

THE MARVELLOUS ‘ MY’S,’ OF THE BIBLE

Reading: Hebrews 13:1-8

4. MY HELPER

It was just after 12.30pm on 12th September, 2001. The towers in New York had fallen 27 hours earlier. Amazingly, Genelle McMillan was still alive. Although the 30 year old Port Authority clerk had fallen from the 64th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Centre, she had survived, *but what were her chances of being rescued from the ten stories of smoking rubble in which she was entombed ?* Her head was squeezed between chunks of concrete while her legs were sandwiched by pieces of a stairway. Because her right hand was pinned under her leg only her left hand was free. With that free hand she reached in the darkness, hoping to find something to hold to physically as well as emotionally, but Genelle could not grasp anything. In the depths of despair and smoking debris she began to pray, “ *I kept my hand out there praying to God,*” she recalls. “ *Show me a sign. Show me that you are out there. Show me that you are listening to me.*” Like many who fell overwhelmed and have nowhere else to turn Genelle called out for help to the God she had rejected earlier in her life.

Not long after someone grabbed her hand. A man’s voice identified himself as Paul. Although Genelle tried opening her eyes she could not. Paul reassured her that

she would be fine. He encouraged her to hold on to his hand. My Genelle McMillan was the last person pulled out alive from the collapsed towers in New York City, but she is not the last person to experience the preservation and help of God. One of the most powerful, pungent, poignant words of the English language is this word help. *Help*, it’s the cry of a mother with four children, three dogs, two cats, and a parakeet after a week at home, while the husband has been away in Europe on a business trip. *Help*, it’s the cry of a college student who sits down to take his final exam only to discover that he has studied the wrong chapters. *Help*, it’s the cry of a man sitting at a table surrounded by a stack of unpaid bills, hungry children and an empty bank account with no job in sight.

Help it’s the cry of a woman who has poured her life into hearth and home for twenty five years only to have the husband she adores walk in and say “ *I’m leaving. I have met someone else and I don’t love you anymore.*” *I wonder, have you ever been in a position where you needed help ? More than that, have you ever been in a position where the only one who could possibly help you was the Lord ?* These Jewish believers to whom this letter was written were in dire need of help. They had embraced Christianity and were being taunted by the Jews as apostates from Jehovah, as renegades from Moses, as abandoning their Law, and as forfeiting all the blessings and promises of the Old Covenant to become the followers of a crucified malefactor. They were under intense pressure to repudiate Christ and to return to the Temple and all the ritual of Judaism. (10:32-34) Here they were being criticized,

pressurised and ostracised and it was against this background that we have this marvellous ‘*my,*’ ‘*the Lord is my helper and I will not fear.*’ Now this ‘*my,*’ is surrounded by something that precedes it and something that succeeds it and so I want to give you three things, that all flow out of this context.

(1) GOD WITH US: HIS PRESENCE

Surely, this is one of the most encouraging statements in all of the Bible. “*For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*” (13:5) My this is the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God who is speaking. When I say, “*Lord I just don’t have the strength for this week, He the omnipotent God answers and says, “ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”*” When I say, “*Lord I’m afraid to go through the next month He the omnipresent God says, “ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”*” When I say, “*Lord, I don’t know what to do, which way to turn.” He the omniscient God says, “ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”*” (1) Now notice,

(a) HOW STRONG THIS PROMISE IS:

“*For He hath said,*” now this is more forcible than if it had been “*For God hath said,*” You see, it is the character of the One with whom we have to do that is held up to our view. “*He hath said,*” Who hath said ? The One whose power is omnipotent, whose wisdom is infinite, whose faithfulness is stable, whose love us unchanging. “*He hath said.*” My if He be with us. I tell you, that if infinite power be our defence, if infinite

wisdom be our guide, if infinite love be our portion, then why do we need to covet, indeed here is the ground and basis of all contentment, for what is all the wealth, honour and pleasure of this world if the Lord be not with us. “*For He hath said.*” (a)

(b) HOW SURE THIS PROMISE IS:

For the Lord hammers home, the assurance that there are no circumstance, ever or anywhere in which He abandons His children. Our Lord will neither “*leave,*” us nor “*forsake,*” us. That word “*leave,*” in common usage means to depart from, but we cannot limit the Greek word to that. We could translate it, “*I will never let you go,*” “*I will in now wise fail thee.*” The word forsake, means that God will never abandon or desert us. My do you see what God is pledging ? That He will never let us go, and never give us up. Moreover the Greek piles up the negatives here. No less than five negatives are heaped together in the Greek, to confirm the gracious promise, and to give us strong consolation from God who cannot lie. A literal translation is scarcely possible. It would run this way. “*No, not will I fail thee, nor, no, not will I forsake thee.*” My a more emphatic, dogmatic, energetic, guarantee could not be given in any language under the sun. “*I will never, never fail thee I will never, never, forsake thee.*”

***The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose
He will not, He will not desert to its foes
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake
He’ll never, no never, no never forsake***

One preacher was visiting an old grandmother in his church, trying to give her comfort in her old age. She probably knew the Lord better than he did. Anyhow he took out his Greek New Testament and was reading to her from this passage. He was explaining to her that in the Greek there were five negatives here. Old Granny interrupted him and said, “ *Son, God may have to say it five times for you Greek boys, but once is enough for me.*” Am I speaking today to some women whose husbands have walked out on them ? To some husbands whose wives have left them ? To some children whose fathers have forsaken them. Troubled soul, there is One who will never fail thee, or forsake thee. At no time under any circumstances conceivable or inconceivable will God fail or forsake one of His own redeemed people. Do you see how (a) (b)

(c) HOW SWEET THIS PROMISE IS:

For it's this promise that sweetens the bitter experiences of life. Do you recall to whom this promise was first given ? God gave it to Joshua. Moses was dead and Joshua was assuming the mantle of leadership. His task was daunting. He had to enter the land, conquer the land, and possess the land. My this was not an easy task. There were new distances he had to cross, new dangers he had to face, new difficulties he had to resolve, but there was one thing he was absolutely sure of, “ *as I was with Moses so I will be with thee, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.*” (Jo 1:5) Can we appropriate this gracious pledge as belonging to ourselves ? Well, Paul says “ *for all the promises of God are in Him yea, and in Him amen unto the glory of*

God by us.” (2 Cor 1:20) That is, all the promises of God become our property in Christ. They are ours in Him by redemption right. They may have been given originally to Moses, Joshua David and others but there was a larger thought behind them than that which merely concerned the individual, and they are now ours in Christ. Do you know what that means ?

1. In times of Discouragement His Presence Sees me Through:

Are you a discouraged, disillusioned, disheartened Christian ? Are you facing heartaches ? My Christ is there in the midst of your despondency, He says, “ *I will never fail thee, or forsake thee.*” 1.

2. In times of Loneliness His Presence Cheers me Up:

Dr. Abraham Maslow famed research analyst said, “ *the truth is that the average American does not have a real friend in the world.*” Death and divorce and desertion, even travel makes you lonely. Success can make you lonely. You often hear its lonely at the top. You can be lonely in a big crowd. You can be lonely in a crowded shopping centre. My loneliness is one of the chief maladies of our age, but Christ has said, “ *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*” 1. 2.

3. In times of Anxiety His Presence Calms me Down:

Do you know what worry is ? Worry is a mild form of atheism. Its acting like God does not exist. David Livingstone who took the gospel to Africa, lived a life a

life of what some would call loneliness, and others would call danger. He wrote this in his journal on the 14th January 1856. He was there surrounded by hostile people in the heart of darkest Africa. They were beating the war drums like they were going to attack the next morning. And this is what he wrote. “ *Felt much turmoil of spirit in prospect of having all of my plans for the welfare of this great region and this teeming population knocked on the head by savages tomorrow.*” Here he is sitting at his campfire, alone in the heart of Africa and he knows what’s out there in the jungle beyond him. And he says this, “ *But I read that Jesus said All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth go ye therefore and teach all nations And lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*”

And then David Livingstone wrote in his diary, “ *this is the word of a gentleman of the most strict and sacred honour so that’s the end to it.*” Then he wrote this, “ *I will not cross furtively as I had intended. Why should such a man as I flee ? I shall take observations for latitude and longitude tonight, though it be the last, I feel quite calm now, thank God.*” Here’s a man in the jungle surrounded by wild animals and savage people and he hears the Saviour whisper in his ear, “ *I will never thee.*” Listen, 1:2:3: and

4. In times of Temptation His Presence Helps me Out:

For when the devil comes and knocks at the door of our hearts, we can just simply say, “ *Lord, please go and answer the door.*” My the Lord is there with us to take care of us. (1)

(2) GOD FOR US: HIS POWER

“ *So that we may boldly say,*” thank God, here is something we may say “ *boldly.*” In these days when the truths of God’s Word are being undermined, and so many who profess the Lord’s name want to apologise for this, that and the other, this breath of dogmatism comes as a refresher to wearied spirits. As one old preacher said, “ *Far better be dogmatic than asthmatic.*” Now what may we boldly say ? “ *The Lord is my helper.*” What comfort there is here. My is there anything we Christians need more than this very thing, help ? Can you see,

(a) THE NEED FOR THIS HELP:

Why here in this very passage we are shown several ways in which we need the Lord’s help. Do you see (13:1) ? It tells me I need **Charity:** You say “ *I cannot love that brother in Christ, its beyond me.*” But you can love him for the Lord is your helper. Do you see (13:2) It tells me I need **Magnanimity:** we as believers need to be large-hearted, open-hearted, cordial and gracious. How can be this ? The Lord is our helper. Do you see (13:3) ? It tell me that I need **Sympathy:** so many of the Lord’s people are suffering persecution. Do we have any sympathy for them ? Do we feel with them in their suffering ? We can if we say, the Lord is my helper. Do you see (13:4) It tells me that I need **Purity:** how can we keep pure in a society that is filled with filth. The Lord is my helper. Do you see (13:9) It tells me that I need **Stability:** You say, “ *I can’t help being changeable.*” You can if the Lord is your helper. (a)

(b) THE NATURE OF THIS HELP:

Dr. S. Baxter reminds us that the word “*helper*,” is a compound of two verbs the one meaning “*to cry*,” and the other meaning “*to run*.” So that the picture, is one ready to run at the cry of another. Such is our tender-hearted Lord towards His loved ones. Do you know how the mother runs when she hears the child cry ? Do you know how she responds when she sees that little one in danger ? My is this not how the Lord responds to us ? Has the Lord not been ready to run at your cry ? Has he not been willing to relieve your distress ? Has He not been able to soothe your soul ? Can you not say, “*The Lord is my helper*,” I tell you,

(1) HE IS A POWERFUL HELPER:

“*Who is like Him in all the world ?*” asks the Puritan Thomas Brooks. “*When friends cannot help, when power cannot help, when policy cannot help, when riches cannot help, when princes cannot help, when parliaments cannot help, yet then God can and will help His people.*” My are you cast down into some valley of adversity ? Then truly you can say, “*I will lift up mine eyes to the hills. From whence cometh my help ? My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth.*” (Ps 121:1-2) My what is your need, trouble, fear, anxiety ? Can anything be too hard for your Almighty God ? Oh, say it boldly this “*the Lord is my helper*,” (1)

(2) HE IS A PERPETUAL HELPER:

Was this not David’s comfort in a day of distress ?

“*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*” (Ps 46:1) Our Lord is not some fair weather companion only. When the dark hour comes, when the storms beat about us, when the grievous blow falls, He is the Friend that “*sticketh closer than a brother.*” (Prov 18:24) He is our all-sufficient standby “*through thick and thin.*” In such an hour as we most need help we may boldly say, “*the Lord is my helper*,” for has he not said, “*I will never, never fail thee, and never never forsake thee ?*”

(c3 HE IS A PRESENT HELPER:

Sometimes when a loved one lies critically ill and phone calls are made. Some of the replies are “*Sorry I cannot come.*” How often when we most need our family they cannot get to us. But my it’s never like that with God. You see, not only is our Lord a “*help*,” and a help in “*trouble*,” and a “*present*,” help He is a “*very*,” present help. Indeed not only present in the sense of being on the spot, He is present in point of time. You see, we can always say it in the present tense, “*the Lord is my helper.*” Sure, it’s good to be able to raise our Ebenezer’s and to say with Samuel “*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*” (1 Sam 7:12) But help in the past is little use if I am stranded at the present. Even the promise of future help is little good unless I can get the help that will save me now.

What comfort is it to a drowning man to tell him that the life-boat will rescue him in a week ? What consolation to some starving beggar to tell him that

some friend will send him a loaf in a month ? Thank God, we have a helper who is “ *very,*” present and “ *ever,*” present. My He is thy Helper now. Did you notice also,

(4) HE IS A PERSONAL HELPER:

Did you notice two changes in the text ? In (13:5) we can go from “ *he,*” to “ *we,*” in (13:6) and then we go from “ *we,*” in (13:6) to “ *my,*” in (13:6) Sure, the Lord is the Helper of His people collectively. But He is more than the God of the multitude for each of His people may boldly say, “ *the Lord is my helper.*” To those in hospital, to those who are hurting, to those who are heart-broken how often I direct these words from Isaiah for three times in three verses we have three assurances. “ *Fear not I will help thee.*” (Is 41:10, 13, 14) Do you believe it ? Have you grasp it ? Sure, we believe that God can meet the needs of others, but somehow ours are too difficult for the Lord to deal with ? How we need to grasp afresh this that the Lord is our helper, your helper and mine. (1) (2)

(3) GOD THROUGH US: HIS PURPOSE

You see, all that we have considered this is intended to have an influence in the experience of the believer. The fact that God is with us and God is for us is designed to moderate our desires and alleviate our fears. *In other words the purpose of it all is, that God might be seen through us.* And that in two ways. First of all that we might be freed from,

(a) FROM THE LOVE OF FINANCE:

Look if you will at (13:5) “ *Let your conversation*” The word conversation here is not referring to speech. It means “ *turn of mind.*” Our mental attitude, our disposition, our conduct is to be away from covetousness. The word “ *covetousness,*” means “ *love of money,*” but it can be applied to a love for more of anything. Someone asked millionaire Bernard Baruch, “ *how much money does it take for a rich man to be satisfied.*” Baruch replied, “ *Just a million more than he has.*” Covetousness is the desire for more, whether we need it or not. Sometimes we want things we don’t need. Sometimes we need things we don’t need, and we get all mixed up. I heard about two tears who met each other along the river of life. Said one tear to the other tear, “ *where did you come from ?*” The tear responded said, “ *I am the tear of a girl who loved a man and lost him.*” “ *Now where do you come from ? I’m the tear who found him and married him.*”

Now many times we think we want something, we need something but we really don’t. We get our luxuries and necessities confused. You see, even as the Lord’s people we are so discontent. The Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs captured this fact by entitling his book ‘ *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment.*’ The philosopher, Immanuel Kant, saw this when he observed, “ *Give a man everything he wants, and at that moment, everything will not be everything.*” (cited by Richard Swenson, *Margin* [NavPress], p. 190). Do you recall this was the sin of the children of Israel as they journeyed toward the Promised Land ? The Lord

was miraculously meeting their needs yet they grumbled, murmured and complained ? But do you see the remedy for covetousness and discontentment ? *It's a realisation of the presence of Christ with us.* Now don't forget to whom these words were first spoken. They were written to believers who had undergone fierce persecution, those whose earthly possessions had been confiscated. Do you recall what is said in a previous chapter ? “ *ye endured great fight of afflictions,*” “ *ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.*” (10:32-34) They had been plundered and reduced, they had little or nothing left. And these are the people to whom these words were first written, “ *Be content with your present circumstances.*” How easily some of us give way to bitter discontent. Do you not smart at times because you do not have the advantages, the successes, the possessions, the resources of a fellow-believer ? How Christian contentment seems to elude us.

What Jeremiah Burroughs calls “ *that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.*” A Puritan sat down to his meal and found that he had only a little bread and some water. His response was to exclaim, “ *What ? All this and Jesus Christ, too.*” Was A.W. Tozer not right when he said, “ *the man who has God for his treasure has all things in One.*” How we forget that each of us is precious to Him Who redeemed us by His blood, and that He has said, “ *I will never, never fail thee and never, never forsake thee.*” (a)

(b) FROM THE LIFE OF FEAR:

Did you notice (13:6) Because He hath said then we can boldly say, “ *the Lord is my helper I will not fear what man shall not do unto me.*” (13:6) This is a quote from (Ps 118:6) where the Psalmist says ‘ *The Lord is on my side, what can man do unto me ?*’ Does the fear of man paralyse you ? Are you fearful of being made a laughing stock at work because you are a Christian ? Do you always publicly side with Christ no matter what company you may be in ? Do you fear illness, poverty, loss, ridicule, loneliness, adversity, death ? Are you fearful because of political turmoil, national crisis, or international conflict ? Does fear of the future terrorise you ? Oh, that we might be able to say with George Whitefield, “ *I am immortal till my work is done.*” Would that the challenge of the apostle might live before us as in letters of flame, “ *If God be for us, who can be against us.*” (Rom 8:31) Some time ago I was ministering in Scotland and before preaching on the Saturday night I was chatting with a servant of Christ.

He said to me “ *Denis I was visiting an old saint the other day and after I had read and prayed with her she said to me “ McKay Munn God is enough, God is enough.” But he said “ this is not all she said. For she closed by saying ‘ God is enough and if God is not enough you have not got enough of God.’*”

Fellow-believer bound for the heavenly city this bind this strong, tender, enduring all-sufficient pledge to your heart. “ *I will never, never fail thee and never, never forsake thee.*” Then with this flashing jewel bound to your heart, press onward singing boldly, “ *The Lord is my helper I will not fear.*”

