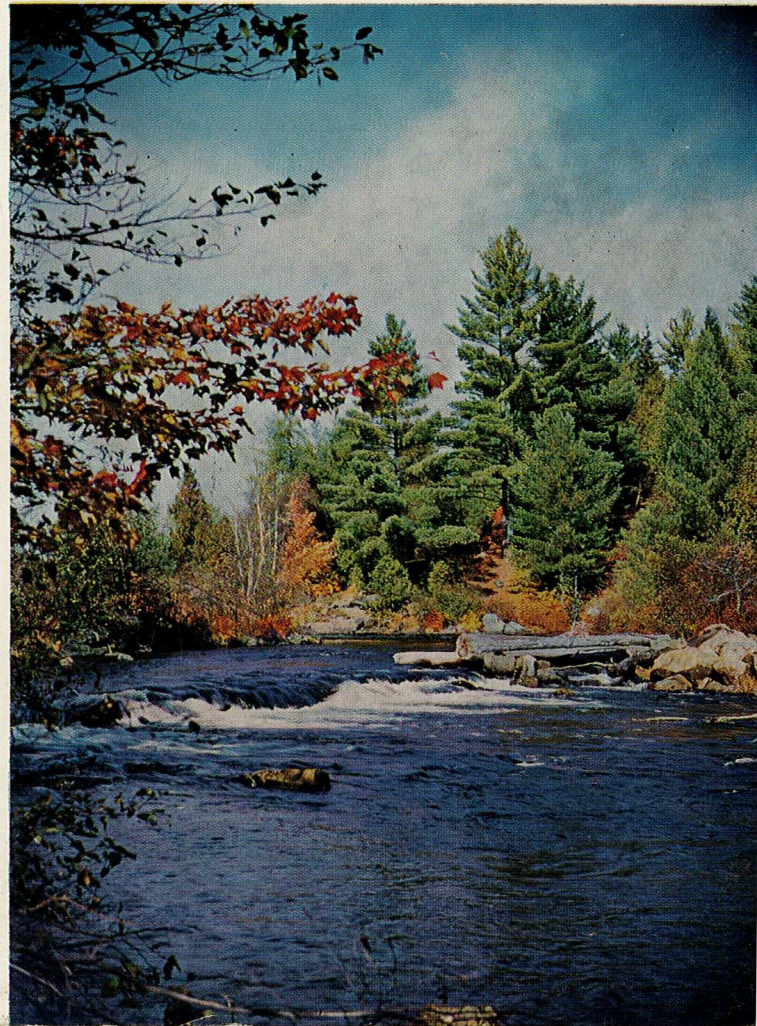


THE EVERLASTING ARMS

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THE EVERLASTING ARMS

Daily Devotional
Messages

by

V. M. Sullivan

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FIRST DAY

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." Deuteronomy 33.27.

God's arms represent comfort. One of God's lovely titles is "the God of all comfort Who comforteth us in all our tribulation".^(a) The fretful baby cannot see its mother's arms underneath him, but he can feel them, he knows they are there and is comforted, feeling secure. What a tender picture we have of the Saviour, taking the little ones in His arms.^(b) When feeling lonely, sad or depressed how comforting are human arms round us; how much more so are God's arms. His arms represent closeness and nearness to Him.

God's arms represent strength, they are mighty arms.^(c) Those who have experienced utter weariness when climbing rugged hills, know the new strength which comes as the strong arm of a guide helps and supports us over the rough places and gives us the courage to go on. God says, "Mine arms also shall strengthen him".^(d)

God's arms are everlasting. The mother's arms grow weary as she carries her sick child and finally when she reaches the point of exhaustion she is compelled to lay the little one down. God, however, faints not, neither is weary.^(e) The strong arm of a loved one on whom you have leaned for many years has been removed and you feel utterly bereft. Then lean heavily on the everlasting arms of God. Let us make this our prayer, "Be Thou our arm every morning,"^(f) His arm to lean upon, His arm to work for us, His arm continually.

(a) 2 Cor. 1.3, 4. (b) Mark 10.16. (c) Ps. 89.13. (d) Ps. 89.21. (e) Is. 40.28. (f) Is. 33.21.

SECOND DAY

GOD OUR REFUGE

"The eternal God is thy refuge." Deuteronomy 33.27.

"Refuge" in this verse means a fixed dwelling place, a habitation, therefore God is not only our Refuge in emergencies but our dwelling-place, our Home. David prayed, "Be Thou my strong **habitation**". What safety and security! God is our Refuge when great trouble is about to overtake us. David made God's wings his refuge until the calamities were overpast.^(a) God is a Refuge from the storm of affliction, sorrow and trial and a shadow from the scorching heat of weariness and pain.^(b)

God will be a Refuge from the strife of tongues. There may be times when you are slandered as David was, when words fly about you like darts, when you are falsely accused and your reputation, which you value so highly, is dragged through the mud. What is your resource in such a situation? God our Refuge is likened to a pavilion (a tent) where we are kept in the secret of His presence from the strife of tongues,^(c) where words will be powerless to harm us or rob us of our peace. "Wherefore hearest thou men's words?" said David to Saul.^(d) God may be saying these words to you. Allow the Lord to draw you into His pavilion, close the flap of the tent, and leave your vindication to Him.^(e)

The Lord Jesus experienced the strife of tongues.^(f) He was called a glutton, a winebibber and an imposter, yet He made Himself of no reputation.^(g) He must have known the strife of tongues in His own home also, "for neither did His brethren believe in Him". At such times God the Father was His Refuge.

(a) Ps. 57.1. (b) Is. 25.4. (c) Ps. 31.13, 20. (d) 1 Sam. 24.9. (e) Job 5.8. (f) Heb. 12.3. (g) Phil 2.7.

THIRD DAY

NOTHING TO GIVE

"A friend of mine in his journey is come to me and I have nothing to set before him." Luke 11.6.

In this parable we read of three people—Friend one, the hungry traveller who needed food; Friend two to whom the needy one went but he had nothing to give. But Friend two went to his Friend three at midnight and asked for three loaves for his hungry friend. Many lessons might be drawn from this parable but we shall think only of verse 6.

The Friend in need. All round us there are needy folk. They may not need bread but they do need love, sympathy, cheer, comfort or a helping hand.

FRIEND TWO. Perhaps you represent Friend two to whom others come for help. Do you have to make the sad confession, "I have nothing to set before him?" What is the reason? Perhaps you have no word of encouragement to give because you yourself are discouraged. Then ask yourself as David did, "Why art thou cast down O my soul?"^(a) Someone comes to you for sympathy but because you are sorry for yourself you have no word of sympathy to give. Self-pity is an impoverishing thing. Another comes to you for comfort in his sorrow but because you yourself have not experienced the comfort of God you have nothing to give.^(b) Yet another needs love and you have none to give him but the Holy Ghost will shed abroad His love in your heart if you ask Him.^(c)

FRIEND THREE represents the Lord Jesus. Go to your Lord, make your confession to Him, "I have nothing". Ask for what you need. He loves you to come to Him for that which will enable you to help others and He will give you as much as you need (verse 8).^(d)

(a) Ps. 42.11. (b) 2 Cor. 1.3, 4. (c) Rom. 5.5. (d) Eph. 3.20.

FOURTH DAY

WOUNDED AND MADE WHOLE

"He maketh sore and bindeth up: He woundeth and His hands make whole." Job 5.18.

He maketh sore: He woundeth. A patient is in need of healing but before this can take place it is necessary for the surgeon to inflict a wound and the patient must submit to the knife of pain and suffering. Then with tender hands, the surgeon binds up the wound. So it is with the Great Physician. He loves us so greatly that He will not fail to use the knife of pain, suffering, sorrow and trial in order to make us whole and lead us into a life of greater usefulness for Him.^(a) There is also fruitbearing through suffering. The Gardener trims and prunes the vine, often very drastically. He knows where and how to cut in order that the vine should produce an abundance of fruit. And so it is with the Great Husbandman; He prunes the branch that it may bring forth more fruit.^(b) Let us then not shrink from the knife.

Sometimes the wound comes through human hands, yet God is behind it. Can we look beyond the human to the Divine and say, "He woundeth"? When the wound comes directly from God's hand we are inclined to accept this more readily but whatever the means used, let us look beyond the human instrument to God.^(c)

His hands make whole. The hands which were once pierced for us are the same which bind up and heal, giving strength, support and comfort. The means God uses are the many comforting passages in His Word which meet our need.^(d) Sometimes He uses the ministry of others, those who possess the gentleness of Christ to give us sympathy, and love.

(a) Heb. 12.6. (b) John 15.2. (c) Ps. 66.11, 12. (d) Ps. 147.3.



FIFTH DAY

STRENGTH FOR THE DAY

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deuteronomy 33.25.

Shoes of iron and brass. God sometimes sends us on hard, rugged, rough, stony paths, but always He provides strong shoes for the journey. And what can be stronger than shoes of iron and brass? You can walk to heaven in them, they will never wear out. So for the stony paths God provides us with the equipment which enables us to make the grade.

Strength for the days as well as shoes for the road. It is a well-guaranteed promise. We can rely upon God, for what He has promised He is able to perform.^(a) Some people promise help beyond their ability to perform, but not God.

As thy days. Our strength is to be as our days. God does not give the help, grace, power or strength to us ahead of our need. As we need it, so He supplies. Do not make the mistake of asking or expecting grace and strength to meet a need which may or may not lie ahead. As we come up to the circumstance, on *that* day God will supply the strength.

As thy days, not as thy weeks or months. As God supplied the manna to the Children of Israel *daily*, so God gives us strength for the day.^(b) It may be the day of manifold duties when work presses upon us and we feel we cannot get through. If it is the day of suffering, strength will be given to bear it; or the day of temptation strength will be given to overcome. But it also means the length of our days, stretching on to old age, "as thy days so shall thy strength be".^(c)

(a) Rom. 4.21. (b) Ex. 16.21. (c) Is. 46.4.

SIXTH DAY

MAKING HIMSELF STRANGE

"Joseph made himself strange unto them and spake roughly unto them." Genesis 42.7.

Joseph's brothers did not recognise him (v. 8). Joseph was a type of Christ. Sometimes we do not recognise our Lord. We know Him when He comes to us with blessings in His hand but we do not always know Him when He comes in the guise of pain or sorrow or with the rod of correction in His hand and He makes Himself strange to us.

Joseph spoke roughly to them but his heart was filled with love toward them. Sometimes the Lord has to speak sternly to us from the Scriptures, words which pierce our hearts^(a) for whom the Lord loves He corrects^(b) and He loves to the end.

Proofs of Joseph's love. He gave them much corn and returned their money. How much Christ has given us "without money and without price". The greatest proof of His love is that by dying on the Cross for our sins He gave us the great gift of salvation.

Joseph wept over them (v. 24) but they still thought he was hard because they did not see his tears. And when the Lord has to reprove us He is grieved at his heart.

Joseph gave them food for the journey (v. 25). Christ gives us food for our souls as we travel on the road to heaven.

Reasons for Joseph's rough words were to cause them to remember their sin against him, to confess it and to bring them to repentance. Then he could forgive them. The Lord speaks sternly to us from His Word that we might truly repent and confess our sin.^(c) He speaks to us roughly only for our good and in love. May we always recognise this.

(a) Heb. 4.12. (b) Prov. 3.12. (c) 1 John 1.9.

GOD'S DARK CLASSROOM

***"What I tell you in darkness that speak ye in light."
Matthew 10.27.***

What we find in the darkness. We find the Presence of God Himself. Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.^(a) The disciples feared as they entered into the cloud.^(b) But what need had they to fear when Christ was there?

We find treasures in the darkness.^(c) Silver, gold and precious stones are found in the darkness of the earth and pearls in the depths of the sea.

There are some words spoken to us by God only in the darkness, words to comfort in trouble, to strengthen in weakness, to cheer in discouragement. We also find light in the darkness. The light of fireflies and glow worms can be seen only in the darkness.

That speak ye in light. The darkness of bereavement, sorrow and trial are only for a time, later we come out into the light. This verse explains to us one of the purposes of suffering. That which we have learned of God in the darkness is to be passed on to others in the light. Have we heard words of comfort, then we are to comfort others with the comfort we have received of God. Has God given us words of cheer in the darkness, or precious promises which have met our need? These we are to pass on to others. So lessons learned of God in the darkness are not for ourselves alone.

Not all experiences and messages from God, however, are to be passed on when we come out into the light. Some of these, such as Paul had, are between God and the soul alone.^(d)

(a) Ex. 20.21. (b) Luke 9.34. (c) Is. 45.3. (d) 2 Cor. 12.4.

GRACE SUFFICIENT

"My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Corinthians 12.9.

Paul was given "a thorn in the flesh". We do not know what this thorn was. It has been suggested that it might have been malaria, ophthalmia or even a disfigurement or some other physical disability, nor do we know for how long he had to endure it. "Paul's particular thorn is not described, that his consolations may avail for all to whom any thorn is given."^(a) Three times Paul prayed that his thorn might be taken away. It was not removed but instead, Paul received the blessed assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee". Paul rested on these words because they were spoken by the Lord, the One Whose Word cannot be broken.

"My grace." This was not the word of a stranger but of a tried and trusted Friend Who would never let Paul down, One Whose resources were limitless.

My grace. Grace means favour shown to one utterly undeserving and unworthy.

Is sufficient—not can be or will be but is sufficient. It is in the present tense to meet my present need.

Sufficient. As the burden becomes greater, the cross heavier, the suffering more intense, He will fit the grace to the need, "He giveth more grace".^(b) His grace is sufficient for the small things also, for the pinpricks of life, the things which fret and annoy. His grace is exhaustless in measure and for all circumstances. "He giveth abundance of grace."^(c) For thee. Do not think this promise is only for the spiritually mature, it is for each individual, all who are on the Christian pathway.

(a) Schofield Bible. (b) James 4.6. (c) Rom. 5.17.

GOD'S PERFECT PEACE

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." Isaiah 26.3.

THE KEEPER. Who is the Keeper Who alone gives us this peace and keeps us in it? He is none other than Jehovah Himself (v. 4), "the Lord of peace".^(a) He does not depute this work of keeping to another. He is always on guard.

The Keeping. It is described in the words, "perfect peace". In the Hebrew it is "peace, peace", as though the soul dwelt inside double doors. What security! It is our privilege to live inside the double doors of God's peace and of His loving care. It is God's own peace. "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth,"^(b) said the Lord. The world's peace depends upon people and circumstances but not so God's peace. He is our peace.^(c)

The Kept. Who are the kept? Those whose minds (thoughts, imaginations) are stayed on God. It is through our imaginations, when we imagine all the things that might happen to us, perhaps sickness, sorrow, loss, or bereavement that we become perturbed, anxious, fearful and worried. These things we turn over and over in our mind, and lose our peace.

Stayed on God might be translated "rested on God". We speak of a person being the mainstay of the house. Some stay themselves on an earthly friend, upon their own ability, their bank balance or possessions, but the one who has perfect peace rests on God. Then do not imagine, but trust; then there will be no worry, anxiety or fear, for you will have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which will keep your heart and your mind.

(a) 2 Thess. 3.16. (b) John 14.27. (c) Eph. 2.14. (d) Phil. 4.7.

HE GIVETH QUIETNESS

"When He giveth quietness who then can make trouble." Job 34.29.

Quietness—the word in this connection means, "to cause to be at rest". The same word is used in the verse, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength".

Quietness given. We cannot produce this rest of heart, it is a gift from God, He giveth quietness. This is an inward peace, a rest of heart which is independent of people and circumstances. It produces confidence which results in strength.^(a) God causes us to dwell in quiet resting places, but so often the Lord's people forget their resting place^(b) and so become troubled, anxious and perturbed. How slow we are to appropriate God's gift of quietness and to fail to dwell in His quiet resting place!

Who then can make trouble? Satan, the accuser of the brethren^(c) attempts to do so by raking up the memory of past sins which God has forgiven and forgotten. It is then that the Holy Spirit reminds us of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ, that they have been blotted out,^(d) and so we return to our resting place.

The storms of life—pain, sickness, sorrow, trial and bereavement—may rage about us. It is then that the Lord says, "Peace be still" as He did on the stormy lake and there is a great calm. He giveth quietness.

The strife of tongues^(e) which falsely accuse us, harshly criticise us and seek to take away our reputation, will be powerless to make trouble or touch our inner spirit because we are hiding in His pavilion in the secret of His presence and so He giveth quietness.

(a) Is. 30.15. (b) Jer. 50.6. (c) Rev. 12.10. (d) Is. 44.2. (e) Ps. 38.20.

THE GARDEN OF THE LORD

"Awake O north wind; and come thou south, blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out." Song of Sol. 4.16.

My garden. The bride likens her heart to a garden filled with all manner of fruit, spices and spikenard^(a) which give forth their fragrance when the winds blow. But she is not content that the fragrance of the sweet spices should be for herself alone, she wants others to share them. Let us meditate on her prayer.

Awake thou north wind and blow upon my garden. The north wind is not pleasant for it represents sorrow, trial, testing and affliction, therefore it was a courageous prayer showing that she was prepared for any experience.

Come thou south wind. Perhaps most of us choose the south wind. We can be thankful that life is not made up entirely of north winds. The bride knew that the gentle, south breeze would follow the north wind; both were needed. God would send His own blessed peace saying, "Peace be still" and there would be a great calm.^{(b) (c)}

The purpose of her prayer was that the fragrance of the spices might flow out beyond the walls of the garden to the weary, the discouraged, the burdened, the lonely and the sad. Let us not be so taken up with our own spiritual blessings and graces, and with the beauty of the Bridegroom, that we forget the needy ones beyond the walls.

But the spices and fruit were first and foremost for the Bridegroom. Let the north and the south winds come, not only that our own soul might be refreshed and that those beyond the garden might share the fragrance but that our Beloved Lord might eat His pleasant fruits. "Bruised hearts often emit the fragrance God loves to smell."

(a) v. 13, 14. (b) Mark 4.39. (c) Job 37.17.

EBENEZER

"Samuel took a stone . . . and called it Ebenezer, saying hitherto hath the Lord helped us." 1 Samuel 7.12.

Hitherto seems to point in the direction of the past. Through all the experiences of life, cloud and sunshine, rough paths and smooth, happiness and sadness, "hitherto hath the Lord helped". Look back often over the years, trace God's hand always ready to help^(a) and you will be compelled to cry out, "Ebenezer".

Ebenezer commemorated answered prayer (v. 9, 10). When the enemy came against them, Samuel cried unto the Lord and the Lord heard him. Samuel did not wish to forget, so he set up a stone to remind himself and all Israel of God's answer to prayer. Let us set up our Ebenezer to remind ourselves of our answered prayers. Recording them would strengthen our faith.

Ebenezer commemorated victory which came after Samuel had offered a young lamb. We can raise our Ebenezer because God has given us victory through the blood of the Lamb of God.^(b)

Ebenezer means we are helped right up to the present, and He Who has helped will continue to help. The unsaved have no Ebenezer set up but they may have it if they will trust that other Stone, the Lord Jesus Christ, the tried Stone, the precious Corner Stone, a sure foundation.^(c)

Ebenezer also looks forward, so we can raise our Ebenezer in gratitude and praise for what God will be to us for the remainder of our journey on earth and for the future which awaits us in glory. Let us raise our Ebenezer now and, like the Levites, praise the Lord morning and evening.^(d)

(a) Deut. 8.2. (b) Rev. 12.11. (c) Is. 28.16. (d) 1 Chron. 23.30.

BE OF GOOD CHEER

"Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid." Matthew 14.27.

"Be of good cheer" (take courage) were words spoken by Christ to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee:—

When they were discouraged and thoroughly exhausted by toiling and rowing in rough seas. It is easy for us to become depressed and discouraged when passing through trying circumstances, when our efforts seem to be in vain. But the Lord saw them, He knew all about their circumstances and so He came to them walking on the sea.

When they were terrified because they failed to recognise Him, He said, "Be of good cheer (courage); it is I: be not afraid". Although He did not name Himself, they knew His voice.^(a) He comes to us in our darkest hours with words of cheer. The world says in such circumstances, "Keep your chin up" but they are powerless to enable us to do so. But when the Lord says, "Be of good cheer", He is able to make it true in our experience.

Be not afraid. He meant be not afraid of Me now that you know it is I; be not afraid of the tempest when I am so near you. Why then should we be afraid?^(b) These words "be of good cheer" were addressed by the Lord to Paul also when he was in custody and did not know what the outcome would be. During the night the Lord paid him a special visit, stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul."^(c) Thus was Paul encouraged. Because Paul Himself had been cheered He was able to encourage others.^(d) As fear is infectious, so also is courage. Then let us be of good courage^(e) not only for our own sakes but that we may cheer others.

(a) John 10.4. (b) Is. 41.10. (c) Acts 23.11. (d) Acts 27.22. (e) Ps. 27.14.

COMMIT YOUR CARE

"Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5.7.

When a man deposits his money in the bank, he no longer worries about it, because he has placed the responsibility of it upon another and trusts the bank to care for it and to guard it. There are several things we are to commit to the Lord among which are our cares.

Our cares. Why should we carry the cares which trouble us when there is One upon Whom we can place them, One Who is well able to carry them, One who cares for us. "Care" here means "division, distraction". This was the meaning of the word the Lord used to Martha when He said, "Thou art careful (distracted) about many things",^(a) therefore she was unable to sit quietly at His feet and be taught by Him.

It is significant that cares of this world are included by Our Lord with the deceitfulness of riches, pleasures of this life and the lust of other things^(b) which choke the Word bringing no fruit to perfection.^(c) We cannot therefore regard lightly the sin of anxious care which destroys our peace of mind, robs us of our peace of heart and weakens our usefulness. If we go about with an anxious face and furrowed brow we are poor recommendations of the Christian life to others. Freedom from anxious care is one of the conditions of the peace of God keeping our hearts and minds.^(d)

"He careth for you." If we will commit our cares to Him He will gladly take over. He is not only interested in all that concerns us, but He loves us and cares for us personally.

(a) Luke 10.40. (b) Mark 4.19. (c) Luke 8.14. (d) Phil. 4.6, 7.

BE NOT DISMAYED

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed for I am thy God." Isaiah 41.10.

How often have these words been a strength and stay to us when we have greatly needed such assurances.

Fear thou not. There are many "Fear nots" in the Bible. God spoke these words many times probably because we are all prone to fear, some more than others, though all are in a measure fearful of something. Some have a special, nagging fear which, even though it is foolish, yet it is always there. God wants us to know that He can deliver us from all our fears.^(a) Some live in constant dread of the future, of what might happen to them or to their loved ones, or of some difficult task which confronts them for which they feel quite inadequate; they may fear sickness, pain, loneliness, and old age. Why we should not fear:—

We have the Divine Presence "I am with thee", so there is no reason for fear. We do not face the dangers or travel the steep, rugged path alone. We may have been separated from loved ones or suffered bereavement but God is with us **always**.^(b) He does not say "I am within call" but "I am already present, I am with thee." He is "Emmanuel, God with us".^(c) Then count on His presence, claim the promise.

Be not dismayed. The R.V. puts it, "Look not around thee". If we look at difficult circumstances, or surroundings, at seemingly impossible situations or to people, of course we shall be dismayed. Let us look up. God reminds us that He is adequate for every situation, "I am thy God". Then why live in fear, child of God? Look away to Him.

(a) Ps. 34.4. (b) Matt. 28.20. (c) Matt. 1.23.

STRENGTHENER, HELPER,
UPHOLDER

"Fear thou not . . . I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Isaiah 41.10.

The Divine Promise is threefold, announcing strength, help and upholding. Are you weak? There is strength for you. Are you helpless? There is help for you. Are you about to faint and fall? There is upholding for you.

I will strengthen thee. This Word may come to us when we are feeling physically unable for the tasks of the day. Then say in faith as David did, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God"^(a) and you will find that you are being carried through the day, for "he giveth power to the faint . . . He increaseth strength".^(b) This promise also holds good for your spiritual needs. Are you weak in faith? He will increase and strengthen it. When opposition came from enemies who tried to stop the building of the wall of Jerusalem, Nehemiah prayed, "O God strengthen my hands".^(c) Not only does He give strength, He is our strength.^(d)

I will help thee. When in trouble or illness, we long for the presence of some dear one who will help us. But he is far away. God, however, is a very **present** help in trouble,^(e) not only my Strength but my Helper.

I will uphold thee. This suggests that we may be about to slip and fall, but He will uphold us according to His promise. This gives us confidence and takes away our fear.

God's right hand is the symbol of perfect strength, and fullness of power and supply. He will never let us fall, all His power is at our disposal. How foolish then to fear when all His resources are available to us.

(a) Ps. 71.16. (b) Is. 40.29. (c) Neh. 6.9. (d) Ps. 27.1. (e) Ps. 46.1.

A LITTLE SANCTUARY

"Yet I will be to them as a little Sanctuary." Ezekiel 11.16.

God told His people to make Him a Sanctuary that He might dwell among them.^(a) A sanctuary means "a place apart".

Many of God's people were captives in Babylon. They were far from the Temple and its privileges yet even there, surrounded by heathenism, God said "I will be to them a little Sanctuary"—a place of refuge, of safety and of communion.

There are many who, for various reasons are deprived of the benefits of public worship and the means of grace—those in hospitals, others on sickbeds in their own homes, others yet again who are confined to the house because they are caring for an invalid, and the mother with the care of small children. How they miss the services and the fellowship; yet God will be to them a little Sanctuary.

There are also those who are able to attend church services and yet who seem unable to derive benefit from them. But, after all, we go to meet with God. As we sing the hymns, we worship and praise Him; as we hear the reading of His Word, He will speak His own message to our hearts; as we pray together for others we shall know that He hears and answers our prayers. He will be a little sanctuary to us right there.

To the lonely missionary doing pioneer work amongst a heathen people where there are as yet no believers, God Himself will be to him as a little Sanctuary. Let us then day by day, lay hold of the fact that God is to us a little Sanctuary where He dwells with us and we with Him.^(b)

(a) Ex. 25.8. (b) 1 John 4.15.

THE GARMENT OF HUMILITY

"Be clothed with humility." 1 Peter 5.5.

The Word of God speaks of those whose garments of self-righteousness are as filthy rags.^(a) God speaks also of the garments of salvation which He will give to all those who will discard their rags of self-righteousness, trust Christ as Saviour and accept the garments of salvation.^(b) There is yet another garment we are told to wear.

The garment of humility. Members of the royal household are expected to wear a special uniform so that they will be recognised as those who belong to the royal palace. Because we belong to Christ He bids us put on and constantly wear the garment of humility. There is nothing spectacular about it therefore it is not admired by the world but it is precious to God. Sometimes the children of God wear this garment; at other times it is left hanging in the wardrobe. There are certain marks of humility:—

Willing to be servant of all, "not to be ministered unto but to minister",^(c) willing to take the lowest place. The disciples failed here when they were not willing to perform the menial task of washing one another's feet. They had left off the garment of humility instead of "By love serving one another".^(d)

Willing to be taught by others as was Apollos, even though he himself was mighty in the Scriptures.^(e) Are we willing to learn lessons of love and patience from those who may be difficult? God has many ways and methods of keeping us humble and He sometimes uses other people to ride over our heads.^(f) It is then we need to wear this precious garment.

(a) Is. 64.6. (b) Is. 61.10. (c) Matt. 20.28. (d) Gal. 5.13. (e) Acts 19.25. (f) Ps. 66.12.

MARKS OF HUMILITY

"Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil." Ps. 141.5.

Willing to allow others to tell us our faults. The above verse shows us the value of wise reproof. David showed that he was humble by not only accepting reproof but by regarding it as a kindness shown to him. It takes much grace on our part to accept reproof from a fellow-christian and even more so to regard it as a kindness and not an injury. When we do, however, it becomes an excellent, fragrant oil which will enable us to correct our faults. We sometimes pray that God will teach us and cleanse us from secret faults which may be unknown to ourselves but very obvious to others and when He uses others to show us these faults we are apt to resent it.

Rejoicing when God uses others. When God uses us, naturally we are glad and thankful but do we rejoice when He uses others more than He uses us and in lowliness of mind, esteem others better than ourselves.

What God does for the humble. He gives grace and the word here means "graciousness".^(a) If we are prepared to be humble, God Who is the God of all grace, will enable us to be gracious to all as our Lord was, for all wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.^(b)

He dwells with them that are of a humble spirit.^(c) "He that dwells in the highest heaven dwells in the lowest hearts." The Lord Jesus Who was meek and lowly in heart, gave us an example. May we then follow in His steps.^(d)

(a) 1 Pet. 5.5. (b) Luke 4.22. (c) Is. 57.15. (d) 1 Pet. 2.21.

WHOLEHEARTED TRUST

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart." Proverbs 3.5.

Trust in the Lord. The word "trust" here means "to lean on", "to place confidence in" and the One in Whom we are to trust is none other than the Lord Himself. We may have leaned upon a human arm which has proved to be like a broken reed; we may have put our confidence in one who was not worthy of our trust and who has let us down. We may, however, with perfect confidence, lean upon God Who is utterly trustworthy, for "He faileth not".^(a) Has He not promised "I will not suffer my faithfulness to fail".^(b)

Complete trust—"with all thine heart" with an undivided heart, with a confidence that cannot be shaken, a loyalty which is not divided between Him and another. We can believe that He will do as He has promised.

Trust Him at all times,^(c) in cloud and sunshine, in storm and calm, in joy and sorrow. Trust Him in every emergency to guide when we are in doubt, to protect when we are in danger, to keep in sickness and in health.

Trust Him for everything—for wisdom when facing problems, for the supply of daily need whether it be temporal or spiritual, for power to live continually a victorious life. You have trusted Christ for salvation, can you not trust Him also for victory?

Lean not to thine own understanding. We are so prone to depend on our own human wisdom or intelligence upon which we so often set a high value, instead of seeking the wisdom that is from above.^(d) This attitude of trust must be maintained till it becomes habitual and we live a life of trust.

(a) Zeph. 3.5. (b) Ps. 89.33. (c) Ps. 62.8. (d) James 3.17.

DIRECTED PATHS

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3.6.

In **ALL** thy ways acknowledge Him, not in some ways but in **ALL**; not only in the greater things of life but in the lesser; not only when about to make a big decision but a minor one. In business, in the home, in the daily round we need to acknowledge Him, defer to Him, consult Him and to count on His promise. **Acknowledging Him** is the condition attached to the promise that He will direct our paths.

Direction given. If we fulfil the condition His promise is sure, He shall direct thy paths. The word "direct" also means "to keep straight" our paths.^(a) If we acknowledge Him in **all** our ways He will direct **all** our paths. Too often we go to one and another for advice and direction, when all the time the Lord is ready and waiting to direct us Himself.

God directs us by His Word which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path^(b) and which shines more and more unto the perfect day.^(c) We are constantly coming to a place where two roads meet and we are uncertain which one to take. It is then we need God's direction. If about to take a wrong path we shall hear a voice saying, "this is the way, walk ye in it".^(d)

THY paths—then the path is different and distinct for every one. Let us not be concerned about another's path, our business is to believe that He will direct my path. "What shall this man do?" said Peter to the Lord, Who replied, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me".^(e)

(a) Is. 45.13. (b) Ps. 119.105. (c) Prov. 4.18. (d) Is. 30.21. (e) John 21, 22.

THE GOD OF PATIENCE

"The God of patience." Romans 15.5.

God has many titles descriptive of His attributes, one of the most beautiful of which is, "the God of Patience". He is never in a hurry whether dealing with nations or individuals. His is long-term planning. His patience with us individually is a subject for wonder.

He is the patient Teacher, teaching us line upon line, here a little and there a little as we are able to take it.^(a) When we are slow to learn He patiently teaches us the same lesson over and over again, using varying circumstances and sometimes various people. How patient He was with Jacob the deceiver, teaching him part of the time through Laban's unfair and unjust dealings with him till later, Jacob the supplanter became Israel a prince with God.^(b) Who teacheth like Him?^(c)

He is the patient Lover and we might well say "Who loveth like Him?" Knowing us through and through He still loves us in spite of our failures, faults and shortcomings. The Children of Israel forsook Him again and again throughout the years, yet God's heart-cry was, "How can I give thee up?^(d) Even though Peter denied his Lord, and the disciples forsook Him and fled, Christ loved them to the end^(e) till they became what He wanted them to be.

Let us then be patient with others. May the remembrance of God's patience with us cause us to be patient toward all,^(f) bearing with their defects and infirmities. We also have defects and failings which must be borne by others, but how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

(a) Is. 28.10. (b) Gen. 32.27, 28. (c) Job 36.22. (d) Hos. 11.8. (e) John 13.1. (f) 1 Thess. 5.14.

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

"The God of all comfort." 2 Corinthians 1.3.

Not only is He the God of patience but He is also the God of Comfort. Not only is He the God of comfort but the God of all comfort, which means that His comfort is available in all circumstances and adequate for all situations. It is not a weakening thing leading to self-pity as human comforts sometimes are, for one of the words translated "comfort" means "to brace up", giving courage to go on in spite of affliction, sorrow or bereavement. This is one of the qualities of God's comfort.

He comforts by sharing our sorrows, He not only sees the affliction of His people,^(a) He enters into it with them, He suffers with them.^(b)

He comforts as a mother. We are all familiar with the fact that God loves as a father, indeed He is our Heavenly Father if we have been born again by the Spirit of God. We may not, however, have given much thought to that tender quality of His love which is as a mother's, the nearest to the Divine because it is outgoing, self-giving and unchanging. When a child is ill or in trouble of any kind the one person whom he wants to love and comfort him is his mother. God says, "As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you".^(c)

He comforts by the Scriptures.^(d) It is our constant experience to be given by God from the Word, comfort which exactly meets our need, therefore we can say, "Thy comforts delight my soul",^(e) but this will be true for us only if we will lay aside the many thoughts which trouble us and make room in our hearts for His comfort.

(a) Ex. 3.7. (b) Is. 63.9. (c) Is. 66.13. (d) Rom. 15.4. (e) Ps. 94.19.

COMFORTING OTHERS

"That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." 2 Corinthians 1.4.

Paul blessed God for the comfort given him in all his tribulations (v. 4). Christ's promise "I will not leave you comfortless (orphans) I will come to you"^(a) is being fulfilled in our experience today. "His compassions fail not, they are new every morning."^(b)

However, God comforts us not only for our own sakes, but that we may be able to pass on to others, the comfort we ourselves have received from Him. Although we may be used as God's instruments to comfort others, yet it is still the comfort of God and all the glory must be given to Him. Because David had been through so many experiences through which we are passing, we find the Psalms so very comforting. Having himself experienced the comfort of God, David's writings comfort us today.

Comforting others is a great ministry for which, as for all other service, we must be trained by God, and this training can only be given in the school of suffering, testing, trial and bereavement. A wife has lost a husband, a parent a child, a son a mother, another has a retarded child, yet another living in a non-Christian home is experiencing loneliness, lack of sympathetic understanding and even a form of persecution. Who can comfort others as those who have experienced the comfort of God in similar circumstances?

Thank God then, that He gave you training in His special school, in order that you might be able to comfort others with the comfort you yourself have received.

(a) John 14.18. (b) Lam. 3.22, 23.

YE BELONG

"Ye belong to Christ." Mark 9.41.

Ye belong. Today's reading is specially for those who may be lonely. To all of us at times there comes the natural longing "to belong" in a special way either to an individual or a family or both; but you are alone in the world as far as relatives are concerned. You long for family life but perhaps you are living in a room or a Guest House and you feel that you just do not belong anywhere. Or it may be that you are in a new country, an exile from home and family. For you there is a special message in the words of this text. If you have trusted Christ as Saviour, of course you "belong", you belong to Christ, you are part of Him, a member of His body.^(a) Could there be a closer relationship than this?

He loved His own. A small boy standing beside the cot of his baby sister was asked, "Is this your baby?" to which he firmly replied, "she is my very own baby". And you are Christ's "very own". He purchased and redeemed you at great cost and you became "His own" whom He loves to the end.^(b)

Thou art mine.^(c) In these words God assures you that you belong to Him and He to you. Nothing can alter this blessed relationship; nothing and no-one can separate us from the love of Christ.

You belong also to the whole family of God^(d) and the word here means "one's own family" which is made up of all who are in Christ. Truly "He setteth the solitary in families"^(e) so that the Christian is not only brought into relationship with Christ but with the rest of His family world-wide, a very blessed fellowship.

(a) Eph. 5.30. (b) John 13.1. (c) Is. 43.1. (d) Eph. 3.14. (e) Ps. 68.6.

NOT FORGOTTEN

"Thou shalt not be forgotten of Me." Isaiah 44.21.

God hath forgotten. Have you ever thought or said these words, "My Lord hath forgotten me?"^(a) God may appear to have forgotten you, when some urgent prayer remains unanswered or when Christ delays His coming to your help as He did to the disciples toiling in rowing all night against the storm. During their beloved brother's critical illness, Martha and Mary sent for the Lord but He did not come and their brother died. Did the sisters think that their Lord had forgotten them? If so, this would have greatly added to their grief. It is hard to be overlooked or forgotten by a close friend whom you have trusted, and this hurt adds to your sorrow. Sometimes it seems to us that our dear Lord has forgotten us. When the thorn about which Paul had prayed three times and he asked that it might be removed, was not taken away, Paul did not think he had been forgotten by the Lord. He accepted His Word, "My grace is sufficient for thee".^(b)

God's comforting assurance. Immediately following the statement, "my Lord hath forgotten me" came the assurance from God, that though a woman may forget her infant child, "yet will I not forget thee".^(c) He lovingly assures us again and again in His Word, and says, "Thou shalt not be forgotten of Me".^(d)

Then trust Him, believe that He will never forget you, and that His apparent forgetfulness of you and the reason for His delay is that He might do a greater thing for you than that for which you asked. Christ can never forget you for you are "His own".^(e)

(a) Is. 49.14. (b) 2 Cor. 12.9. (c) Is. 49.15. (d) Is. 44.21. (e) John 13.1.

MY YOKE

"Take my yoke upon you." Matthew 11.29.

Yoke. Figuratively it is used of the yoke of service, as bullocks were yoked together in pairs for ploughing. Servants are said to be "under the yoke" in the service of their masters.^(a) In verse 28 Christ gives rest not only from the fear and the power of sin and its consequences but a rest in Himself, not rest from the service of God but rest in it so that we are not being fussed and fretted in our service as Martha so often was^(b) but we go on calmly, serenely and restfully because Christ is our rest.

"TAKE my yoke upon you." To take Christ's yoke upon us is to put ourselves under Him as servants obeying His commands, yielding ourselves to Him and submitting to Him in all things. We are to **take** His yoke voluntarily.

It is **HIS** yoke, the one He has appointed for us, a yoke in which He Himself has drawn before us. In the Word of God, Christ is frequently called, "My Servant" (God's Servant), and so He sets us the example of service for God. Let us see to it that we serve Him in the work to which He has appointed us, not choosing our own service but putting on **His** yoke. His yoke does not hurt or chafe us if we accept it as from Him and recognise it as **His** yoke.

Our yoke-fellows. Paul writes to his true "yoke-fellow"^(c) Who this person was is uncertain. Some think it may have been Epaphroditus, a prominent worker at Philippi. May we be true yoke-fellows with those with whom we work in the service of Christ, pulling together in love and harmony.

(a) 1 Tim. 6.1. (b) Luke 10.41. (c) Phil. 4.3.

THE EASY YOKE, THE LIGHT BURDEN

"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11.30.

My yoke is EASY, there is nothing in it to gall or to chafe if the neck is adjusted to it for it fits perfectly, and is lined with love. Therefore you need not be afraid of it. At first it may be difficult for us to adjust ourselves to it as the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke^(a) but the longer we wear it, the easier it becomes. His yoke may also mean His commands and teaching for in the previous verse the Lord says, "Learn of Me".^(b) To the one who loves Him, "His commandments are not grievous" (weighty, heavy),^(c) "for even a wish is enough to one who loves".

MY burden—just as the yoke is **His** yoke, so the burden is **His** burden, that which He has given you. Whatever the burden may be, whether it be a physical limitation in your own life or the life of a loved one, a burden in connection with your family, your business, or others for whom you may be responsible, recognise it as **His** burden, that which He has placed upon you.

My burden is LIGHT. Read 2 Corinthians 11.23-28, the account of the burdens Paul carried, of his sorrows and sufferings and the afflictions through which he was even then passing, yet he was able to say triumphantly, our **light** affliction. You will find this a very humbling experience for what are our trials and burdens in comparison with his? Then cast your burden upon the Lord and He will both sustain you^(d) and carry your burden. "Sustain" here means "to measure". God measures out the grace needed to bear the imposed burden and you will indeed find that His burden is light.

(a) Jer. 31.18. (b) Matt. 11.29. (c) 1 John 5.3. (d) Ps. 55.22.

CIRCUMSTANCES AGAINST ME

"All these things are against me." Genesis 42.36.

Jacob was in sore distress. He believed that his beloved son Joseph had been killed many years before, he thought he had lost Simeon and now his youngest son Benjamin was about to be taken from him and he said, "All these things are against me".

Trouble has one of two effects upon us according to our attitude towards it, it either hardens us or softens us. We can accept it as from the hand of God and extract blessing from it or we can resent it, become hopeless and even bitter against God, offended with Him. Jacob's reaction was, everything is against me.

Sometimes our attitude is that of Jacob's. We say, my circumstances are against me, my environment makes it too difficult for me to live the Christian life, my sorrows overwhelm me, the people with whom I live and work are incompatible and quarrelsome. The Psalmist said, "my soul hath long dealt with him that hateth peace"^(a) and only the Lord and we know how difficult this can be. Later, however, the words were, "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes".^(b) Jacob's trouble was that his mind was focused upon his sorrows, real and imaginary, and he forgot that God was working out His purposes.

The purpose of trial. God means it for our good. "Tribulation worketh patience"^(c) and the word tribulation here means "pressure". Corn must be bruised in order to make bread, grapes must be crushed in order to produce wine. Paul was at times "pressed out of measure".^(d) God's purpose for us is to turn into blessing that which appears to be against us.^(e)

(a) Ps. 120.6. (b) Ps. 123.1. (c) Rom. 5.3. (d) 2 Cor. 1.8. (e) Gen. 50.20.

PAUL'S ATTITUDE TO TROUBLE

"All things work together for good to them that love God." Romans 8.31.

What triumph there is in these words of the Apostle Paul and what a contrast his attitude was to that of Jacob!

ALL things—not some things, not only the bright and happy things but the dark and sorrowful circumstances also, and for the all things we **always** have **all** grace and **all** sufficiency.^(a) To ensure a good harvest we must have all seasons, summer and winter, cloud and sunshine.

Work TOGETHER for good. We look at the wrong side of a piece of tapestry and there seems to be no pattern, no beauty and no harmony of colour but instead a kind of patchwork and ends of thread. Then a bystander says, "you are looking at the wrong side". We turn it over and we then see the beautiful pattern and the exquisite blending of colour. God has a pattern for our lives, He is working to a design. The apparently meaningless circumstances as we see them, form the wrong side of the pattern, the part that we can see.

For good. Let us believe that God's ultimate purpose is our good. We may not be permitted to see the right side of the pattern till we reach the Gloryland, then we shall understand^(b) and we shall know as we are known.^(c) Meanwhile let us trust God and believe that His dealings with us are in love.

We KNOW. It requires faith to believe that all things in our lives are working together for good to them that love God. May we be able to say with full assurance, "we know".

(a) 2 Cor. 9.8. (b) John 13.7. (c) 1 Cor. 13.12.

IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL

"Who is among you . . . that walketh in darkness . . . let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God." Isaiah 50.10.

Notice the description of the man who is walking in darkness and hath no light.

He fears the Lord with a filial fear that is afraid of grieving Him. This shows that he is a true child of God.

He obeys the voice of God's Servant, he is willing to be ruled by Christ, he is walking in the path of obedience. Yet he walks (for a time) in darkness, joy in God is interrupted, God's face is obscured, he has lost the consciousness of God's presence. These times come to us all. We feel that God has withdrawn from us. We no longer feel Him dear and close, we have lost the sense of His presence. What is the purpose of all this? God wants to teach us to trust Him in the dark, to walk by faith and not by sight (or feelings).^(a) He tells us how this lesson may be learned.

Let him trust. Do not worry and fret about your feelings but trust in the name of the Lord and all that His name stands for. It is a strong tower into which you may run.^(b) When God appears to hide His face from you, still believe that He is near. Our feelings cannot alter the fact of God's presence. He is with us always.

Let him stay upon his God, not on his blessing or feelings. The word "stay" means "to be supported, to lean upon, to rely upon". The darkness may be in the circumstance and obscure God from our vision as a cloud the sun, but "In Him is no darkness at all".^(c) He knows what is in the darkness and light dwelleth with Him".^(d) Believe then that the cloud will disappear, you will feel His Presence.

(a) 2 Cor. 5.7. (b) Prov. 18.10. (c) 1 John 1.5. (d) Dan. 2.22.

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