

HELP FROM THE SANCTUARY

"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.

Sanctuary means the holy place. In the Old Testament it was the name given to the tabernacle as a whole, to the court which was occupied by the priests, or 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 especially consecrated by God's presence. He was there in a special sense -- 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.

Hence, toward the sanctuary the pious Israelite turned when he was in trouble, for there alone he found all needful help and strength. Toward the sanctuary he turned his face when he sought the special protection of God.

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. We turn to the cross and sing:

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

There he received 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. Jesus is the true city of refuge. "All my trust on Thee is stayed." But let us take the word sanctuary in a narrower sense. We use the term in the sense of the house of worship. Help from the sanctuary suggests to us that spiritual strength, hope, comfort and understanding which we obtain when we sincerely engage in the worship of God in the Lord's house. But when you come to think of it, you will find that all the help you get in the church services comes from Christ, through whom our worship ascends to God, and through whom every blessing descends upon us.

I. We All Need Help.

Burden of life often presses heavily upon us, and we feel, in our inmost souls, 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; each one of us 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 this prayer they utter the words of my text.

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 Satan. And the more earnestly he has tried to fight these enemies of God, the more he feels 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.

II. There Is Help From the Sanctuary.

This is a comforting thought. In our lives we are 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, our Lord Jesus 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. Then comes the first day of the week again, and when we enter His sanctuary. Jesus speaks words of cheer and sets us a 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; power of temptation is broken by divine motives; 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 in the degree in which we appropriate Him to ourselves as our God and Father, in that degree will we be strengthened and encouraged. All 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 white light of His Word. Temptations lose their power when we feel that He is beside us, and that His almighty arms are underneath us.

In a more special sense, there is help in the sanctuary for every one. There is help in every hymn of praise that is sung; every portion of scripture that is read; every prayer that is offered; every sermon that is preached. All these acts are intended to turn the current of our thoughts, affections and interests heavenward. Can one do these things as well at home as at the sanctuary? No. Not find single example where wilful neglect of sanctuary has not led to a neglect of all duties and privileges of religion.

There are special promises 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 church are to be helpful to each other. We are pledged to help one another. We are to bear one another's burdens. We are bound together in bonds of sympathy and love.