

“My Soul, Hope thou in the LORD”

By

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Christ, our “Hope of Glory” in the Storm

Text:

¹ *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.*

² *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

³ *My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?*

⁴ *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.*

⁵ *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.*

⁶ *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember Thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.*

⁷ *Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me.*

⁸ *Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.*

⁹ *I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*

¹⁰ *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*

¹¹ *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God Ps 42: 1-11).*

A time of pain, distress and loss is the time our soul hungrily longs for God. And He does not disappoint.

The Psalmist in the 42nd chapter of his book compares his longing for God to how the deer “panteth after the water brooks”. In poetic language he observes:

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.”

With an intense thirst for God, he says, has He sought Him day and night with tears. And he is all the more desperate to see God because of the taunts of his enemies, saying ‘where is thy God’ and where is His salvation?

The taunts particularly break his heart because he is exiled from the house of God where he used to go with the multitude, “with the voice of joy and praise”. Though he is depressed, he encourages his soul: “hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance [presence]” (vv. 2-5).

In all his anguish, the Psalmist remembers God and His hand of salvation to turn his world around – the same hand he acknowledges in his distress, at least to the extent that He allowed it (v. 6). And it’s a flood of distress, even waves of problems, as if God has emptied His storehouse of water below and water above over him. He sighs: “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me” (v. 7).

This is a reference to the period before the six-day rehabilitation and restoration of the earth when “darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” At that time, God had not made the firmament (expanse) “in the midst of the waters” to “divide the waters [or deep below i.e. rivers and oceans] from the waters [or deep above being the clouds in the sky]” (Gen. 1:2, 6-7; Ps. 148:4).

The Psalmist uses this analogy to heighten his feeling of despondency. But as God commanded light to shine upon the face of the deep (Gen. 1:3), so will the Spirit of God brooding over his troubles dispel his darkness of distress. (See 2 Cor. 4:6).

And so the Psalmist breaks into a song of hope:

“Yet the LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

“I will say unto God my rock, Why hast Thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

“As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (vv. 8-11).

So we must not despair even if the primeval chaos of Gen. 1:2 engulfs us. God is still our refuge and our strength, “a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

“Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early” (Ps. 46:1-5).

In this scripture, the Psalmist paints scenarios of the worst possible crises and problems and still affirms, “we will not fear; we shall not be moved”. Even though the continents are driven apart and dislodged from their places and the mountains plunge into the tempestuous sea, the unassailing power of God over all forces and crises remains – ready and able to offer refuge, strength and “a very present help in trouble”.

Moreover, He will create a river in river-less Jerusalem, “the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God”.

God will make blessings possible where they shouldn’t normally be. The apostle Paul wrote to the Church in Philippi: “But my God shall supply all your need[s] according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Php. 4:19). “The earth is the LORD’S and the fullness thereof,” including the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10).

So, my soul, hope thou in the LORD. In the desert He will cause springs of water to bubble to the surface of the parched earth, to quench the thirst of the poor:

¹ “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

² “I will open rivers in high places [i.e. hills and mountains], and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

³ “I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together:

⁴ “That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this [not any other power], and the Holy One of Israel hath created it” (Isa. 41:17-20).

God challenges nature; He demonstrates His power to change the natural course of things. In the most unlikely, impossible places, God will open rivers, fountains and springs of water. On the mountain-tops God will open rivers, and in the cavity of valleys will spring up fountains; pools of water will gush out in the desert! What is naturally impossible, it is possible with God (Matt. 19:26).

So, my soul, hope thou in the LORD. No situation is too bad for God to turn into joy! In waiting on God for His salvation, therefore, let’s not despair. The ancient saints looked to Him and were not put to shame (Ps. 34:5). Against all hope, we must continue to hope with a firm faith in God

as Abraham did (Rom. 4:18). He was fully persuaded that what God had promised “He was able also to perform (v. 21).

When we face problems and distress as faithful believers, we must realize that it’s God’s will for our lives – since He allowed it (1 Thess. 5:18). And it “worketh for an exceeding weight of glory” not yet seen (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

We shouldn’t buckle under the problem and give up hope and faith in God. Christ lives in us as His house if we hold firmly to the hope till the end of the crises (Heb. 3:6). He is with us even as the troubles swirl around us (Ps. 91:15). His presence in us is “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27)! With Christ, the miracle-Worker in us, the glory destined for us will appear by all means, whatever the situation.

So let’s not doubt, or we will receive nothing from the LORD (Jam. 1:6-7). He is our strength in time of weakness and distress, “a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall” (Isa. 25:4).

Yes, He’s the Lord Jehovah, our “everlasting strength” (Isa. 26:4). Because His judgments are righteous (pleading our cause justly), we will wait for Him, and all will learn the righteousness He has performed for us (vv. 8-9).

The remembrance of His righteous desire to restore and bless us gives us cause for thanksgiving (Ps. 30:4). He will never disappoint us. Happy are we, for we have the Creator, the God of Jacob, for our help (Ps. 146:5-8).

We have set the God of Jacob at our right hand, and we shall not be moved (Ps. 16:8-9).

So, my soul, hope thou in the LORD and bless His holy Name forever:

“Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:

“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

“Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

“Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

“The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed” (Ps. 103:1-6).

So, my soul, hope thou in the LORD, your God! Amen!