He encountered His enemy and ours. That was a fierce conflict in the wilderness between Christ and Satan. Using "the sword of the spirit," which is the Word of God, Christ overcame Satan.

We would do well to sit at the feet of our Lord. This position and attitude implies submission. Submission means doing the will of God. To sit at the feet of our Lord means surrendering the life to be and to do whatever He wills. "At His feet" means learning God's will. One of our greatest needs is a real study of His word, but also a reproduction of His deeds. When He said to His disciples: "I have given you an example," He meant that He set the pattern which all of His followers are to copy.

The Lord has done many wonderful things for us. We have every reason to be grateful and happy. We should rejoice in the privilege of praising the Lord for His goodness to us. Also we should seek to live in a way that is worthy of the position that we occupy as Christians, and to serve Him faithfully to the best of our ability.