

The Lord is My Helper

“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What shall man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:6)

To understand this text is essential to the understanding of the nature of God in relationship to man; the nature of man in relationship to God; and the nature of man in relationship to man. There is a limit to our ultimate understanding of the nature of God. However, we must understand something of God's relationship to us, in order to understand how it is that He helps us. The Greek word for help—βοηθεω (*boetheo*)—means literally, “to run to the cry of.” In Psalm 34:15 we have a direct statement to this effect. *“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.”* So we assume from these texts that we can expect help from God. We can expect Him to respond to our cries. But how does God—the Creator and Master of the universe—even enter into a relationship to the creature, much less extend to him a helping hand? If the human creature is but a tiny speck in the vastness of space, how could God be so closely related to this tiny particle?

In the first place, we accept it because it is so stated in the Bible. We may not understand how or why, but if the Scripture says that He is our helper, then He is our helper, whether or not we understand it. But this naturally raises serious questions in the minds of so tiny and finite a creature.

Therefore, in the second place, and most importantly, we possess within us the Spirit of God and are thus partakers of His Divine nature. According to Romans 8:26, the Spirit within us encounters God at the Spirit level, beyond the reach of the “cocoon” which is our fleshly being. *“The Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us [meets God on our behalf] with unuttered sighs.”* The Holy Spirit within us, lifts our spirits to meet God at the Spirit level, thus transcending the limiting confines of the flesh. The minute capsule which is our earthly person could not possibly of itself entertain an involvement with God. But the seed of the Spirit, planted within that cocoon, transcends the cocoon to encounter God at the Divine level. Having the nature of God within us, we are enabled to interact with Him far beyond the reaches of our human mind.

In the third place, the role of God as helper is often misunderstood and misapplied. For many people, the Lord is like “a genie in a bottle.” They assume that if they have enough faith, they can simply summon Him and receive from Him “whatsoever” they wish. This misconception arises from an inadequate knowledge of the Scripture and of the text itself. The Old Testament text that is quoted here in Hebrews is Psalm 118:6. A study of the original Hebrew will reveal that the text should be translated—*“The Lord is for me; I will not fear. What shall man do for me?”* The quotation in Hebrews 13 is taken from the Septuagint (the translation of Hebrew into Greek) and is somewhat interpretative. It is assumed that because the Lord is “for us” that He is our helper. Such an interpretation is all right so long as we do not make our own determinations as to what kind of help the Lord will give us.

For example, let us assume that the son of a very wealthy father has gone into

business for himself. The father is for the son one hundred percent and will do whatever he deems wise to help him. But that does not guarantee that he will always come forward to bail that son out of difficulty if he believes that the son should work things out for himself. He will stand with him and encourage him and give such help as he thinks appropriate. And so with the Lord—He is with us always; stands beside us; encourages us; and gives such assistance as He thinks appropriate. The earthly father may miscalculate things and decline to help, when he really should, or come forward with help when he should hold back. But that is the human factor. Christ does not make such mistakes. He always functions on our behalf in terms of whatever is best for us. Nevertheless, as indicated in the May Messenger, He will not leave us alone in our difficulty.

What shall man do for me? The reading of the Psalm in the Hebrew text brings out a most important contrast. The Psalmist is not saying that with the Lord on our side, no one can harm us, but rather with the Lord on our side we need no other help. This is in the context of the fact that the Israelites were always seeking help from their neighbors, as for example the Egyptians, which the Lord warned them against. The other idea—that if the Lord is for us, no one can effectively be against us, is actually expressed in Romans 8:31. It is not that such an idea is untrue, but rather that the text we are looking at is not the one to use for that concept.

The idea of the Lord as our helper is strongly supported in Hebrews 4:16. *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace for a timely help”* (Author’s translation). Boldness here does not mean brashness or in a demanding manner—“You must do this for me because you promised.” It means rather the humble wonder of such a privilege.

Grace for a timely help . . . The Lord does not function on our timetable. He does not come satisfying our own assessment of our needs. He knows what we need and when to respond to that need. In the story of Lazarus and his sisters in Bethany, Jesus waited three days after they asked for His help and, in fact, waited until in their minds it was too late. But He had His own reasons and it was not too late for Him. Remember that, when you are inclined to think the Lord has abandoned you. He will come in His own time, but He will never be late.

We can have perpetual peace in our spirits if we will only realize that the Lord has His own time and ways, but will never “let go of us or leave us alone in our circumstances.”

David Morsey

June 1991

www.harvestermission.org