

HELP FROM THE SANCTUARY

Psalm 20:1-2

"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion." Psalm 20:1-2.

The word "sanctuary" means the holy place. In the Old Testament it was the name given sometimes to the tabernacle as a whole, sometimes to the court which was occupied by the priests, and sometimes to the most holy place in which was the ark of the covenant and into which the High Priest alone could enter, and that but once a year, which was on the great day of atonement.

What made the tabernacle a sanctuary was the fact that it was a structure consecrated by the presence of God. God was there in a special sense. He was there to make His presence felt, to reveal His will, to accept the worship of His people, to grant their requests, and to give them help.

Toward the sanctuary the pious Israelite turned when he was in trouble, for there alone he found all of the help and strength which he needed. Toward the sanctuary he turned his face when he sought the protection of God for some special purpose or mission.

All that was foreshadowed in the tabernacle and its worship is realized in Christ. In Him atonement was made for human guilt. In His work there is a real mediation between God and man. In Christ God is with His people in a very special sense. For the Christian, "help from the sanctuary" means that help which God gives in and through Christ; and that help is all we need. Just as Joab fled to the altar and laid hold on its horns, so now does the Christian turn to the cross and sing:

"Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling."

There he receives pardon for his sins, purity for his uncleanness, strength for his weakness, peace for his troubled conscience, and victory in the hour of his conflict. Christ is the true city of refuge. He is the strong tower in which the righteous are safe. Troubled ones avail themselves of His grace, and sing the familiar words:

"All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring,
Cover my defenceless head,
With the shadow of Thy wing!"

As commonly used among us now, the word "sanctuary" denotes a stated place of worship. So help from the sanctuary naturally suggests to us spiritual strength obtained through the observance of religious worship in the Lord's House at stated intervals. All the help thus received in the church services comes from Christ.

I. Help Is Needed.

The burdens of life often press heavily upon us, and we realize that we need help from on high. The strongest is weak at some point. Every heart has its own sadness; every soul its own bitterness; every one of us has his or her own cross to bear.

Take the thought that underlies the Psalm from which the text is taken. King David was about to engage in a war against the heathen for the interest of God's people. But before he goes, the people assemble and pray for their king and their cause, and in their prayer they utter the words of the text: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; send the help from the sanctuary and strengthen thee out of Zion."

So, each Christian has entered upon a warfare. He has set up his banner in the name of the Lord, and has begun to fight with self and sin, with the world, and with Satan. And the more earnestly he has tried to fight the world, the flesh, and the devil, the more fully he realizes that he is not able of himself to win the victory.

In addition to this constant battle, there are many difficulties that arise in the life of each one. There are domestic trials and cares; disappointments that paralyze; hopes that are blasted; perplexities in business; anxieties and burdens that disturb the peaceful rest of the mind. The more thoughtful that one is, the more deeply does he feel his weakness.

II. Help Is Available.

That help from the sanctuary is available to us is comforting and encouraging. In our living we are very much like school children learning to write. Every week is a page in our copy-book and every day is a line. On the first day of the week we come into the sanctuary, and then, on the first line, Christ sets His own beautiful life and example as a copy for us. We start out on Monday to imitate it; but as we go down line after line, we more and more lose sight of what He has written, and when we get to the bottom, our work is irregular and very imperfect. Then comes the first day of the week again, and when we enter His sanctuary, Christ speaks words of cheer and encouragement -- perhaps tenderly chiding us and giving us anew principles for our direction -- turns over the page, and takes the pen once more and sets us another perfect copy.

God makes His saving help known mainly through the sanctuary. It pleases Him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. There doubts are dispelled by the light of divine truth; there the power of temptation is broken by divine motives; and there moral weakness is strengthened by contact with heavenly realities which lift us up and fill our souls with a divine inspiration.

In the sanctuary we draw near to God, and are strengthened and encouraged thereby. All of our burdens become light when His Spirit comes into our hearts; for He bears us and our burdens too. The mysteries of His providence lose their perplexing character, when we go into the sanctuary and look at them in the light of God's Word. Temptations lose their power when He is beside us, and His almighty arms are underneath us.

Help is available in the sanctuary for every one who will receive it. There is help in every hymn of praise that is sung; in every portion of scripture that is read; in every prayer that is prayed; and in every sermon that is preached. All of these are intended to turn the current of our thoughts, affections and interests heavenward. Can one do these things as well at home or elsewhere as at the sanctuary? No. You cannot find a single case of wilful neglect of the sanctuary which has not led to the neglect of the other duties and privileges of the Christian life.

Special promises are made to those who seek help from the sanctuary. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "They that behold his beauty and inquire in his temple, shall be hid in his pavilion in the time of trouble." Help comes from the sanctuary through the communion of saints. Members of a church are rightfully expected to be helpful to one another. They are to bear one another's burdens. They are expected to be bound together in bonds of sympathy and love.

Help from the sanctuary comes to God's children through various ways.

1. As a spiritual reminder.

It keeps in our minds the matter of our relationship to and responsibilities toward God. That is something that every Christian needs.

2. As a means of overcoming the perils of religious isolation.

The social genius of Christianity is one of its foremost features. There is peril in religious isolation. The sun of sociability is as necessary to soul health as is the sun in the sky to our physical bodies. Both the humblest and the greatest alike have felt the need of the sanctuary privileges and of the help that comes from mutual association in God's house.

3. As a nourishing and refining influence.

All of us need God's truth to nourish and to strengthen us. We are commanded to "desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby." Any Christian who neglects to avail himself of the nourishment thus to be obtained will inevitably become weak in faith, cold in love, and sickly in soul. Every Christian needs the sanctuary as a place in which to grow spiritually strong.