

WHAT GOD IS TO ME

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Isaiah 12:2.

This beautiful verse is recorded in an unusually noble chapter of God's Word. The twelfth chapter of Isaiah is a song of thanksgiving for God's wonderful mercies. The eleventh chapter closes with a reference to the deliverance of the nation from the oppression of Egyptian bondage, and the twelfth chapter opens with a burst of song because of that deliverance. This whole chapter is a song of praise. Joy, gladness and thanksgiving sparkle in every verse of it. And yet how little we hear of this praise in ordinary life! How seldom do we find it bursting forth from our own hearts! Our thoughts generally center around ourselves. When we praise, all too frequently we praise our families or ourselves rather than praise God.

What does this sweet, joyful and exultant singer find in God? Thinking of God as a person, which He is, Isaiah emphasized the fact that He is ever a vital force in human life. There are three things that God is to His own:

I. God Is My Salvation.

Israel had been saved from political servitude, but the salvation to which Isaiah here refers is that which reaches its lofty climax in spiritual redemption. In this regard we are not only saved from past sin, but we are also exalted to present good and to future bliss.

The supreme act of God's goodness and graciousness is His gift of salvation. How extraordinarily rich and comprehensive is this term of "salvation"! All that one needs is included in this beautiful and wonderful word. The Lord's fulness and man's needs are encircled in this rich word.

This gift of forgiveness of sin and deliverance therefrom is a higher gift than deliverance from trouble, sickness and even death. It includes freedom from the penalty of sin, the power of sin and ultimately from the presence of sin. Redemption from the defilement of sin and from the dominion of sin, and restoration to the favor of God are invaluable blessings. All of these things are offered in God's gift of salvation. "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid." Everything we need is found in God. We need not fear what man or Satan may do, for God is my salvation.

II. God Is My Strength.

Here is the adequate resource for all our needs. How weak I am and how much I need God's strength and help. I am assured that God will sustain and strengthen me in this new and blessed life which He has given me. Since He has redeemed me, I may be confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). In other words, Paul was saying, "And I am sure that God Who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in His grace until His task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns." He is indeed my strength.

Sweet is God's promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." It requires much strength to live the Christian life. We are surrounded by foes; we have a daily battle to fight; we are marching through the territory of the enemy to "fairer worlds on high." But we must put on the whole armor of God, that we may fight and overcome the wiles of Satan. So far as we are concerned, the armor of God is worthless until we put it on. That is why Paul urged us to put on the whole armor of God. No part must be omitted. The pieces of the armor of God are the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness,

the shoes in which we are to march, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Only one of these pieces is offensive, and that is the sword of the Spirit or the Word of God. God thus becomes our strength.

We have a right to associate strength with the One Who is almighty in power. We might also notice that Isaiah is saying more than "God is strength." He is saying, "God is my strength." This possessive pronoun changes everything. The personal note reminds us of our union with the Father. It is God Who is our strength. And that is the primary and fundamental need of our lives. Life without strength lacks vital force. Haven't you heard sick people say, "If only I could get back my strength!" There is life, but, alas, the needed strength is lacking, and there is no force. A mind may be finely constructed, but it is productless without executive strength. So it is in the spiritual realm, the fundamental requisite is strength, and that is to be found in God.

To God we must look for the impartation of strength in order that the force of character may endow life with the necessary intensity, decision and aim. Without this strength of character, Christian life lacks vital force. That is why we need our weaknesses to be transformed through the possession of and dependence upon our resource, which is God Who is our strength. Conscious of his own weakness, Dr. Horatius Bonar expressed this thought in an impressive manner in a verse of the beautiful hymn:

"I have no other help but Thine; nor do I need
Another arm save Thine to lean upon;
It is enough, my Lord, enough indeed;
My strength is in Thy might, Thy might alone."

It is in God's might alone that we have true strength of love, strength of will, strength of motive, strength of aim and strength of achievement. To carry on in daily life we need God's strength. What dreariness, drudgery and disappointment there is in human lives! Power is needed to walk with unfaltering step the long lane that never seems to have a turning; to rise up with determination and engage in the battles of life. As we travel along life's road, there are many hills of difficulty to overcome, and we need strength to climb. God is my strength.

III. God Is My Song.

God is not only my salvation and my strength, but He is also my song. The life of a Christian is not only to be characterized by strength, but also by song. Some Christians have God for their salvation, and God for their strength, but they do not have God for their song. The churches are filled with songless members. They are as out of place, because songless, as birds would be if songless in the woodland. When the love of God is in the heart, the song of God will be on the lips. A Christian whose soul is not stirred by the love of God is a Christian whose lips will not move with the song of salvation. When God is the glory of our salvation and our strength, He will be the subject of our song. Fulness of strength will issue in fulness of song. The heavenly harmony does not blend music with melancholy. Life holds for us many a sorrow, but underneath and above is the unquenchable song. God is the cause, theme and consummation of the song. God is my song. God is the happiest being in this universe because He is perfect and can and does do so much good to others and for others. His happiness He can and does share with His own.

In addition to giving salvation and strength God gives me a song. As Christians we ought to have such a sense of gratitude in our hearts for God's redeeming and sustaining grace and love that we are ready at all times to break forth in song and praise.

"Let those refuse to sing
Who never knew our God;
But children of the heavenly King,
But children of the heavenly King,
May speak their joys abroad,
May speak their joys abroad."

All that Christ is to us and for us is included in this great word, salvation. Life, love, liberty, light, inheritance and victory are included. In Him is salvation for the soul's deepest need, strength for service, and music for the march. Indeed God is my salvation, my strength, and my song. How good and gracious He is to me! Praise His wonderful Name!

Salvation has its origin in God. It wells up out of His love. It is not drawn forth by anything in us, but flows out freely from His own gracious and loving heart. His love ever streams out by an energy within, like the sun whose beams travel through dark distances, not because they are drawn by the earth, but because of their own inherent impulse.

God sent His only begotten Son into the world and opened up to us the fountain of eternal life. After He came Christ said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Christ plants Himself over against the entire human race and claims that He can satisfy every thirst of every soul through all the ages. He claims to be able to satisfy every craving of heart and mind, all longings for love and wisdom, purity and joy, strength and guidance. He is the only and inexhaustible source of salvation. Though the ages pass, this fountain never runs dry. The blessings of His glorious gospel may be compared to wells of water on account of their refreshing properties, their purifying influence, their adaptation to the needs of all men and their necessity to life. These waters impart strength to the worker, courage to the timid, refreshment to the weary, satisfaction to the thirsty and joy to the mourner.

The well of salvation is an artesian one that does not need any machinery to raise the water, but only containers to receive it. To trust Christ as Saviour is to draw the water of life from the well of salvation. Faith is the channel through which God's salvation comes to each thirsty soul. People never appropriate this blessing until they are impelled by a sense of need. The rejecters of Christ and salvation are those who do not feel their need of a Saviour. Men need to be taught that they are sinners and in great need of salvation.

On a small island off the coast of Arabia in the Persian Gulf is perhaps the largest well in the world. It is a deep basin sixty-six by one hundred and twenty feet. There has been much discussion as to the source of the water that constantly fills this great well. The water cannot come from the island or from the sea around it. The only source seems to be the mountains in the distance. Presumably the water from the rain and snow falling on these mountains sinks into the ground and, finding a strata of sand deep in the earth, runs under the sea and comes up in this well on the island.

This is a splendid illustration of the wells of salvation, whose waters of life have their source in the hills from whence cometh our strength and, flowing through the strata of God's grace, burst to the surface of human life in Christ, the great well of all mercy and love and redemption.

The Lord is calling to you now, as He did to the men of His generation, and saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." To you He says, "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one;
Stoop down, and drink, and live.

I came to Jesus; and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched,
My soul revived,
And now I live in him!"