

"COME, MY PEOPLE."

"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." – Isa. 26:20.

THERE is an affectionate tenderness about these words of our Heavenly Father which helps us to realize his great love for his people, and his special care over them. Through his prophet, taking the standpoint of the end of this age, he is forewarning us of a great time of trouble which is just imminent (verses 5,6,21) – "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation," when the whole present order of things, civil, social and religious, shall be swept with the besom of destruction. Yet in the midst of it all he would have his people in rest and peace in him, as saith the prophet, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." – Verses 3,4.

And again the Lord had another of his prophets put into our mouths those beautiful words of trust and confidence – "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth [the present social order] be removed, and though the mountains [governments] be carried into the midst of the sea [overthrown by the turbulent sea of world-wide anarchy]; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swellings thereof.... The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Psa. 46.) Surely, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." – Psa. 103:13.

But while appreciating very gratefully this special love and care for us as his people, in the comfort, encouragement and protection afforded us by our Heavenly Father in the midst of the world's great tribulation, we would come far short of having his spirit if we should

regard the matter with self-complacency, forgetful of his great love for the whole world also, which, veiled behind the clouds of his righteous indignation against their sins, in wisdom strikes the heavy blow which will shatter all their idols and humble their pride in the dust, that so the sore wounds of his wrath may prepare for their everlasting healing. If God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish [eternally], but have everlasting life," he loves them still, and it is his love that wields the rod for their correction. So also would he have his people regard his judgments, and while rejoicing in the sunshine of his favor, because by faith and obedience they have come into an attitude which can receive it, he would have them share his spirit towards the world; and while the blows of his righteous indignation fall heavily upon them, he would have us point them to the cause of their calamities and to the only remedy – "In returning [to God] and rest [in him alone] shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." "Be still," saith the Lord, "and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." – Isa. 30:15; Psa. 46:10.

But who are those whom the Lord is pleased to designate by the endearing name, "My people?" Does this class include every one upon whom his name is named? No, for that would include a great number of false professors. As the Psalmist expresses it, it includes all those who have made a covenant with God by sacrifice (Psa. 50:5) – all the consecrated and faithful children of God, however young or weak they may be, whose hearts are fixed firmly and resolutely to be true loyal and obedient children by his assisting grace.

To be numbered among the people of God is a very great privilege; but it means much more than many seem to understand – much more both on their part, and on **[R1788 : page 72]** God's part. On their part, it signifies, not merely a name to live, in some great organization which bears the Christian **[R1788 : page 73]** name, but that they have become sons and heirs of God through Christ, that they have fully consecrated themselves to God to follow in the footsteps of his dear Son, that they

have renounced the vain pomp and glory of the world and have solemnly covenanted to live apart from its spirit, ambitions, hopes and aims; and not only so, but that, in pursuance of that covenant, they are striving daily to be faithful, and meekly to take up their cross and follow their leader and head, Christ Jesus.

On God's part it signifies the fulfilment of all his gracious promises to such through Christ, both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. It signifies that in the present life we have his fatherly love, care, discipline, counsel, teaching, protection and encouragement to the end, and that afterwards we shall be received into his glorious presence and everlasting rest and joy and peace. Oh, how blessed to be the people of God! even in the present life the reward of his favor is beyond computation. Through all the age God has permitted his people to be scattered as sheep in the midst of wolves, and as wheat in the midst of tares; but now the harvest of the age is come, and their gathering together unto him is due. They have been growing in the midst of that great organization, the nominal Christian church, which God calls Babylon (confusion), but which men call Christendom (Christ's Kingdom). Upon this great system which has appropriated the name of Christ while misrepresenting his teaching and his spirit (although in possession of his Word of truth and of many advantages of precept and example from his saints so long permitted to dwell in her midst), God is about to pour his indignation, which will involve the whole world with it; but before doing so, he forewarns his people to come out of her (Babylon), that they be not partakers of her sins, and that they receive not of her plagues. (Rev. 18:4.) But while calling them thus to come out of Babylon, he calls them also to come into another place, or condition rather – "Enter thou *into thy chambers* and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself...until the indignation be overpast."

The place of hiding is the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty. (Psa. 91:1-9.) This secret place of the Most High, Beloved, is the place of intimate communion and fellowship with

God, through the blessed privilege of prayer and through faith in his precious Word and his promised providential care.

"When all around our souls give way,
He then is all our hope and stay."

Oh, how precious is this hiding place! What rest and refreshment we find in the midst of the commotion that is even now bestirring the whole world, but especially the nations of Christendom – rest from the pride and folly of man in their abortive efforts to readjust the present unsatisfactory social order; and rest from the strife of tongues in an equally vain attempt to evolve the clear principles of truth and righteousness from the present confusion of human traditions. (Psa. 31:20.) Here we find rest, peace, light and joy, which the world can neither give nor take away.

Few indeed are those who can understand our motives in thus withdrawing from the world and from the various organizations of the nominal Christian church to walk alone with God; and many are the reproaches which such must endure for his name's sake. But fear not; "shut thy doors [of faith] about thee," and heed not the reproaches; turn a deaf ear to them, and "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Isa. 8:13); and, "Above all, take [for the conflict before you] the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

It is well, especially in this time of greatest need, that the Lord's people should consider the value of this portion of the Christian's armor, and that the doors of their faith should thoroughly shut them in to the secret place of the Most High. When the reproaches fall thick and fast, when they are told that they have left the faith and gone after fables, that they have incurred the Lord's displeasure, and that their sufferings for Christ's sake are the penalties they deserve, when their names are cast out as evil and they are separated from the company of those whom they have long regarded as the Lord's people, because they

bear his name, ah, then is the time for firmly grasping the shield of faith and for adopting the triumphant language of the Psalmist:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?...Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident....In time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me upon a rock....When my father and my mother [my most trusted human friends] forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." – Psa. 27:1,3,5,10; 23:1,4; also 56:4.

It is to inspire such a faith as this that the Lord has offered us, in addition to all his precious promises, so many encouragements to simple, childlike trust in him, and that he has bidden us turn a deaf ear to the reproaches of men, saying – "Hearken unto me, *ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law*; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings....I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord, thy Maker, that has stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy?...I have put *my words* in thy mouth, and I have *covered thee in the shadow of mine hand*, that I may plant the heavens [establish the new heavens], and lay the foundations of the earth [the new earth], and **[R1788 : page 74]** say unto Zion [the people tried and proved by these afflictions to be the worthy heirs of the new Kingdom – the new heavens and earth], Thou art *my people*." – Isa. 51:7,12,13,16.

What condescension on the part of the Almighty to thus consider our weakness when the darts of the enemy wound our hearts, and to

pour in the balm of his consolation. He would not have one of his children whom Christ has made free to come again under the bondage of "the fear of man which bringeth a snare." (Prov. 29:25.) He would have every man in Christ realize his liberty from sin and superstition and his solemn accountability to God for all his thoughts and words and doings. – "Sanctify *the Lord of hosts himself*, and let *him* be your fear, and let *him* be your dread."

Just here the words of the Apostle Paul (1 Thes. 5:21; Gal. 6:4) are worthy of special notice – "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," and "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another." Thus every individual in Christ is reminded of his own personal responsibility in matters of faith and conduct. Not until he has proved what is truth and righteousness, accepting the Word of God as the only standard of authority, is it proper to take a resolute stand; but, having proved "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God," nothing should be able to unsettle his faith or turn him from the line of duty, and no fear of man should bring him again into the snare of bondage to superstition or human traditions or opinions of others. If each individual prove his own work – his faith in the doctrines and his conduct in life – by the square and compass of God's Word, "then shall he have rejoicing in himself and not in another" – *i.e.*, his faith, no matter through what privileged human agent or agency it may have been received, will be so established by the Word of the Lord that it will be *his own*, and in no sense dependent upon another.

It was the neglect of this principle, of the right and duty of the individual judgment in proving all things by the inspired Word, that brought upon the Church the snare of the great apostacy, which set up infamous popes to dictate in matters of faith and conduct and subvert the consciences of men. Let us remember the command, "Sanctify *the Lord of hosts himself*, and let *him* be your fear, and let *him* be your dread." Let us fear and dread to displease him; let us see to it that we know and love righteousness and that we have the law of God, not in

our heads only, but also in our hearts, for so shall we ever find acceptance with him; and to such, who in faith continually rely upon the Lord, who go forth, strong in the strength which he supplies through faith, to do valiant service for truth and righteousness, comes also the blessed assurance, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

While the storm of trouble that is to engulf the whole world will affect all men, both individually and collectively, the Lord's people, who seek only to draw yet closer to him, entering more fully into the secret place of communion and fellowship and rest in him, and shutting the doors of faith about them, will there be safely hidden from the alarm and fear and trembling that will take hold upon all other classes; and while they patiently endure its effects upon their temporal interests, they will rejoice not only in the knowledge of God's overruling providence, in the whirlwind and in the storm as well as in the calms of life, but also in his blessed assurance that his wrath will be thus revealed only "*for a little moment,*" and then will his righteous Kingdom be manifested in power and great glory, and they shall shine forth as the sun.

"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." Oh blessed invitation! Lord, we will trust in the covert of thy wings.
