

The Christian Life.

WAITING AND SINGING.

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"Because of His strength will I wait upon Thee; for God is my defence." "Unto Thee, O my Strength, will I sing; for God is my defence."—Psalm 59: 9-17.

I have taken these two verses because in the Psalm they make a kind of refrain at the end of each part of it. They are very much alike, and they are very significantly different. For the first of them there is another reading, which is adopted in the Revised Version, and brings it into exact parallelism with the second. The Authorized Version's rendering, "Because of His strength will I wait upon Thee," is barely intelligible. Whose strength? we ask, and there is no obvious answer forthcoming. But "because of" is a supplement, and what the Hebrew words, as they stand, say is, "His strength, will I wait upon Thee." Well, that is nonsense, but slight alteration in one letter causes the difference, in the Hebrew, between "His" and "my" and if we adopt the alteration here, and look upon "my Strength" as a name for God, addressed to Him, the unmeaning words blaze up into beauty and throb with devout emotion. "My Strength! I will wait upon Thee," so says the Psalmist in the midst of his troubles; and because he does so, he says at the end of the psalm, repeating his earlier vow, but with an alteration that means a great deal, "My Strength! I will sing unto Thee." If you have waited, while in the middle of trouble, you will be sure to sing after it, and perhaps even during it. We must further point out the parallelism in the ending of both verses. The former has the vow of waiting followed by "God is my high tower," and that, again, by "the God of my mercy," while the latter reiterates, "God is my high tower," and adds "The God of my mercy."

So, then, if you have at all followed me, you will see that there are three things here: the bright thoughts of God that burn in the darkness; what such thoughts hearten a man to do, in the middle of his trouble; and what, if he does that, his trouble ends in.

I. THE THOUGHTS OF GOD THAT LIGHT UP THE DARKNESS.

"My strength," "my tower," "the God of my mercy"—these are the thoughts which burn for this devout soul in the darkness of trouble. Now, I am not going to dwell upon each of these designations individually, but I gather two or three thoughts from them all.

Notice, first, how that "my" is the very strength and nerve of the Psalmist's confidence. It is not so much what he thinks God to be—though that is all important—as that he thinks that, what ever God is, He is it to him. "My defence, my strength; the God of my mercy"—who gives it to me, that is, the mercy that I need.

And notice the happy reiteration indicative of assured possession, and blissful counting of one's wealth. With each repetition of the "my" there is a fresh outgoing of the heart in confidence, in conscious weakness, and in believing appropriation of God's strength, a tightening of the fingers on his treasure.

We whisper to ourselves, over and over again, the names that we love. Superstition repeats the names of its gods in vain invocations "from morning until noon," like Baal's prophets on

Carmel, or Catholic devotees with their "Hail, Marys." Mahomedans write the name of Allah in multitudinous interlacings everywhere on walls and cornices and lattices, as the only decoration that their rigid law permits. We cannot too often repeat to ourselves that great and sweet Name, in the various aspects which our present circumstances need, if only we repeat it with an outgoing of the heart to Him, as being that which we require.

But let us put "my" before the Name. God is little to us unless we can take the whole of God for our very own. We do not rob each other by doing that. He is enough for each, enough for all. The fragrance of the flower enters one man's nostrils, but that does not hinder any other man from perceiving its sweetness. The whole of God is the property of each individual soul. We might almost say that we are Christians in the measure in which we lay our hands on the broad general promises of Scripture, and the facts of Revelation, and wherever God has put a "whosoever," scratch it out and put in our own names, and wherever He has said "your," appropriate it, and say "mine." "My mercy, my strength, my tower—everybody else's, if they will; but I resolve that, at all events, He shall be mine!"

Note, too, how these thoughts of God which burn in the darkness are those which are most needed by the circumstances of the moment. According to the superscription of this Psalm, it was written at one of the times when David's fortunes were at their lowest ebb, "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." Whether that be so or no does not matter much to us. At all events, the psalm is the cry of a man who is in great distress. Darkness is round him, and strong enemies are besetting him—and what does he want most at such a crisis? Defenceless, exposed in the open, as it were, to the assaults of all foes, what he needs most is some stronghold into which he can flee, and shut the gates behind him, and feel that it is impregnable, and he is safe. Because there is so much to guard against that he cannot guard against, and so much to think about that he cannot think about to purpose, and so much to bear that he has no nerve to endure, he flings himself out of himself on to God as his strength, and by a dead lift of faith attains to believe that there will come to him an actual communication from God's own heart and spirit of real power, to be and to do, and to endure whatsoever the circumstances require. He believes that, although he stands there apparently defenceless, God is round about him, a strong bulwark, a wall of fire, and that not only will he get strength in trouble or in circumstances that make demands, stringent and draining, upon his capacity, but that from all the real evil that may be in the apparent evils he will be kept as in a strong fortress. It is hard, when we feel only our weakness, to believe that God's strength is trickling into us, and it is hard, when we know that external sorrows or troubles or perplexities, or all the ills that flesh is heir to, are really working their will upon us to believe that at the same moment we are girt about as by impregnable walls of a fortress, and that no harm can come to us at all. We have to lay hold of that aspect of the Divine help which our circumstances

most require, and which it is most difficult for us to believe in, at the moment of trial, and to lay that upon our hearts as the one sure breastplate which will defend us, and will blunt all the fiery darts. If we are in sorrow, let us say, "I will go unto God, my exceeding joy." If we are exposed to the hurrying of a whole flight of arrows of disaster, let us say, "I dwell in the pavilion where no calamity comes." If we are conscious of weakness, let us cast ourselves into those strong arms, and be sure that from their clasp there will come tingling into our feebleness the electric thrill of His almightiness, and that we, too, shall be able to "do all things through Christ which strengthen us." "My strength," because I am weak; "my fortress," because I am assailed; "the God of my mercy," because I need His mercy.

2. WHAT SUCH VIEWS OF GOD HEARTEN A MAN TO DO.

"My strength, I will wait upon Thee," says the first of our text, "I will wait"—the word is a remarkable one; it is that which is often employed to describe the action of shepherd's guarding their sheep, or soldiers guarding a city, or men keeping guard over anything that is precious to them. It implies fixed attention of one who guards; but here it designates the attention and fixed observance of one who is guarded. "I will look unto Him" is, perhaps, nearer the meaning of the words than the "wait" of our version. If these three blessed thoughts, "my strength, my tower, the God of my mercy," are uppermost in our hearts, there will be the fixed attitude and eye of expectancy. Did you ever see a dog sitting and looking up into its master's face, waiting for a morsel to be cast, that it might snap at it and swallow it? That is a very homely illustration of the way in which Christian men should sit and look at God. Do you remember the story in the Acts of the Apostles of a lame man that was sitting at the gate of the Temple, and saw Peter and John going in and fixed his eyes upon them? What dumb desire, what brimming-over expectation, and the dawning of a thrilling hope there were in his eloquent, silent look! That is how we should look at God. If He is "my strength," and "my tower," and if "my mercy" comes from Him, then no attitude befits me except that of such gazing expectancy and steadfast direction of mind and heart to Him. "My strength, I will watch Thee."

And there should be, too, not only expectancy in the look, but patience, and not only expectancy and patience, but submission. You remember that sweet psalm: "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look unto the Lord our God." Stand before Him, waiting to know what is to be done by you with the strength that He gives, and how the mercy that He inbreathes is to be expressed and manifested in your life.

This waiting should be the fixed attitude and posture of our spirits. The Psalmist had to make a definite resolution to look away to God, for there was a great deal that tempted him to look elsewhere. He says, "I will wait," and the original conveys very strongly the idea of his having to set his teeth, as it were, in the effort to keep himself quiet and waiting before God. It is hard to look off at Him when all around us lie knots to be solved, perplexities to be unravelled, obscurities to be cleared,

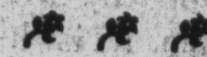
difficulties to be overcome; and when we feel our own weaknesses, it is hard for thee, Peter, not to listen to the howling wind, not to look at the driving clouds, not to cast thine eye downwards on the heaving billows and thine own sinking feet, but to look only to the Master. If we look to Him we are kept up, and we are kept right; but it takes all our will-power, and it needs a very resolute effort if we are not to be forced out of the attitude of faith and to let our eyes turn to alarmed gazing at the stormy seas. Without such effort we shall be weakened by looking at the foes and not at the fortress, at the difficulties and inward weakness and not at our strength, but we shall find the means of making this effort after steadfastness of expectant gaze in faithful remembrance of the great Name of the Lord, our strength and fortress.

Lastly,

WHAT COMES OF THIS WAITING.

He that began with saying, "O my strength, I will wait upon Thee," ends with saying, "O my strength, I will sing praises unto Thee." That is to say away in the future there lies the certainty that all will end in thankfulness and rapture of praise-giving, and in the present whilst the attitude of watchfulness has to be kept up, and evils and dangers are still round us, there may glow in our hearts a quiet assurance as to how they are all going to end, and how for the waiting in the present there will be substituted glad praise in the future. Into the midst of winter we can bring summer. Strange would it not be if at our will we could surround ourselves in chill October nights with the blossoms of May and the roses of June! But we can do a like miracle in this higher region, and carry right into the depth of "the winter of our discontent" and sorrow "the glorious summer" of that Sun. We can, we can hope, we can say, "Today I will watch, tomorrow I shall praise." And because tomorrow we shall praise, there will be some praise mingling with the watchfulness of today.

Let us do the one now, and at last we shall do the other. Do the one, and even in the doing of it the other will begin. The waiting and the praising are twins, the one a trifle older than the other. "Unto Thee, my Strength, will I look," and even now the waiting soul may have a song, feeble perhaps and broken, like the twitter of birds when the east wind blows and the clouds are low in the early spring, but which will mellow and swell into fuller rapture when the dark, ungenial days are overpast. "O my Strength, I will sing praise unto Thee," and that for ever and ever.



It may be only a trifling cold, but neglect it, and it will fasten its fangs in your lungs, and you will soon be carried to an untimely grave. In this country we have sudden changes, and must expect to have coughs and colds. We cannot avoid them, but we can effect a cure by using Bickle's Anti-Consumptive Syrup, the medicine that has never been known to fail in curing coughs, colds, bronchitis and all affections of the throat, lungs and chest.

We must put the glory of love, of best effort, of sacrifice, of prayer, of upward looking and heavenward reaching, into the dull routine of our life's every-day, and then the most burdensome and uneventful life will be made splendid with the glory of God.—J. R. Miller.