

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Tuesday, December 22, 2020

"A Shield... my Glory, and the Lifter of My Head"

But thou, O Lord, art a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.

—Psalm 3:3

From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. —Psalm 121:1-2

A psalm has "jumped out at me" lately, as Bible passages often do, and has spoken an incredible word of encouragement. As has been said so many times of this timeless book, it was written thousands of years ago, yet it seems to have been written for today! This song is attributed to David and it begins, as do many of David's psalms, with a lament over a pervasive enemy. As was true in any royal palace of the ancient Near East, the intrigues were constant and real enemies lurked, and so the king cried, *O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me.* These enemies were unseen (at least David had little way of knowing who was his friend or foe) all about him. Sounds like the virus, doesn't it? It is so very unnerving to live among such an unseen enemy.

His detractors believed that God was done with David and would not be willing to rescue him if he should be deposed. *Many are saying of me, there is no help for him in God.* Though our present situation is very different, these words remind me of those who scorn the family of faith as we pray to God for relief and for a cure. "Pray to God all you want! Only science can help us!" they say. But our help *is* in the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth! Science and faith were never meant to be set against each other. We rejoice in medical advances made moment by moment and trust in our great God who reigns over all. We rejoice that this same God loves us and delights to hear our prayers and to send rescue though many means, so with David we pray.

Perhaps the sweetest verse of this song is the third, with its threefold assurance. *But thou, O Lord, art a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.* David saw God as his *shield*, an indispensable item of armor for any warrior. Shields may not guarantee avoidance of every injury in our warfare, but they are truly a life saver. Repeat this verse next time you put on your mask or apply hand cleaner. Next, David calls God his *glory*. God is indeed glorious, and as we walk with God we share in that glory. It is not enough that we wield God as our armor but that we also glory in God. Many are in a cowering mood these days, hiding with great fear behind any conceivable protection. God wants us to hide ourselves behind His great protection, but God doesn't want us to cower there, but to glory in our blessedness as God's children. The world looks at faith as a crutch or a refuge for helpless and weak souls, and sadly,

many live this way. But true faith glories in God and shines confidently for the world to see.

Finally, David calls God *the lifter of my head*. For years I thought this remark a bit archaic sounding and a little strange, but ten months of this virus has taught me to see things differently. The stress, the sadness, the depression of dealing with this virus has caused our heads to sag. And where do I go when I need to have my spirit lifted? How sweet it is to gather in the Lord's House, and for those who cannot, to pause in prayer, to explore the scriptures, to take in a sermon video or reading. God is indeed *the lifter of my head!*

In sleepless times David found God to be his rest, and though his enemies were many, David trusted. As the virus surrounds, let us walk with David, in full confidence in our God!

Psalms were not primarily meant to be explained (though I hope that my thoughts were of some help) but are to be embraced and celebrated. I commend to you the third Psalm for your reading and contemplation—a song and a prayer for our days.

Be blessed.

Pastor Jim

*O Lord, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
many are saying of me,
there is no help for him in God.
But thou, O Lord, art a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter
of my head.
I cry aloud to the Lord,
and he answers me from his holy hill.
I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, for the Lord sustains me.
I am not afraid of ten thousands of people
who have set themselves against me round about.
Arise, O Lord!
Deliver me, O my God!
For thou dost smite all my enemies on the cheek,
thou dost break the teeth of the wicked.
Deliverance belongs to the Lord;
thy blessing be upon thy people.*

—Psalm 3 (Revised Standard Version)