

The Comforts of the Lord

Psalm 94: 19.

Hamilton Smith

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The Ninety-fourth Psalm very blessedly sets forth the way in which a godly man can experience the comforts of God in the midst of suffering, and find "rest from the days of adversity" (Verses 13, 19).

The suffering, of which the Psalmist speaks, arises from living a godly life in the midst of a godless world, — a world in which for the time being "the wicked triumph" (3), in which they "speak hard things" against God and His people (4); in which they exalt themselves (4), crush God's people, and afflict God's heritage (5), act with violence towards the defenceless (6), and defy God (7).

The circumstances in which the Christian finds himself may be very different to those of the Psalmist, but the comfort and instruction of the Psalm still applies, for it ever remains true that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3: 12). Moreover, we may find that the most painful form of suffering will come from the professing people of God. So the Apostle found when, on account of his pious life, he was deserted by all in Asia, opposed by false teachers, and insulted by malicious individuals (2 Tim. 1: 15; 2 Tim. 2: 25, 2 Tim. 4: 14).

Nevertheless, whether in the day of the Psalmist, or in the last days of Christendom, the one who seeks to walk in obedience to God will find that the time of suffering becomes a season of blessing. If, however, we are to obtain the blessing in the time of suffering, we must, in the first place, give up all thought of taking our case into our own hands and seeking to revenge ourselves upon those who unjustly oppose and abuse us. Whatever the suffering, the believer is to refrain from taking vengeance. When reviled the flesh is ever ready to revile again, and when suffering unjustly it is ready to threaten, and would delight in taking vengeance upon all who oppose and insult us with their hard speeches. But the godly are not to render evil for evil, or railing for railing. The LORD cannot trust the believer to deal with those who oppose. Vengeance belongeth to the LORD (Verse 1).

Are we then, as believers, helpless and resourceless in the presence of those who "speak hard things" against others, while boasting in themselves (v. 4). So far from being helpless the Psalm shows that we **have the greatest** possible resource. The LORD, Himself, is the resource of the godly. Faith falls back on the great fact that nothing escapes the LORD. He hears the hard speeches: He sees every wrong act; He knows every secret motive. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" "He that teacheth man knowledge, shall He not **know**?" (Vv. 8-11).

The maliciously disposed may speak hard things about the godly, and stander them in secret, but the LORD hears, the LORD sees, the LORD knows.

Moreover, in making the trial an occasion of turning to the LORD, the believer will find great blessing. He will learn that all the trials and sufferings that come upon us are permitted of the LORD, and are part of His chastening. Receiving blessing through the chastening, he will be able to say "Blessed is the man whom thou chasteness, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law" (v. 12).

The devil would seek to occupy our thoughts with the trial to bring in distance between our souls and the LORD. He would seek to engross our minds with the hard speeches and unjust acts of our opposers and thus lead us to "fret," and. "grieve," and complain in bitterness of soul, like Hannah of old

(1 Samuel 1: 6, 8, 10). Faith, making the trial an occasion of turning to the LORD, not only triumphs over the devil, but, gets blessing out of the trial.

Turning to the LORD, our opposers and their hard speeches cease to engross our thoughts and, alone with the LORD, we learn that He is allowing the trial for our blessing. Thus we keep the LORD between ourselves and the trial, instead of allowing the trial to come between ourselves and the LORD.

We learn that if the LORD allows men to "speak hard things" and act maliciously towards us, He will use the trial to correct much in our thoughts, and words, and ways, that He sees to be inconsistent with Himself. He does not chasten willingly; He sees there is a need for the trial. Thereby we discover the unsuspected evil of our own hearts, that we may judge the flesh, and say with Job, "I abhor myself." It is one thing to admit the truth of the doctrine that in the flesh there is no good thing; it is quite another to learn this truth experimentally in the presence of God.

Further, looking beyond the immediate trial, and seeing the LORD'S hand dealing with us for our blessing, will lead to rest and calmness of soul. Instead of fretting and bitterness of soul, we shall find "rest from the days of adversity." (v. 13). Even so, Hannah found in her sore trial, when she turned to the LORD, "poured out her soul before the LORD," and was "no more sad." Her circumstances were not changed, but she was changed, for, by pouring out her soul before the LORD, she passed from bitterness of soul to rest of soul (1 Samuel 1: 15, 18).

Moreover, in the loving chastening of the LORD, we not only learn to detect and judge the evil of our own hearts, but, we also discover the goodness and grace of the LORD'S heart. Thus, in the portion of the Psalm that follows, verses 14 to 20, the godly man is occupied with the LORD and all that He is on behalf of His own.

First, he realises that though the LORD may chasten, He "**will not** cast off His people, neither will He forsake His heritage" (14). So the Apostle, in his day, can remind believers that the Lord has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13: 5)

Secondly, he finds that the LORD is his helper. If I am not to take vengeance upon my enemies, "Who will rise up for me against the evil doers? or Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" Experience answers these questions, for, says the Psalmist, "Unless the LORD **had been my help, my soul** had almost dwelt in silence." So again, the Apostle, realising that the Lord will never forsake the godly man, can boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear" (Hebrews 13: 6).

Thirdly, the godly man finds that he not only **requires help** because of his enemies, but, he needs to be **held** because of his own weakness. So he can say, "When I said, my foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD **held me up**" (v. 18).

Thus the Psalmist, very blessedly realises in trial that the LORD will not forsake us, the LORD is our help, and the LORD will hold us up. So too the prophet Isaiah links these three things together when he says, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: . . . I will strengthen thee; yea, I will **help** thee; yea, I **will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness**" (Isaiah 41: 10-13).

Bringing then our sufferings to the LORD we not only obtain "rest from the days of adversity" but we find the "comforts of the LORD." We learn that He is with us, to help us in all our sufferings, and hold us in all our weakness. Thus the "anxious thoughts," which would distract the soul, give place, to the comforts of the LORD that delight the soul (v. 19 N.Tn).

With the LORD before his soul as an Object, and the comforts of the LORD filling the soul, the wicked are no longer feared. As the Apostle can say, at a later day, "In nothing terrified by your

adversaries" (Phil. 1: 28). They may "gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous," but the LORD is his "defence" against every assault of the enemy; and his "refuge" in every storm. Never will the LORD cast off His people, though, in due **time, He will cut** off the wicked. (Vv. 20-23).