

Help Laid on a Mighty One

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"Then Thou spakest in vision to Thy Holy One and saidst, I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people." (Psalm 89:19)

Paul says: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." (Heb. 2:14) This is the incarnation of the eternal Son of God. The Person of God existed before the Man Christ Jesus. The Son of God was sent, then He was made of a woman, made under the law; (Gal. 4:4) and this is the One after David who is David's Lord and of whom this inspired word speaks. God spake in vision to Samuel respecting David, that David was the chosen; was he who being chosen became mighty in that very choice; and his great Antitype Jesus Christ is the One whom God has chosen; and this is the infinite mercy that Zion is eternally to know, rejoice in, and be saved and crowned by. And if we may, by the help of God for a short time meditate on this, let it be in the following manner:--First, speak of the doctrine that is in the text: "I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people." And second, notice this great doctrine as it becomes an experience that He whom God made choice of does from time to time in individual cases help those who in themselves have no help.

First of all the doctrine. We can never be too frequently reminded of this, because it is continually being denied and reviled in this evil day. Men will have Jesus Christ to be a great Person in history, to be a great example of noble suffering, but they won't have Him to be Almighty God; they won't have Him to be the chosen of God to save the church. The Lord give to us to hold fast this doctrine, namely that God did send His only begotten Son; made choice of Him in the eternal covenant and counsel of peace to be the Redeemer of the church; that in the fulfilment of that eternal purpose in the fullness of the time He sent His Son into the world, sent Him and made Him under the law that He might redeem them that were under the law. This brings us to foundation principles: "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, and he that believeth shall not make haste." (Isa. 28:16) This I say, brings us to foundation principles; when God in eternity in the Trinity of Persons did take counsel and did determine that the church, consisting of a number that no man can number, should be saved by this very Person Jesus Christ. Salvation does not begin when people begin to know it; they come to know it because it was in God's heart and purpose from eternity. The decree brings forth. The decree is in God's heart, the purpose was formed there, the plan drawn, the Saviour given; the church chosen, the Surety set up, sins taken from sinners and imputed to the sinless One, Jesus Christ, who should come. This is God's blessed work in eternity. The work that men won't have; they reject the counsel of God against themselves. The work which men chosen to be saved do come in the power of the Spirit to receive, by the revelation and application to them by the Holy Ghost of this great salvation. All true experience issues from this. Experience does not

lay the foundation of salvation; experience is the fruit of Christ's Person and work. As the river of water of life seen by John, it being shown to him, issued from beneath the throne of God, so all living religion issues from this divine purpose, this election of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Behold," says Isaiah by inspiration, "Behold My Servant whom I uphold, Mine Elect in whom My soul delighteth." (Isa. 42:1) It is a great thing to see Jesus Christ, God's servant, God's elected One. "I have laid help upon Him." May we never be allowed to let this go, or become loose respecting it, or to think that it is a tiresome thing, or to be weary of thinking or meditating upon it or of hearing about it; because this is the very bottom of all--all that God will reveal to His people, all that God will do in this world, all the works of grace, all the mysteries of providence, all the overthrowing of thrones, and all the setting up of thrones, all the things of this world, particularly things of the church; all, all are laid upon Him who is in our text. All laid upon Him, and the work of salvation to be accomplished by the Man of sorrows; the work of government to be upon the shoulders of Him who having carried away sin, bears up the world and works all things after the counsel of His own will. It is a mighty theme; it fills heaven with men who were sinners here; it makes the arches of heaven echo and re-echo with the glorious mysteries, the glorious and beautiful sound: "Grace, grace unto the building whose foundation Christ is, whose foundation is laid in the souls of sinners." All, all shall be to His praise, His exaltation.

It would be a good day to us if now and throughout the day it should please God to enable us to meditate upon Him. As said the Psalmist in one Psalm, so may we feel and say: "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." You could not meditate with any pleasure on an absolute God. You cannot think with any calmness of mind upon the Creator and upon the Lawgiver and the Judge, because you are sinners; but you may by grace meditate upon Jehovah with sweetness and delight if you see Him to be in the Man Christ Jesus. Here is God's love, here is His mercy, here is His favour, here is His justification, here is His sanctification, here is eternal redemption; and should these great matter of our salvation be opened to us by the Spirit, we shall find matter for meditation, reason for praise, and power to humble us, and power to lift us up, and power to make us little in our own eyes, and power to persuade us of that which is all but impossible to believe, that we, even such as we, wretched, polluted, perpetually sinning persons, are acceptable to God and beautiful in His eyes.

Look at His exaltation in the doctrine of it. He was crowned with glory and honour that He might suffer death, and after He had suffered it, what an exaltation is that of Christ! How His enemies mocked Him! They said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save, if He be the Christ let Him come down from the cross and we will believe Him. He said God was His Father; if God be His Father and delighteth in Him, let Him deliver Him now." They mocked Him, they shot out the tongue against Him, they derided Him, and He meekly bore it all. He made Himself of no reputation, He humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross; and when He was dead and buried they thought they had got rid of Him. Only some suspicion must have been on their minds which caused them to go to Pilate and ask for a watch lest His disciples, as they pretended, "should come in the night and steal Him away; so the last error should be worse than the first." The first error was killing the Lord of life; the last would be what they looked upon as a terrible thing, a report to be believed of His resurrection. But man's devices hinder not God's purposes. "I have exalted One chosen out of the people."

Now His exaltation began by His call to be a Priest; He took not this honour on Himself. This Man, Jesus Christ, "took not on Him this honour, but He that said unto Him, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek;" that was the beginning of this exaltation. A priest was an important person in the Old dispensation. As the temple was the center of Israel's life, so the priest was the one who administered all that was in the temple, all that signified to them as their life. So the Priest, the High Priest of our profession is the center of all our life and of our hope and of our good state and of our everlasting peace. God called Him to this great work, to be a Priest. A priest is a mediator; a priest is chosen to stand between the living and the dead, and to do this he must have somewhat to offer. Under the Old dispensation the priest had always somewhat to offer, namely the sacrifices which the people by divine commandment took to him. Christ was not a priest under this order. He came not of the tribe of Levi but of the tribe of Judah and He must, being called to be a Priest by His Father, have somewhat also to offer; He must have something to take to God. He must be consecrated, he must have His hands full. What were His hands filled with? What had He, a Priest, a Mediator, to take to God His Father? Himself. Nothing else, nothing less; nothing more wonderful, nothing so efficacious, nothing so glorious as this--Himself. He offered Himself without spot to God. This was the great exaltation of the Man Christ Jesus. His great office, His wonderful work, His priestly offering, all acceptable and accepted of His Father. This was His exaltation, and though commonly and rightly His death is said to have been ignominious (and so among men it was and is esteemed of them, for "cursed is every one that hangeth of a tree"), yet what more glorious thing or subject can we think about than this, the death of Jesus Christ? O the matchless beauty of it, the infinite loveliness of it, the wide embrace of it! There are two things in the embrace. First God in His perfections; these perfections must be honoured. The help in this case is wonderful, and it could only be done by one who was mighty, for it was a case of the eternity of God's character being honoured, of His perfections being magnified in perfect consistency with the holiness and the happiness of the people He represented. And the embrace in the next place is the whole church. He gathered all up so to speak into His own mighty hands and lifted them out of the mire of sin, delivered them from the prison-house of death, taking away their guilt and pollution and corruption and obnoxious condition--taking all away from them and bringing them to be as in God's sight spotless and without blame before Him in love.

What a cross was the cross of Christ! What a mighty helper is the helper Christ! He brought God and sinners together, He reconciled man to God, He took away their sins. His salvation is a salvation that saves, not an attempt to save, but a salvation that leaves nothing to be desired or done afterwards. And He rose from the dead. He was laid in a new grave. This is significant, I think. As He had no corruption, so when He was buried He was buried in a place where there had been no corruption, and He left none, for He saw none. "Where should the dying members rest but with their dying Head?" He rose from the dead, and He was by that resurrection "declared, manifested to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness," as Paul tells us in the Romans; and by many infallible proofs He showed Himself to be what He was, even to be the Lord Jesus, the Man and Person whom they had seen crucified, who had predicted His death and His resurrection; the Man who had taught them, whose miracles they had wondered at, whose kindness they had received, under whose protection they had lived. They saw Him to be the very Person with whom they had walked, and He was exalted in their estimation. He was exalted in the congregation of above five hundred brethren at once. This is He whom men crucified. This is the Man whom men derided, against whom the tongues of

enemies were shot out. This is the Man, and He was exalted. And when the day came that He must leave them, then He led out His disciples as far as to Bethany and lifted up His hands and blessed them, and then was taken up out of their sight and heaven received Him; and He is exalted in heaven in His Person now glorified, in His office very glorious; for He ever liveth to make intercession and is able on that account to save all them that come unto God by Him, even to the uttermost. And He is exalted in providence in the hearts of His children. He is exalted there so that they all honour Him even as they honour the Father; for this is God's will concerning Him, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

Now on this doctrine real religion is built. Let me say it to you again with all the solemnity I have. On this doctrine real religion is built, and if a man should build on any other foundation, the storm will come and the wind will blow, the rain will fall and beat, and the waves dash themselves against the house that is built, and it will fall and great will be the fall of it. See then how you are building, if you are building. If you are building for eternity, look at your foundation. Who is the bottom of it? Is there a rock? Have you reached it?

Let us look, in the next place at how this doctrine is translated into experience; how it is written upon every heart of every child of God. Every child of God receives this into his heart by the Holy Ghost. And in the first place it intimates this, that we must be helpless. "The whole need not a physician but they that are sick. The rich are sent empty away, the poor are filled with good things." Christ went about doing good, God being with Him, and healing all manner of sicknesses and disease. He healed all that had need of healing. He fed the hungry. He did miracles, showing His divinity and His pity. Do we feel needy? Are we helpless? Have we diseases, sicknesses? Have we soul sickness? Are we helpless, sensibly so? Do we realize the distance to which sin has driven us from the Almighty, the infinite unlikeness to God that there is in us by sin, the terrible deformity, the voidness of our nature in respect of all that's good? Have we had that conviction? Does it live in us? Do we see and feel these our hearts to be sinks of sin and iniquity? Do we realize our terrible ignorance, so that unless God pity us and teach us we cannot but err and go astray even more and more from Him and His holy commandments? Do we realize at all the claims of God upon us, the claims of God as manifested in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and so on? Do we feel that though to do good may be present with us, we know not how to perform it? If we do, one may say honestly and scripturally, "Happy people; blessed sinners!" Such sinners do not live in sin willfully, for sin is their grief as well as their shame. They want to be right. Often they may say they know not how they may be, but they want to be right. And now because they are helpless in themselves and because in the first place God is determined to lift them out of the hell of sin into the heaven of free grace; out of helplessness and put them into a state of grace whereby they will find power to pray and believe; He sends One to them whom He has chosen, He sends His dearly beloved Son incarnate. They get a view of Him; they can sing to Him who was born of the virgin Mary, as did the holy angels when a mighty multitude of them came and sang, "Glory to God in the Highest; on earth peace, goodwill toward men." One may say truly that the attitude of our souls to the Lord Jesus Christ will determine our characters. What you think of Him, how your heart is toward Him, will show somewhat of what you are. They said, "Away with Him, away with Him." Well, they were His enemies. What do we say? Have we said, perhaps even this morning, "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" Put your case by the side of those of whom it is said in the Scripture, "They entreated Him to depart out of their coast," and look at your own case, the coast of your soul and heart. Do

you say "Depart," or do you say "Lord come, dwell with me, be in me?" They said "It is not fit He should love." What do you say? "O dwell in me, fill all my soul, And all my powers by Thine control." They said, "His blood be on us." A terrible imprecation that ! What do you say? "May His blood in all its atoning power be sprinkled on my guilty conscience that I may live." It is a great thing to find a heart well bent toward Jesus Christ. The root of a tree planted by a river will always go toward the river, and you, if planted in grace and in the death of Christ, will always find the roots of your desires and of your faith and of your hope bent and turned toward Jesus Christ. It must be so. A Christian has the life of Christ in him. A Christian has the Spirit of Christ in him. Christendom is one thing; a Christian is a different thing, quite. O to be a Christian!

Now the help: "I have laid help upon One that is mighty, I have chosen Him for this purpose." There is none but Christ shall do this people good. What is this help? First of all, He sends His Holy Spirit. The Spirit is called the Spirit of promise because God promised Christ His Spirit and told Him in the covenant as Isaiah expresses it, that the Spirit should not depart from Him, nor from His seed. (Isa. 59:21) This is "that anointing that teacheth of all things and is truth and is no lie." (1 John 2:27) To Nicodemus Christ preached the necessity of the Spirit and of the new birth: "Except ye be born of the Spirit, ye cannot see, much less enter into the kingdom of God; ye must be born again." This is the first act of divine help or creation and power with Christ. This is the first thing He accomplishes in one who is so sinful as to be dead in sin, and therefore absolutely helpless. This is the beginning of all right feeling, of all true knowledge of sin and of grace. What a mercy it is to be born again! It will always be an interesting question with God's people. Even when they are made to believe that they are born again, they will still be thinking about it. They will still at times be meditating upon it. "My soul's new heavenly birth," they will be singing, "was not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." (John 1:13) It is a great thing, this creation in you of a new life. This creation in you therefore of a new appetite, a new knowledge, a new feeling, a new aspiration, a bent of your heart, a trend of your spirit. Born again. No creature power can accomplish this. God does in the heart what it could never do for itself, not even wish to do, not even wish to have done. O grace how wonderful, that He should come and give this lift to a dead soul! But this is not felt as His work, when one is born again; he knows something has been done, and a change has come, but what the change is he is not aware of, the nature of it he does not realize. He begins to know he is lost. What a thing that is! O what a wonderful thing it is to know you are lost! Why, it is the beginning of the knowledge that you are found. It is the beginning of a turning to God. Regeneration is a creation work, a wonderful work; and conversion is the effect of that. When you are converted you are turned, you are turned round; your mind is tuned and thoughts and conscience and desires and aims and pursuits, they are all turned; everything is different. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away and behold all things are become new;" (2 Cor. 5:17) and Christ was given for this very purpose, given to do this great thing.

Now His Holy Spirit being given brings this within the experience of each one born again, namely, he prays. He may have read prayers and said prayers before, but he never prayed till now; and now he does pray, his heart prays. He may have kneeled often in the days before, but his heart never kneeled till now. Now it kneels, now it kneels before God his Maker; his spirit bows down. "Let us kneel before the Lord, let us bow before our Maker;" the soul does this. Happy man who prays! The more he prays the nearer he gets to God. The more he is lifted out of himself when he prays, the more he gets to God by the Spirit of grace and supplication; the

higher he is raised by the helping hand of Jesus Christ. And every step he takes in prayer is a real step toward heaven, toward the saving grace of Christ, toward the fountain open for sin and uncleanness. (Zech. 13:1) Ah, if you have taken one step in this life, one step of real God-wrought prayer, you have taken a step toward eternal blessedness! You may be far from feeling that, but that is the case. Happy man who prays! Blessed sinner who prays! And he is helped in this, he is helped in it; and he needs help in it, for there is much opposition in every child of God to this life of prayer, much opposition. Circumstances oppose it sometimes. If they be pleasing then the mind is carried into the things. If they be painful then the mind is disposed to rebellion, and the heart's affections are opposed, and the will is opposed, and pride is opposed, and the whole bent of human fallen nature is opposed to this life of prayer. But Jesus Christ comes, pours His life upon the soul, gives new supplies of His Spirit, and fulfills anew the Scripture: "I will bring them with weeping, and with supplication will I lead them;" and causes them to enter into that word, "Praying in the Holy Ghost."

Now haven't you had this help, you who pray? Renewed prayer is a renewed token for good. Lifting up by the Spirit unto the throne of grace is a new lifting up by the Lord of life and glory. Prayer is the means of trafficking with heaven. Prayer makes you like the merchantman who brings his food from afar. It is the soul's speaking to God in the face of opposition and in the midst of din and noise and voices contrary to it. You may not always distinguish, but God does, He knows, "He understands a sigh divine and marks a secret groan." When you cannot do without the Lord and tell Him so, He knows it, hears it, observes it: "I have heard him and observed him. I have heard him in his entanglements and his fears and his sinkings and his ceasing to pray as he thinks. I have observed him in all his chatterings and his feelings that he cannot go on any longer; I have observed him and I will help him." Have not you found this help? When men are strong they do not need this arm, but when they are weak they cry for it. They need the inspiration of the Spirit when they feel themselves to be poor dead things.

He helps them to believe. He helped Thomas to believe. Do not be shy of Thomas. If Thomas is a neighbour of yours, you cleave to him; do not be shy of Thomas. I cannot, because the Lord pitied him. He did not turn His back on Thomas. He said, "Thomas, reach hither thy hand, reach hither thy finger," and that helped Thomas to believe. "O," said Thomas, "I have got demonstration enough now." He wanted no further demonstration, and if Christ helps you by giving you some new discovery of Himself so that afresh you look on His Person and say "This is the Lord," you look into His merit and say "This is enough," into His gospel promises and say, "These are wonderful, O that they were mine"--I say, if He does that you have got a demonstration and you can say, "I do believe, I do believe." Men may persuade themselves into believing, but then they do not believe, but when a sinner gets the mighty help of such demonstration, though he may feel short of saying, "My Lord and My God," yet he can say, "I believe that, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

What a favour it is to be helped to believe, because if you so believe then you bring to the Lord everything about yourself; all your sins and unworthiness and all your fears and sinkings and shortcomings, and all your necessities, the need of grace, the need of light, of mercy, of forbearance, of pity, of interposition; you bring all these things to Him, nothing is kept back. No temporal case, no spiritual need, will you keep back if you get this. O what a mercy it is to be helped to believe! A believer is a miracle of grace. A believer is a demonstration that the power

of Christ's resurrection is sufficient; it is against and overcomes all unbelief. Paul prayed that the Ephesians might know this, "the exceeding greatness of His power in them that believe, even the mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him far above all principalities and power." (Eph. 1:19-21) And when you believe by that power, then you will be above principalities and power; you will be above the world, and above your circumstances in your circumstances. You will say, "This will be done, and that will be done, and God will appear for me and help me." Everything will be possible to you if the Lord helps you to believe.

And then too, how He helps us to hope. Ah sometimes hope is ready to die! Unanswered prayer is a great damper upon a living hope, but "the Christian's hope shall never fail." The Psalmist must have received something very remarkable that turned him away from himself in a moment as it were. He was saying, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me," and the next moment he is saying to his soul: "Why art thou cast down; what is the matter, what is it, what is it that depresses you so, what is it that sinks you so, what is it that makes you give up hope? Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" Is it all creation that is against you? "O but," says the Psalmist, "hope thou in God." Demonstration, my friends, demonstration; communication, communication; you will live thereby. Who can give the demonstration? Who can make the communication? "I have laid help upon One that is mighty."

And see the end--love. This must be revived. It is to abide when faith and hope are no longer; when they shall have died a sweet death in sight and fruition. "But love shall still remain; its glories cannot cease," Hart says: "No other change shall that sustain, save only to increase." But who can give us love? How can you embrace a reproving Christ? How can you kiss the hand that is laying on a rod? How can you bless the mouth that speaks a solemn reproach to you? How can you do these things? "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me, in My dealings." Said Christ to His disciples after He had taught them; "Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men." As if He should say: "You believe now what I am saying to you, keep this teaching. Now you believe Me to be the Christ; what when you see Me delivered into the hands of men? You believe My power because you have seen my miracles; what when I am weak and My enemies prevail against Me? Let these sayings sink down into your ears." My friends, you will need every testimony you get; and all the love that may be created in you for Jesus Christ, you will need one day. But this is the one great truth to be kept before us; God has laid help upon His beloved Son, and so to the very end perseverance they shall all receive from day to day. "I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

What follows His exaltation? Who is like Him? Who is like Him? Have any of us felt this morning there is none like Christ, none like Christ? When Aaron's rods and eleven other rods, all sticks, twelve dead sticks, were laid before the ark, what happened? In one night Aaron's rod budded and bloomed blossoms and bore almonds. Are you barren? Do you feel like a stick? All you need is that. Not to be stuck by somebody, not to be stuck in a profession of your own making. All you need is just by the Holy Ghost to be carried into the Holy of Holies and laid before Jesus Christ, and virtue will flow from Him and you will begin to bud and bloom and yield almonds and bear fruit to the praise and glory of God, and this will exalt Christ. As He is in

heaven, so will your affections lift Him up, and you will say, "Bless Him, praise Him," and want to put crowns on His dear glorious head, for He alone is worthy. Amen.