

UPHELD IN THE "EVIL DAY"

"He shall give His angels [messengers] charge concerning thee, to guard thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." – Psalm 91:11,12.

THE introduction of this Psalm seems clearly to indicate that it applies exclusively to the consecrated people of God during the Gospel Age, the spirit-begotten ones – those who abide under the shadow of the Almighty, in the secret place of Jehovah. This same thought is represented symbolically in the typical Tabernacle. The secret place where the saints abide is the Holy. None were allowed to enter the typical Holy and Most Holy except the high priest and the under priests. All of the people of Israel, so far as they were living in close harmony with this arrangement, were blessed. But the secret place, the Holy, is the one referred to in this Psalm.

Coming down to Jesus' day, we see that He was the first to enter the antitypical Holy and the Most Holy. He entered the first of the Holies when He offered up Himself at Jordan. When He made His consecration at baptism, instantly He was in the Holy, instead of being outside in the Court. If He would abide in the Holy and continue under the Shadow of the Almighty, all of God's providences would be favorable to Him and all things would work together for His good. So when Jesus had finished His course victoriously, He passed beyond the Second Veil, and entered into Heaven itself – the Most Holy. (Hebrews 6:19,20; 9:24.) While in the flesh He was kept in all His ways; He was guarded of God, and not suffered to be tempted above that which He was able to bear. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Father revealed Himself in some manner not specifically stated, except that we are told that angels came and ministered unto the Master. God "maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire." – Psalm 104:4.

God can use anything or anybody as His agency, His messenger. But there were very few of the human family in Jesus' day capable of being used as God's comforting angels to our Lord. Mary of Bethany was one of these, who, just prior to the Master's crucifixion, anointed His feet with a fragrant, costly perfume, and wiped them with her hair. She was one who gave Him consolation when His mind was agitated with the thought that five days thence He would be crucified. He realized that none of the people understood, that none of them were able to enter into His feelings. But Mary's service was very precious to the Lord – very encouraging to Him.

SUBTLE TESTINGS PECULIAR TO OUR DAY

So the Lord has also used spirits – angels – and at times various other agencies, human beings and even the powers of nature, as His ministers. If the Father were wishing to send some message to us, His children, He could use the electric power that we are learning to use in wireless telegraphy and telephony. But He has not chosen to use this power as His messenger to speak to us directly. Our text gives us the thought, however, that the Lord's special supervision is over all His saints, the class which He has been selecting since Pentecost, with a view to their preparation for the Heavenly Kingdom through growth in the graces of the Spirit. But we see that this Psalm as a whole has a special application to *our* day, when "a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand," and when the pestilence shall be abroad. When pestilence is in the air, it inoculates a person without his being conscious of the fact, and it is thus that we, "the feet" members of the Body of Christ, are exposed to special trials and dangers – spiritual pestilence.

This is the time to which all the prophets pointed as a time of special persecution. In the past there have been times of persecution to the professed people of God; but they were times when the right was more manifest, when a sharp line was drawn between the right

and the wrong. When the question was raised, "Will you serve the Lord, or will you serve Baal?" it was not difficult to see the right and decide, "I will be on the Lord's side." In the days of the early Church, the question was, "Will you curry favor with the Roman power, or will you suffer persecution by following Christ?" It was Christ or the Emperor. Still later down, when the question was as to one's choice between one denomination or another, the issue was clearly drawn: "Am I on God's side, or am I on the side of the Adversary?" But during the past forty years the differences between the denominations have been practically ignored.

Sometimes those who were being persecuted were somewhat to blame for their persecution; for they held errors that were more or less atrocious. But all the way down, the trials and temptations were, it would appear, less subtle than they are at the present time. Today these [R5816 : page 374] great denominations that formerly fought one another are trying to be one body. It would seem on the surface as though the Millennium had come, and that the lion and the lamb were lying down together. In general there seems to be among Christian people a feeling of amity and a desire to do good rather than evil. The cases in which violent persecution is indulged are far between, and not appreciated by the masses.

For the past forty years, then, there has been a condition that is constituting a crucial test to all Christian people. The subtle doctrines of Spiritism, of Christian Science, of Theosophy, and of New Thought of different kinds, are prevalent. Likewise the theory of Evolution is widely proclaimed. Learned men formulated the theory of Evolution, and then the Higher Critics began to pull the Bible to pieces, because of "the oppositions of science, *falsely* so-called." (1 Timothy 6:20.) These false theories have constituted a miasma that has spread in every direction. There are four hundred millions of Christians, according to some; seven or eight hundred millions, according to other authorities. These include all the infants, the feeble-minded and the insane. Whether they are one

minute old or fifty years old, they are reckoned members of the Church, if they have had certain drops of water sprinkled on their heads and certain words said over them.

But amongst the most intelligent of those who name the name of Jesus there has been a great falling away from the Word of God. This testing has been the most insidious, the more injurious, because it has come from the theological seminaries. Thousands have fallen. They are not *about to fall*, they *have fallen*. They have lost all anchorage to the Word of the Lord. Out of the two hundred thousand professed ministers of Christ, probably not more than ten per cent. believe in the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Ten per cent. would be twenty thousand, leaving one hundred and eighty thousand who have fallen from faith. If they have fallen from faith in the inspiration of the Bible, we may be sure that they have in a measure fallen from relationship to God. Some probably never were in relationship with the Lord in any sense.

UNFOUNDED HOPES OF THE MANY TODAY

What revelation has God made except that given in the Bible? "Having no hope and without God in the world," represents the condition of the many. They have hopes of their own, but not a Bible hope. The Theosophists have **[R5816 : page 375]** a hope, the Spiritualists have a hope, the Christian Scientists have a hope, and so have the Evolutionists; but the hope of all these is without foundation and will surely fail them in this testing time.

The hope of the Evolutionist is not that he can himself survive everlastingly; but that, as he learns more day by day, he may be able to beget better children, who will be more noble of character and more wise of head than he has been. In turn, these children may be able to live longer and have children yet more wise and strong. These Evolutionists believe the time will come in the distant future when their children will be so wise as to be able to take advantage

of all the circumstances of life, and may continue to live forever. From our viewpoint these people are without God, without hope.

It is true that these ministers speak of Jesus, but the message that they give is not the Bible Message. They say, indeed, that there was a great deal of good in the life of Jesus worthy to be copied, that He was a good Example, etc. We think that they speak after this manner simply for its moral effect upon the people. If these men lived such a life as Jesus lived, they would reprove the people and tell them that they are living very foolishly, that they are living for self and neglecting the Word of God. These same ministers who hold Jesus up as an Example know very well that it is because of the way that He *lived* that He died at thirty-three years of age – *died* instead of *living everlastingly*. They admit that He was a very fine character, but the majority of them have no place in their scheme for His Ransom-sacrifice. And in urging their people in respect to following the example of Jesus, this class apparently do not urge them to lay down their lives for the Truth and in the service of God.

They tell their people not to go to war, unless their country calls them, and not until the ministers preach it; but that if it ever becomes popular to go to war, then go to war and make all the cannon possible. Meantime the preachers will train the little boys, and form of them Boys' Brigades and Boy Scouts. When war comes, then let the boys be noble Boy Scouts, shoulder their rifles and do their best to kill. Let them help uphold the war, and fight on their own side. Let their people care for and help to heal the wounded – all who have not been killed outright. Let them bind up their wounds, and get them ready as quickly as possible to go out to the trenches and fight again, and perhaps be killed.

SKEPTICISM NOW RIFE EVERYWHERE

All this is a confusion of religious instruction. It comes because these people are fallen from faith in the Bible. Some of

them, seeking to hedge when inquired of on the subject of their faith, will say, "Well, we believe all the words of Jesus." And some publishers, following along the line of this growing sentiment, have published New Testaments with the words of Jesus printed in red text, so that those who wish to read His words alone have there before them these words lettered in red. But if asked whether they believe in the words of Jesus in regard to Jonah and the great fish, and in His words about the Flood in Noah's day, they will retrench and answer, "No; we believe as much as our minds tell us is reasonable, and we think the rest is all nonsense." The truth is that they have no real faith in Jesus, nor in what He declared His life in the flesh was for. They do not *believe* that He was a sacrifice for sin, and say so freely. They have fallen from the position of faith.

Now if the *teachers* of the people have fallen, what shall we say for the people themselves, the four hundred millions or the eight hundred millions? Some have been in one denomination and some in another, but in general the whole procedure has been to keep them in ignorance. That may not seem to be strictly true when we think of how many schools and colleges there are. But the fact is that only a small portion of the people ever get as far as a collegiate course, or even a high school course. Before that time they are supposed to be on the side of the deceived ones. Many of our great universities today are hotbeds of infidelity. Bible Truth is being kept from the people. With the colleges endowed with millions of money and with learned professors, and the whole Christian world, so called, under the tutelage of the two hundred thousand ministers of the nominal church, the wonder is that the people are not all infidels.

With this view, then, of the past forty years, we see a fulfilment of this Psalm. We see that thousands and tens of thousands have fallen. We see *where* they have fallen. We see *why* they have fallen. We see that *the few* are standing – "the feet" of Christ. As we look out over the world and see these thousands, we perceive that *the*

few who have come into covenant relationship with the Lord are the only ones who are standing. But many even of these, because of having been overcharged with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, and false teachings, are in a trembling condition and are quite unable to stand firmly. These need our immediate help.

URGENT NEED OF THE WHOLE ARMOR

The Apostle Paul urges all the Lord's people to "*put on the whole armor of God.*" Some of them have not had on much of the armor of God, but that of the creeds of the Dark Ages. Some of them, under the false teachings of modern Higher Criticism, Evolution, etc., have only a wavering faith. They are weak, instead of being "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might," as they should be. Now is the time for all these to be strong, in order that they may "be able to stand in the evil day," now upon us. They need to have on "the breastplate of righteousness," to be "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace," to have "the shield of faith," and "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." – Ephesians 6:10-17.

We who have put on "the whole armor of God," who have become measurably skilful in the handling of the Sword of the Spirit – the truths now due from God's Word – need to use this now in the interest of all who may be succored. They need to be assisted to put on the whole armor quickly, that they may be protected from the darts of the Adversary now flying thick and fast, that they may be saved from the errors now abounding on every hand, that they may be uplifted from their temporary fall and made strong in the Lord.

MINISTERING ANGELS

This 91st Psalm, then, seems to be a picture of the present time; and we are to strive to be the *angels* mentioned in our text. These

angels, or ministers, are preeminently the children of God. They are to minister to the brethren. This is the high honor God has given to His people throughout the Gospel Age. In our Lord's case angels, spirit beings, ministered to Him; and in the cases of some of the Apostles the angels appeared and ministered to them at certain times. The Scriptures declare, indeed, that the angels are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." But we have very little reason to expect that God will use any of the spirit beings to do a service that may be done by His people.

According to this Psalm we see that now is the time when the "feet" members are in special danger of **[R5817 : page 376]** stumbling, and hence require special assistance. After the various snares of this day have been described with particularity, we read, in the words of our text, "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee,...lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Our Lord spoke of Himself at the First Advent as the Stone of Stumbling to the House of Israel, foretold by the Prophet Isaiah. (Matthew 21:42-45.) The Apostle Paul refers to this prophecy that Jesus would be a Stone of Stumbling to both the Houses of Israel. – Isaiah 8:14; Romans 9:32,33.

Our Lord was a Stone of Stumbling to the Natural House of Israel in their forty years of Harvest. Similarly, we see that He has been, as foretold, the Stone of Stumbling in this Harvest, during these past forty years. His presence and His work were neither understood nor appreciated in the Jewish Harvest; and so here, the fact of our Lord's *parousia*, presence, is disbelieved and His Ransom-sacrifice repudiated. The events of today are manifestations of His presence. These things and the vital truths of Scripture, now more clear and luminous than ever, are stumbling-stones to the world, but are blessings to the faithful, watching ones. The true people of God, mounting on this Stepping-Stone, are lifted up to a higher view-point and kept from stumbling. The doctrine of

the Ransom and the evidences of the Master's Second Presence at this time are unspeakable advantages to the saints of the Lord.

PRESENT FULFILMENT OF OUR TEXT

We see that the "stone" of our text is a symbolic stone. Satan tried to apply it literally in His temptation of Jesus, when he urged Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple. But Jesus said, "Get thee hence, Satan," and refused to make any such application of the Scripture. But we see the fulfilment of it in this our day. We believe that the Lord has raised up messengers, agencies, which have been very helpful to all of the "feet" class. These agencies have been various. The printed page with its Message of Present Truth has gone in many languages to all parts of the earth, to seek out and to sustain the members of "the feet" of Christ. Thousands are writing us continually that they have been recovered when they have been in great danger. Some of these had already gone into infidelity; many had lost all faith in the Bible as the Word of God. But they are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might today.

God has used these agencies, then; and these have been His ministering spirits, which have ministered to His people. We do not say that there have not been invisible agencies also, but we *know* the agencies that we have *seen*. So our text has a good message for us all. "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to guard thee in all thy ways." Whatever may be the difficulties of the Lord's children in the near future, there will be a special comfort in remembering that the Lord is able to make full provision for all His true-hearted ones, and that He will do so. He will continue to use these agencies, and there will be the strengthening of His people to the end of the way. If there are any who will not be thus led, it must be because there is something wrong in themselves. We should each see to it that we are of the "*thee*" class. "No evil shall come

nigh *thee*." (Psalm 91:10.) That will mean Divine protection to the very end of our course.

