

"The Secret Place of the Most High."

Psalm 91.

Hamilton Smith.

(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 43, 1968, pages 57-60)

To enter into the blessedness of this beautiful Psalm, it is important to notice its structure. The first verse gives us the theme of the Psalm — **the blessing of One who dwells in the secret place of the Most High.**

In the second verse we hear the voice of Jesus, taking this place of secret communion with God. This we know from Hebrews 2: 13, where the Apostle Paul quotes the words "In Him will I trust," as being the words of Christ.

Then from verses 3 to 8, have we not the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the blessedness of the One who dwells in the secret place?

In the following verses, 9 to 13, we hear the voice of a godly man, — one who can speak of the LORD as "my refuge" bearing his witness to the blessedness of Jesus.

Finally, in verses 14 to 16, the Psalm closes with the witness borne by Jehovah to the blessings that form the portion of the One who sets his love on God and dwells in the secret place.

(Vv. 1, 2) What then are we to understand by "dwelling in the secret place," to which such blessing is attached, as witnessed by every voice in the Psalm? To use our New Testament language, does it not speak of the inner life of secret communion lived with Divine Persons? Is it not this life to which the Lord's words refer when He says, "If I wash thee not thou hast no **part with Me**;" and again when He says, "**Abide in Me**"? Does not the apostle John bring before us this secret life, when he writes, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"? (John 13: 8, John 15: 4-7, 1 John 1: 3). To have part with Christ, and abide in Him, is to live in communion with Him where He is. To live such a life is to dwell "in the secret place."

It is not the **outer life** lived before men of which the Psalm speaks, but the **inner life** lived in secret before God. Further, it is not occasional communion of which the Psalm speaks, but rather the constant experience of the soul, for it speaks of one that "**dwelleth** in the secret place." We know that there has been only one Man who lived this life of unbroken communion with God — the Man (Christ Jesus, Who, when on earth, could speak of Himself as "the Son of Man which is in heaven" (John 3: 13). He walked on earth but lived in heaven. While, the experience of the Psalm is only fully realised in Christ, it, none the less, presents a perfect example for the believer.

All the **outward life** of Christ on earth, marked by perfect obedience to the Father; grace to sinners; faithfulness in testimony, holiness in walk, combined with meekness, lowliness, gentleness and love, was the outcome of the **inner life** lived in communion with the Father. With the most spiritual saint such a life will only be in measure, with Him it was lived in absolute perfection. Have we not to own that, too often, we may have been very careful of our outward lives before men, but careless of the secret life known only to God. Has not all the ruin of the church in responsibility been traced back, by the Lord, Himself, to failure in living this inner life? In the church at Ephesus, while there was much that the Lord approves in their outward zeal and refusal of gross evil, yet He has to say, "Thou art fallen." This fall is traced back to loss of first love. They had broken down in living the secret life of communion with Christ.

In the promises to the overcomer in the midst of the church's ruin, Christ is presented both as the Tree of Life in the paradise of God, and as the Hidden Manna. As the Tree of Life we have Christ brought before us in the home above — the Man in the glory — as the **Object** of our souls. As the Hidden Manna we think of Christ in His path on earth - the lowly Man as our **Example**. Does not the apostle present Christ as the Tree of Life when he says, "Looking steadfastly on Jesus" Who "is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"? Then, immediately, he reminds us of Christ as the Hidden Manna, when he says, "Consider Him that endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself" (Heb. 12: 2-3 N.Tn.).

In this Psalm we are invited to consider Christ as the Hidden Manna — the One who passed through this world as a stranger, amidst trials and dangers, in unbroken communion with God, and thus found in God His "refuge" and "fortress" — a refuge from every storm, and His defence from every enemy.

(Vv. 3-8) Passing on to consider the blessings of the One that walked in secret communion with God, as unfolded by the Spirit, we learn:-

Firstly, that such will be **delivered** "from the snare of the fowler, and from the destructive pestilence" (N.Tn.). Does not a snare represent evil hidden under a fair exterior? The apostle Paul warns us against being beguiled with "enticing words" (Col. 2: 4), and tells us that in the professing Christian circle some will be caught "in the snare of the devil" (2 Timothy 2: 26). Again the apostle Peter warns us that among the saints there will be found those "who privily shall bring in destructive heresies" (2 Peter 2: 1 N.Tn). Was it not a "snare" the Lord had to meet when wicked men sought "to catch Him in his words," by approaching Him with flattery, saying, "Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man. . . but teaches" the way of God in truth"? Was it not a "destructive pestilence" He had to meet when the Sadducees sought to argue there is "no resurrection"? In keeping with the secret life set before us in this Psalm, the apostle Peter sets before us the secret life of "godliness" as the way of deliverance from snares and destructive pestilences (see 2 Peter 1: 3, 2 Peter 3: 11). We may think we can escape snares and be preserved from heresies by our own intelligence and knowledge of the truth. But whatever our knowledge and gifts, unless we are in secret communion — abiding in Christ — there is no snare into which we cannot fall. The Corinthian saints found that though they had all knowledge, it was not sufficient to preserve them from the destructive heresy which denied the resurrection.

Secondly, the one walking in secret communion will be kept from every assault of the enemy by the word of God. Of such it can be said, "His **truth** shall be thy shield and buckler." Was it not so with the Lord when He met every temptation of Satan with the words, "It is written"? The Lord can say, in the words of another Psalm, "By **the word of thy lips** I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Ps. 17: 4). Let us beware of seeking to meet the attacks of the devil by human argument. Error can only be met by truth. But to rightly use the truth we need to be living in secret communion.

Thirdly, of the one living this life of secret communion, it can be said, "**Thou shalt not be afraid.**" We live in a world of terrors by night, and dangers by day. A world in which there is lurking evil and wasting destruction. Though we may have to face these things on every side — as the word says, "at thy side," and "at thy right hand," yet, if walking in secret communion we shall "not be afraid." We shall be preserved in the trial, and in due course see the governmental judgment of God upon the wicked.

(Vv. 9-13) Furthermore we are reminded, by the witness borne by a godly man, that the One who dwells in the secret place of communion — Who makes "the LORD . . . even the Most High" His

"habitation," will pass through the world under the escort of angelic beings, and overcome every wicked spirit. At every stage of the pathway of the Lord we are permitted to see the attendant angels. An angel announced His birth to simple shepherds, and a multitude of the heavenly host united to tell His praise (Luke 2: 8-14). In the wilderness, when tempted by Satan, "the angels ministered unto Him" (Mark 1: 13). In the agony of Gethsemane "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven strengthening Him" (Luke 22: 43). At His grave the angel of the Lord was on guard (Matt. 28: 2). And in that last scene that closed His path on earth, when He was taken up to heaven, two angels were standing by (Acts 1: 10). Moreover, of the Lord's people it is still true that the angels are sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation. But may we not say, it is the one who follows the Lord's example, and walks in secret communion with Christ that will have the consciousness of divine protection and overcome the power of the devil whether it be in his might as a roaring "lion" seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5: 9); or in subtle craft as the serpent (2 Corinthians 11: 3); or as the persecuting dragon (Revelation 12: 3)? We thus learn by the perfect example of Christ that, if walking through this world with all its dangers and terrors, in constant communion with God, earthly evils will not overcome us, Heavenly hosts will wait upon us, and Hell's forces be subdued beneath us.

(Vv. 14-16) Finally, we are privileged to hear the witness of God, Himself, to the blessedness of the One who walked through this world in a life of unbroken communion flowing from love to God. In Christ God has at last found a Man in wilderness circumstances of Whom He can say, "He hath set his love upon Me"; "He hath known my Name"; "He shall call upon Me." In this perfect Man, God can find all His delight, and to His perfections God can give a perfect answer, as He says "I will" bless Him. When God says "I will," who can gainsay? So we hear God saying of Christ:-

"I will deliver Him" from every snare;
"I will set Him on high," above every power;
"I will answer Him," when He calls upon Me;
"I will be with Him," in trouble;
"I will deliver Him, and honour Him;
I will satisfy Him with length of days in glory
I will "show Him my salvation" in the coming kingdom.
When once His word is passed,
When He hath said "I will":
That thing shall come at last,
God keeps His promise still.

Such then is the blessedness that flows from "dwelling in the secret place" and thus living the inner life of communion. If, in any measure we are to follow the perfect example of the Lord, as set forth in this Psalm, we must be ready to put our feet into His hands that everything in our thoughts and words, walk and ways, that would hinder communion may be judged and dealt with by the washing of water of the word.

May we hear His voice as He says "Abide in Me," and respond in the words of the disciples who said, "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Opening the door of our hearts to Him, shall we not know something of the blessedness of His words, when He says, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3.

20). Will this not lead to the blessedness of dwelling in the secret place?