

A BLESSED DELIVERANCE

Psalms 91

Martin Luther said, "This is the most distinguished jewel among all the psalms of consolation." It is certainly a psalm of rich and rare promises. The first verse expresses the safety of him who puts his trust in God. It says, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." To dwell means to have a fixed and habitual mode of life. The godly soul looks to God for protection and for support and for shelter in the storms of life.

After trying practically everything that the world offered, the psalmist dwelt in the secret place and discovered that he was sheltered from all evil, and was also safe from all fears and dangers. Likewise, our safety lies in our nearness to Him. Distance from God means danger while closeness to Him means security in the midst of danger. The secret place is a refuge which the Lord has provided for harassed souls. In it there is rest and peace for those who are burdened with sin. In the secret place there is peace, purity and power. It is well to remember that Jesus Christ said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace."

So the Christian has intimate and unrestrained communion with God. In everything he reveals his heart to God, with its needs and wishes, its thoughts and feelings, its doubts and anxieties, its sorrows and its joys, as to a loving, perfect friend. Here we find comfort in sorrow, hope in trouble, calmness in storm and strength in weakness. This verse emphasizes the fact that faith on man's part is met by faithful love on God's part.

In the second verse the psalmist said that God was his refuge. He meant his refuge from trouble, sorrow and despair. That statement was a confession of need and of trust. It is fine that he was able to think thus of God because he had gone to Him and found in Him deliverance from all the guilt and condemnation of sin, which otherwise would have overwhelmed him. God is ever the refuge of His people from the storms of life. In times of suffering and trial they find safety and comfort in Him. Believers are in danger by reason of bodily pains, mental perplexities and spiritual struggles, and therefore need a refuge.

He also said that God was his fortress. The idea of this word is different from that of refuge. A refuge is a quiet and secure hiding-place, whereas a fortress is a place of defense against foes. A fortress is a tower of defense, ready to meet the attacks of all enemies and strong enough to resist them. In life's warfare, God is the stronghold of His people. Therefore, when the psalmist needed help in his warfare he relied upon the Lord for it.

Then, he referred to God as "my God." All that is contained in the former declarations is included in this one, and much besides. "My God" means more than heart can conceive by way of security. The psalmist knew that God was his God. He rejoiced in that fact and delighted to assert it. Others recognized it also. What a glorious privilege for any one to be able to truthfully say, "He is my God!" God was the center and strength and joy of his life. It is certainly the acme of happy experience to be able to say, "He is my friend, companion, confidant and God." God is worthy of all our reverence, confidence, affection, praise, glory and obedience. Since there is every reason for genuine faith, we should place our implicit confidence in Him without any hesitancy or wavering.

Quite frequently the psalmist compared the soul of man to a bird. Note verse three. And like a bird, the soul of man is exposed to many dangers. Not alone such as are open and known, but such as are hidden, secret and subtle; not alone from the hovering hawk, but also from the crafty snare of the fowler. A fowler is one who catches or kills wild birds for sport or food. In order to be successful the fowler must conceal both himself and his snare. For the fowler to show himself, or to spread his snare in the sight of

any bird, would be to defeat the very object he has in view. Neither does the fowler seek to snare all birds in the same way. Instead, he studies their nature and likings and haunts, and then sets his snare accordingly. So it is with Satan. He knows the weak points of people and how they may be ensnared most effectively. Just think of what might happen were it not for the deliverance and keeping of God.

In all the ages God has certainly delivered His people from many dangers. He has promised to do so for us. It is encouraging to know that God will take care of us when we are abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. You may ask, How does He effect this deliverance which is so blessed? Either He does not let us fall into the snare, or He rescues us and delivers us out of the snare when we get into it. What we must remember is that God uses His own method of deliverance. From one He may take the temptation away, and to another He may give grace sufficient to master it. We have no right to dictate to God how He shall deliver us. What we need and want is deliverance, whether it comes by the removal of the cause or by grace sufficient. He has promised to deliver us, and His promises are bonds that have never yet been dishonored. Assuredly no subtle plot shall succeed against one who has the eyes of God watching for his defense.

In verse four the Lord compares Himself to a hen covering her brood. He speaks not only of the wings which give shelter, but He enters into detail and speaks of the feathers which give warmth and comfort and repose. Wings and feathers indicate the tender and loving character of the divine protection. "He shall cover thee with His pinions"--that is the divine act. "Under His wings shalt thou trust"--that is the human condition. "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler"--that is the divine manifestation which makes the human condition possible.

The special blessing here promised is the gracious protection of God. The hen gathers her young under her wings when she apprehends danger. She does it to protect them from exposure. She does it also when she wants to rest with and mother them. Picture to yourself what the shelter of the wing of the mother-bird is to her young, and it will tell of what the precious promise of our text means to the believing soul. It means happy contentment, comfort, a life hidden with God, nearness to His heart and perfect peace. What a beautiful figure to illustrate God's tender affection for His own! In our lives there come times when we feel the need of the special throb of the mother-heart of God. Under His wings four blessings are conferred upon us. We are concealed; we are protected; we are refreshed; we are nourished and cherished.

Verse seven makes it quite clear that the power of God can bring us near to danger and yet keep us far from harm. Isn't that glorious?

Verses eleven and twelve teach us that God is profoundly solicitous for the well-being of each one of His people. He does not overlook the individual in the multitude. He cares for every believer with a care as complete and constant as though He had no other soul to care for. We are taught that the faithful are under the constant care of angels, who are declared to be watchful helpers and guardians, who guide them and direct them perpetually.

One great object of the ministry of angels is to guard the saved lest they stumble and fall into sin. They also aid us to overcome the hindrances of life. "They shall bear thee up in their hands"--lift thee over thy difficulties and stumbling-blocks. Angels sustain a most close, happy and exalted relationship of nearness, love and service to God. Their mighty powers are willingly and obediently exercised in ministering to the welfare of God's children. They have charge over them, and keep them in His ways by suggestive thoughts, purposes and resolutions. They insure victory over all kinds of spiritual foes. Although the foes of a godly soul are numerous and are to be dreaded for their malignity, subtlety and power, yet victory over them is entirely possible.

Even when the way is roughest and we are the feeblest, we shall find safety and sufficient strength provided we are in the way in which God has prescribed for us to walk. But, if

we get out of that way, we forfeit the help of the angels. So long as we are in His way we are sure of their help and protection. The path of duty is the path of safety and strength. In that pathway our minds will be fortified with God's thoughts, guarded with God's ideas and protected with God's principles. Therein we get our natures animated with holy impulses, sympathies, tastes and dispositions.

God calls people to tread different ways. His way for one person is the way of patient endurance, so He calls that one to suffer; His way for another is the way of constant and perhaps difficult service, so He calls that one to work; His way for vast numbers is that of quietly and faithfully discharging the common tasks of life, so He calls them to diligence and faithfulness.

Each of the wonderful promises in verses fourteen to sixteen is a jewel. It glows with a light which makes the eye of faith shine with eagerness as it reaches out its hand to receive a rich gift from God. These wonderful blessings herein promised are for the saved only. The blessings which God guarantees to His children according to these verses are the following:

1. Protection.
"I will deliver him." God assures the believer that He will deliver him from danger, temptation, trouble, sickness and sin.
2. Position.
"I will set him on high." Thus God promises to place the believer out of the reach of danger. How wonderful to be in a position of such great security, influence and usefulness!
3. Promise.
"I will answer him." This signifies that the believer will pray unto God and receive an answer from Him. What we receive may be far different from what we expect, but it will be what we need and what is best for us.
4. Presence.
"I will be with him in trouble." Trouble cannot be escaped. When we are in trouble God will be with us to strengthen and to help us. His presence with us is the supreme good.
5. Promotion.
"I will deliver him, and honor him." God honors believers by taking them out of the bondage of sin and bringing them into His own family. Then He promotes those who honor Him.
6. Prospect.
"With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation." God's child fills out the measure of his days, is quite satisfied with life, and is content to leave it. Let us, as God's children, so live that when life comes to a close we may be able to say, "It is enough! Let Thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."