



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

July 26, 2015

Jump Start # 1378

Psalms 91:4 "He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark."

Our passage is poetically describing the shelter, protection and care found in the Lord. God is good to His people. The idea that God is a "refuge" is found sprinkled throughout the Psalms. In this setting, fear from enemies was a very real threat. David experienced this often when fleeing from King Saul. His enemy was mighty. His enemy was fierce. However, in the Lord, there was found comfort, protect and shelter.

There are some thoughts for us from this passage.

First, we must realize that God's people have and do experience difficulties. Job was tried. David was chased. Paul was persecuted. The righteous do suffer. The righteous die. Stephen was killed by stones. James was killed by a sword. John the Baptist was beheaded. Hebrews tells of some being sawn into. Not all escaped lions dens or fiery furnaces. Jesus as well as Peter tells us that we are blessed if we suffer. The suffering saint is not being punished by God. The level of suffering is not an indication of God's displeasure with us.

Second, God is always there. He is there for His people. The Psalmist viewed God as a giant bird who would spread wide His wings and His people could hide underneath Him. God was there to protect. There is a comforting thought in that. God sees. God knows. God cares. God has rescued His people. When the odds were against God's people, victory against enemies came. God rescued His people from Egypt, Babylon and other foreign strong holds. God sent angels, hornets, and fire to put those foreign armies to flight. We are never alone because of God. We always have someone who understands in God.

Third, the expression from our passage, "His faithfulness is a shield," probably refers to God's promises. God is faithful. He is true to His word. If He said it, then it will be. That's the way God is. He doesn't say things and then finds out that He cannot deliver. He is sure. He is true.

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To a warrior, a shield was important. The shield is listed among the armor of a Christian in Ephesians 6. The shield would be held up and the soldier would shelter himself behind it. Arrows would be deflected by the shield. The blows of a sword would not harm the soldier who had his shield. We stand behind the shield of God. The world and especially Satan, fires arrows at us. The enemy tells us that God's word is not true. Attacks are made about the origin of the Bible. Others fire arrows from the field of science, believing that it will take down God's soldier. Others look to sign peace treaties of compromise with immoral behavior. Attacks after attacks. Often, there are attacks on more than one front. The shield of faith, the shield of God, the faithfulness of God is what protects us. God is true. He has never lied. He has proven Himself. God stands. God is right. It is behind God that we stand and survive.

Fourth, it is important that one does not exchange the church for God. Some see the church every time they see God. The church serves a purpose. The church is important. We are the church. It is not the church that is our shield, but God's faithfulness. The church, us, can let each other down. We don't always keep our word as we ought to. We can run when we ought to dig in and fight for one another. We can get confused and even be wrong at times. The refuge, the protection, the shield was God, not the church. Some live their lives through the church and not through God.

Fifth, because of God's protective nature, the Psalmist was not afraid and was not turning back. God protected him. The enemy is often still on the battle front. The enemy hasn't left the scene. Danger and trouble still lurk, however, with God, the tide has turned. With God, there is help. With God, there is nothing to fear.

This passage reminds us that we ought to turn to God more than each other. We can pour our hearts out to one another, but we are limited in what we can do. We can tell the world our woes on facebook, but our help comes from above. It was God that the Psalmist sought. God was the refuge. This tells us that we need to take it to the Lord in prayer, as one hymn states. We need to seek Heaven's wisdom more. God is our help.

May you find comfort in these words.

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