

# God Cares for Us

In this newsletter, we will be contemplating a new theme. One that should be spoken of and thought upon often. Our contemplation begins with a rather distasteful character.

## Balaam

An apostate prophet and a lover of money, Jude points to Balaam as a model of those who sell the people of God for profit. But Balaam was not always like this. At one point, he was a sincere worshiper of the true God. Says our prophet:

“Balaam was once (a good man and) a prophet of God. But he had apostatized and given himself up to covetousness (yet he still professed to be a servant of the Most High. He was not ignorant of God’s work in behalf of Israel.) When the messengers announced their errand, he well knew that it was his duty to refuse the rewards of Balak and dismiss the ambassadors. But he ventured to dally with temptation and urged the messengers to tarry that night, declaring that he could give no answer till he had asked counsel of the Lord. Balaam knew that his curse could not harm Israel. But his pride was flattered by the words, ‘He whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.’ The bribe of costly gifts excited his covetousness, and while professing obedience to the will of God, he tried to comply with the desires of Balak.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, pg. 439.

Don’t you find it interesting that the apostate, backslidden, covetous prophet still professed to be a follower of God? He even asked the council of the Lord! How many people profess to seek counsel from God in prayer when their hearts are wholly bent upon an evil course? God still answered the prophet, telling him, “No.” But Balaam’s heart was set upon disobedience. He disobeyed God and was saved by a donkey that intervened on his behalf. This was how far down the path of destruction a man who received visions from God went. But how was his understanding corrupted?

“Balaam had some knowledge of the sacrificial offerings of the Hebrews, and he hoped that by surpassing them in costly gifts he might secure the blessing of God and ensure the accomplishment of his sinful projects. Thus the

sentiments of the idolatrous Moabites were gaining control of his mind. His wisdom had become foolishness; his spiritual vision was beclouded; he had brought blindness upon himself by yielding to the power of Satan.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, pg. 444.

By yielding to his sins and through contact with the wicked, Balaam lost the divine wisdom he had gained through communion with God. He began to think God was such a one as himself, able to be swayed with costly gifts. He adopted the same view as the pagans.

Upon turning from God, Balaam became a magician:

“Balaam belonged to the magicians, though at one time a prophet of God; by the Holy Spirit he had foretold the prosperity of Israel and the appearing of the Messiah; and his prophecies had been handed down by tradition from century to century. But in the Old Testament the Saviour’s advent was more clearly revealed. The magi learned with joy that His coming was near, and that the whole world was to be filled with a knowledge of the glory of the Lord.”—Desire of Ages, pg. 59.

Balaam was also famous, not for his work as a magician, but for his work as a prophet. Balaam had said, “He whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.” His reputation had grown through service to God, but it was now ill-placed. Balaam, of himself, had no more power to curse Israel than did the donkey upon which he rode. Despite his apostasy, the Lord still used Balaam as a mouthpiece. Though he had wicked designs in his heart, he was not allowed to speak as he desired.

“Balaam confessed that he came with the purpose of cursing Israel, and strengthening the hearts of the people of Moab. But the power of the Lord rested upon him, and controlled his speech. The words he uttered were directly contrary to the sentiments of his heart. In the most solemn prophecy he pronounced blessings upon Israel, while his soul was filled with curses. God had given Balaam an evidence of divine power, in speaking through the dumb beast, and this wicked man was now an instrument in the hand of God as verily as the beast

had been. He had no more power to control his words, and no more reason to take glory to himself, than had the animal upon which he rode.”—Signs of the Times, December 2, 1880, par. 18.

Balaam intended to curse the people of God because he wanted the riches that the heathen king offered. Through uniting with the world, his views of God had been corrupted, His spiritual understanding had become dwarfed. He was ready to sell his eternal inheritance for riches and worldly prosperity. Money of itself is not an evil thing; in fact, there is only one way in which it can corrupt a person.

“The Scriptures teach that wealth is a dangerous possession only when placed in competition with the immortal treasure. It is when the earthly and temporal absorbs the thoughts, the affections, the devotion which God claims, that it becomes a snare. Those who are bartering the eternal weight of glory for a little of the glitter and tinsel of earth, the everlasting habitations for a home which can be theirs but a few years at best, are making an unwise choice. Such was the exchange made by Esau, when he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; by Balaam, when he forfeited the favor of God for the rewards of the king of Midian; by Judas, when for thirty pieces of silver he betrayed the Lord of glory.”—Review and Herald, May 16, 1882.

Balaam was not ignorant of the reward of the righteous. He had seen the great plans of God and likely had a greater understanding than you or I. Neither was he ignorant of the powerful workings of God against the enemies of Israel.

“Balaam was not ignorant of God’s work in behalf of Israel. He knew how Jehovah had displayed his power and majesty in bringing his people from the house of bondage. The destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts, the mighty manifestations at Sinai, the countless miracles in the wilderness, and the recent triumphs over Og and Sihon,—these thrilling events had spread far and wide, and with them all Balaam was familiar. He could see how terrible a thing it was for finite man to war against the infinite God. He saw the destruction of those who set themselves in defiance of Omnipotence. Balaam knew that his curse could not harm Israel. God was on their side; and so long as they were true to him, no adverse power of earth or hell could prevail against them.”—Signs of the Times, November 18, 1880.

In vision, Balaam beheld the reward of the righteous:

“He beheld the vast multitude of holy, happy ones, rejoicing in the unfading glories of the earth made new. Gazing upon the scene, the prophet exclaimed, ‘Who can count the dust of the righteous, or the number of the fourth part of Israel?’ And as he sees the crowns of glory on every brow, the joy beaming from every countenance, and looks forward to that endless life of unalloyed felicity, he utters the solemn prayer, ‘Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.’”—Signs of the Times, December 2, 1880.

Despite all this, his heart remained unchanged, and he learned the secret of Israel’s strength. What God had intended for his salvation, the mad prophet used for his own destruction.

“Balaam was shown the peculiar favor with which God regarded Israel, and their distinctive character as his chosen people. He saw that the position to be maintained by the Israelites—a complete separation from all surrounding nations—represented the relation which all true Christians should sustain to the world. ‘The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.’ At the time these words were spoken, the Israelites had no permanent settlement, and their peculiar character, their manners and customs, were not familiar to Balaam. Yet how strikingly was this prophecy fulfilled in the after-history of this people! Through all the years of their captivity in Babylon, through all the ages since they were dispersed among the nations, they have maintained the distinctive characteristics of their nationality and their religion.”—Signs of the Times, December 2, 1880.

Balaam knew the only way to overcome Israel was to separate them from God and unite them with the world. To receive the wages of wickedness, he taught Balak how to draw Israel into sin and separate them from God.

“The people of Israel were at this time loyal to God; and so long as they continued in obedience to His law, no power in earth or hell could prevail against them. But the curse which Balaam had not been permitted to pronounce against God’s people, he finally succeeded in bringing upon them by seducing them into sin. When they transgressed God’s commandments, then they separated themselves from Him, and they were left to feel the power of the destroyer. Satan is well aware that the weakest soul who abides in Christ is more than a match for the hosts of darkness, and that, should he reveal himself openly, he would be met and resisted. Therefore he seeks to draw away the soldiers of the cross from their strong fortification, while

he lies in ambush with his forces, ready to destroy all who venture upon his ground. Only in humble reliance upon God, and obedience to all His commandments, can we be secure. No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer. Especially should we entreat the Lord for wisdom to understand His word. Here are revealed the wiles of the tempter and the means by which he may be successfully resisted. Satan is an expert in quoting Scripture, placing his own interpretation upon passages, by which he hopes to cause us to stumble. We should study the Bible with humility of heart, never losing sight of our dependence upon God. While we must constantly guard against the devices of Satan, we should pray in faith continually: 'Lead us not into temptation.'—Great Controversy, pg. 529-530.

### **A Theme for Contemplation**

Israel fell into sin and provoked God to wrath. This was their own fault. If they had remained followers of that which is good and obeyed God, no evil would have befallen them. Our prophet draws upon the story of Balaam, providing us a beautiful theme for contemplation:

"There, upon the mountain-top, are the emissaries of Satan, devising evil against God's people, who are all unconscious of their danger. But He that keepeth Israel does not slumber. The Lord's eye discerns every plot against his own, and no weapon formed against his church shall prosper. God restrains the power of wicked men. He says to them, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.' What a thought is this! what a theme for contemplation! and what a response of love and faithfulness should it call forth from every child of God!"—Signs of the Times, December 2, 1880, par. 8.

God does not allow the wicked to do as they please to His children. He has set limits beyond which no emissary of evil is allowed to act. It was this boundary that Satan mentioned when he said of Job, "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Job 1:10. God only allows things to come to us that will work together for our good. But we ought not to be presumptuous, nor deceive ourselves. If we sow disobedience, evil will certainly come upon us, for God is not mocked. But if we have not done evil, we can be still and wait for the salvation of God.

Let's now take a moment to consider a few scenarios in the Bible in which the wicked plotted against the righteous but failed to accomplish their purposes.

David made many mistakes, but because of

his sincere repentance, God forgave him. When he was young, he challenged the towering Goliath with a staff and sling in his hands and the name of the Lord on his lips. King Saul saw his bravery and took him to be his armor-bearer. Saul was soon convinced that David would be the next king. He knew the kingdom had been torn from him. Saul offered his daughter to David as a wife. For a dowry, he requested a bloody price, hoping David would fall in battle to the Philistines. But God was with David, and this attempt only served to legitimize David's claim to the throne. David himself was not even aware that this was an attempt on his life. Later, Saul tried to pin David to the wall with a javelin twice. David began to suspect something was amiss and skipped the new moon feast where Saul had planned to kill him. He fled from the presence of Saul and was hunted for years, until Saul finally fell in battle. The Lord delivered Saul into David's hand twice, but each time David showed him mercy and spared his life. God placed David on the throne, and David was part of the lineage of Jesus.

Joseph was a great man in the land of Egypt. He saved the lives of an untold number of people, including his own family. As a child, his brothers plotted against him. When he came at his father's command to check on them, they intended to kill him. God did not permit this and worked upon the heart of Ruben, the oldest brother. Ruben intervened, intending to rescue Joseph, but while Ruben was away, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. He remained faithful to God despite the turn of events. Eventually, Joseph became overseer of the house of the Captain of the Guard in Egypt. The wicked wife of his master plotted against Joseph. He was cast into prison for his integrity. But God soon raised Joseph to the second-highest position in the kingdom. These events strengthened Joseph's virtue and integrity. It was these circumstances that fit Joseph for the position he was to hold.

Daniel was a man greatly beloved by God. In his youth, he determined to remain faithful to God no matter his surroundings. After he was made a wise man of Babylon, the captain of the guard informed him that King Nebuchadnezzar had decreed that he was to die. He appealed to the king, placing his faith in God. God delivered him from his sudden danger, and he was given a high position. In his old age, another test suddenly came upon him when the king issued a decree that wicked men had created to cause his destruction.

4 The decree forbade praying to anyone other than the king, and Daniel took it to the Lord in prayer. He was cast into the lion's den, but the Lord shut the mouths of the lions. Daniel stands as a beacon of faithfulness amidst the corruption of Babylon. His life testifies that God tells the wicked "thus far and no farther." They could cast him to the lions, but they could not kill him. Dumb beasts are not so foolish as to resist the will of God.

Daniel's three friends were not spared their own troubles. The proud king Nebuchadnezzar cast them into the fiery furnace because they would not worship the idol he had made. The king had been filled with boundless ambition and selfish pride. Defying the prophecy of the Lord of Heaven, he had sought to garner worship for himself. The author behind this perversion of truth was none other than Satan.

"The symbolic representation by which God had revealed to king and people His purpose for the nations of earth, was now to be made to serve for the glorification of human power. Daniel's interpretation was to be rejected and forgotten; truth was to be misinterpreted and misapplied. The symbol designed of Heaven to unfold to the minds of men important events of the future, was to be used to hinder the spread of the knowledge that God desired the world to receive. Thus through the devisings of ambitious men, Satan was seeking to thwart the divine purpose for the human race. The enemy of mankind knew that truth unmixed with error is a power mighty to save; but that when used to exalt self and to further the projects of men, it becomes a power for evil."—Prophets and Kings, pg. 505.

Satan had, to a great extent, succeeded. But the power of God is not constrained by the human vessel or by the popularity of the Truth. Through three faithful men, God revealed His power to the known world. Through Joseph, one man who was determined to maintain his integrity, God revealed His power to the nation of Egypt.

"From the beginning God has wrought through His people to bring blessing to the world. To the ancient Egyptian nation God made Joseph a fountain of life. Through the integrity of Joseph the life of that whole people was preserved. Through Daniel God saved the life of all the wise men of Babylon. And these deliverances are as object lessons; they illus-

trate the spiritual blessings offered to the world through connection with the God whom Joseph and Daniel worshiped. Everyone in whose heart Christ abides, everyone who will show forth His love to the world, is a worker together with God for the blessing of humanity. As he receives from the Saviour grace to impart to others, from his whole being flows forth the tide of spiritual life."—Acts of the Apostles, pg. 13.

Despite the best efforts of Satan to corrupt, deceive, and lead astray, his plans are always overthrown by God.

"It was because the Israelites were so disposed to connect themselves with the heathen and imitate their idolatry that God had permitted them to go down into Egypt, where the influence of Joseph was widely felt, and where circumstances were favorable for them to remain a distinct people. Here also the gross idolatry of the Egyptians and their cruelty and oppression during the latter part of the Hebrew sojourn should have inspired in them an abhorrence of idolatry, and should have led them to flee for refuge to the God of their fathers. This very providence Satan made a means to serve his purpose, darkening the minds of the Israelites and leading them to imitate the practices of their heathen masters. On account of the superstitious veneration in which animals were held by the Egyptians, the Hebrews were not permitted, during their bondage, to present the sacrificial offerings. Thus their minds were not directed by this service to the great Sacrifice, and their faith was weakened. When the time came for Israel's deliverance, Satan set himself to resist the purposes of God. It was his determination that that great people, numbering more than two million souls, should be held in ignorance and superstition. The people whom God had promised to bless and multiply, to make a power in the earth, and through whom He was to reveal the knowledge of His will—the people whom He was to make the keepers of His law—this very people Satan was seeking to keep in obscurity and bondage, that he might obliterate from their minds the remembrance of God."—Patriarchs and Prophets, pg. 333.

Satan is even now working his hellish science with renewed zeal because he knows he has but a short time. He is seeking to obliterate the remembrance of God from the minds of His people. Why is he so successful? Because God's people are not watching and praying lest they fall into

*More Food for the Little Flock —*

# God Cares for Us

temptation. Satan seeks to lead us to study the Bible without prayer and sincerity. He tries to fill our minds with the vanity of fiction, crowding out the Word of God. He tries to occupy our attention with insignificant matters. He causes fierce temptations to beset us, seeking to overthrow our faith. He tries to choke us with the cares of this life. He tries to blind our eyes to eternal realities. All of these things will only cause us to come forth as great men and women mighty in the cause of God if we resist him by faith. James tells us:

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”—James 4:7.

The Lord has decreed that the gates of hell will not prevail against His church.

“I tell you, my brethren, the Lord has an organized body through whom he will work. There may be more than a score of Judases among them, there may be a rash Peter who will under circumstances of trial deny his Lord. There may be persons represented by John whom Jesus loved, but he may have a zeal that would destroy men’s lives by calling down fire from heaven upon them to revenge an insult to Christ and the truth. But the great Teacher seeks to give lessons of instruction to correct these existing evils. He is doing the same today with his church. He is pointing out their dangers. He is presenting before them the Laodicean message.”—3 Selected Messages, pg. 17.

Consider Israel in Babylon. Were there not more than three Jews among the throng of worshippers? It appears that the plotting of Satan had succeeded! But through those three men, God turned the tide in the entire known world. The Truth was exalted, God was glorified, and sinners were converted. Satan is still seeking the destruction of God’s people, whether through wicked men or through the agency of evil spirits, but this is not where our attention is to be focused:

“While all the powers of earth and hell are combined to destroy, God guards his children still. The Lord would not have his people in continual fear, hence he does not reveal to them a thousandth part of the efforts of their great adversary to allure and destroy. If they could

discern the wonderful power of God constantly exerted in their behalf, would not their hearts be filled with gratitude for his love, and with awe at the thought of his majesty and wondrous power.”—Signs of the Times, December 2, 1880.

Marvel at the tender compassion of our heavenly Father and His wondrous benefits towards those who obey the perfect law of liberty.

## More examples of God’s Deliverance

In the time of the Medes and Persians, through a series of events, God placed Esther in an ideal place to rescue His people. The wicked Haman hated the Jews because Mordecai would not pay him reverence. He scorned the idea of killing Mordecai only and sought the destruction of the entire Jewish nation. To the Jews throughout the provinces, it came as a sudden shock as they listened in horror at the decree against their lives. Haman had succeeded, or so it seemed. But how the tables were turned! The King was unable to sleep, and the work of Mordecai was called to his remembrance. He realized that he should honor Mordecai for saving his life. Seeking ideas, he asked who was in the court. Haman was waiting in the king’s court. He was so sick of seeing Mordecai that he made a 75-foot-tall gallows so the whole city could watch the body of Mordecai being eaten by birds. He had come with murder in his heart to petition the King. The King made haste to bring Haman in, and he asked him, “What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour?” Pride certainly brought Haman low. Imagine his surprise and humiliation as he went before Mordecai, praising him before the people. He ran home with his head covered to hear his wife and friends tell him his case was hopeless because he had begun to fall before the Jews. This conversation was interrupted by an invitation to eat with the King and Queen. He soon discovered his murderous intentions were also directed against the life of the Queen. The anger of the King was exceedingly hot, for the law of the Medes and Persians cannot be changed. The life of the Queen was in danger, and the King was so angry that he had to take a walk. When he returned, the pleadings of Haman were so desperate that he had climbed onto the bed, an inappropriate position

6 to take towards the Queen. This only made the King angrier. As they covered Haman's head, an overly helpful chamberlain suggested the gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai. The entire city watched the birds eat Haman's body instead. To combat the decree, King Ahasuerus made another permitting the Jews to defend themselves. I wonder who defended the Queen?

Herodias, the unlawful consort of King Herod, plotted against John the Baptist because of his boldness in condemning sin. Herod cast John into prison to please Herodias, but was afraid to kill him. One day, when the king had partied too hard, he was trapped in his own oath and beheaded John the Baptist. It would appear that the Lord had forsaken John. The wicked conspired against a righteous man, and seemed to have prevailed! This story has a valuable lesson: God does not always deliver us from the first death. Jesus said:

"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."—Matthew 11:11.

"...In the estimation of Heaven, what is it that constitutes greatness? Not that which the world accounts greatness; not wealth, or rank, or noble descent, or intellectual gifts, in themselves considered. If intellectual greatness, apart from any higher consideration, is worthy of honor, then our homage is due to Satan, whose intellectual power no man has ever equaled. But when perverted to self-serving, the greater the gift, the greater curse it becomes. It is moral worth that God values. Love and purity are the attributes He prizes most. John was great in the sight of the Lord, when, before the messengers from the Sanhedrin, before the people, and before his own disciples, he refrained from seeking honor for himself, but pointed all to Jesus as the Promised One. His unselfish joy in the ministry of Christ presents the highest type of nobility ever revealed in man."—Desire of Ages, pg. 219.

"The principle of the Baptist's own life of self-abnegation was the principle of the Messiah's kingdom. John well knew how foreign all this was to the principles and hopes of the leaders in Israel. That which was to him convincing evidence of Christ's divinity would be no evidence to them. They were looking for a Messiah who had not been promised. John saw that the Saviour's mission could win from them only hatred and condemnation. He, the forerunner, was but drinking of the cup which Christ Himself must drain to its dregs."—Desire of Ages, pg. 218.

"To many minds a deep mystery surrounds

the fate of John the Baptist. They question why he should have been left to languish and die in prison. The mystery of this dark providence our human vision cannot penetrate; but it can never shake our confidence in God when we remember that John was but a sharer in the sufferings of Christ. All who follow Christ will wear the crown of sacrifice. They will surely be misunderstood by selfish men, and will be made a mark for the fierce assaults of Satan. It is this principle of self-sacrifice that his kingdom is established to destroy, and he will war against it wherever manifested...When (John's) voice was heard in the wilderness saying, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight' (Matthew 3:3), Satan feared for the safety of his kingdom. The sinfulness of sin was revealed in such a manner that men trembled. Satan's power over many who had been under his control was broken. He had been unwearied in his efforts to draw away the Baptist from a life of unreserved surrender to God; but he had failed. And he had failed to overcome Jesus. In the temptation in the wilderness, Satan had been defeated, and his rage was great. Now he determined to bring sorrow upon Christ by striking John. The One whom he could not entice to sin he would cause to suffer."—Desire of Ages, pg. 224.

"Jesus did not interpose to deliver His servant. He knew that John would bear the test. ...for the sake of thousands who in after years must pass from prison to death, John was to drink the cup of martyrdom. As the followers of Jesus should languish in lonely cells, or perish by the sword, the rack, or the fagot (burning at the stake), apparently forsaken by God and man, what a stay to their hearts would be the thought that John the Baptist, to whose faithfulness Christ Himself had borne witness, had passed through a similar experience! ...Though no miraculous deliverance was granted John, he was not forsaken. He had always the companionship of heavenly angels, who opened to him the prophecies concerning Christ, and the precious promises of Scripture. These were his stay, as they were to be the stay of God's people through the coming ages. To John the Baptist, as to those that came after him, was given the assurance, 'Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end.' Matthew 28:20, R. V., margin."—Desire of Ages, pg. 224.

"God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in

the dungeon. 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.' Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, **fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.**"—Desire of Ages, pg. 224.

In a sense, John the Baptist was delivered. He was placed beyond the temptations and wrath of Satan to await his reward. But not without first receiving the most weighty trust and highest honor that Heaven can bestow upon men.

The next Herod (the one eaten by worms) killed James, the brother of John. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he took Peter during the feast of unleavened bread and cast him into prison, intending to kill him too. In those days, people put their trust in training and in bars. The soldiers themselves were under a death sentence if caught sleeping! Surely man had prevailed! Peter seemed unconcerned; he had such a deep trust in Jesus that the night before his execution, he was sleeping between his two guards. Suddenly, light shone all around him; God had sent an angel to deliver him. Peter walked out of prison in the middle of the night. All the security and training of Rome was as nothing before the angel of God. Today, people put their trust in technology, but it will prove just as worthless before the power of God. Man cannot prevail against Heaven or the will of God for His children.

Consider Elijah, whose heart was full of hope in the quick work of revival in Israel. Having experienced a great victory on Mount Carmel, he ran before the king all the way to the city, which was anywhere from 20 to 30 miles. Exhausted from the day's activities (including slaying 400 false prophets), he fell asleep only to be awakened by the death threats of Queen Jezebel. Filled with fear, he fled for his life. Elijah was fed by an angel twice, shown the power of God in a whirlwind, an earthquake, and a fire, and then sent back to finish his work. In his time of trial, Elijah had wanted to die, but God ordained for him to be taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. He was also delivered from the temptations and wrath of Satan.

Paul was delivered many times from the plotting of evil men. He says:

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the

wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."—2 Corinthians 11:24-28.

God's people will in all ages face sudden danger, but God is ever ready to deliver and preserve those who seek His glory with self-forgetful zeal and a love inspired by the Sacrifice of Christ for sinners. We should not fear, for we are in the hands of an all-knowing, all-powerful, loving heavenly Father.

"In all ages God's appointed witnesses have exposed themselves to reproach and persecution for the truth's sake. Joseph was maligned and persecuted because he preserved his virtue and integrity. David, the chosen messenger of God, was hunted like a beast of prey by his enemies. Daniel was cast into a den of lions because he was true to his allegiance to heaven. Job was deprived of his worldly possessions, and so afflicted in body that he was abhorred by his relatives and friends; yet he maintained his integrity. Jeremiah could not be deterred from speaking the words that God had given him to speak; and his testimony so enraged the king and princes that he was cast into a loathsome pit. Stephen was stoned because he preached Christ and Him crucified. Paul was imprisoned, beaten with rods, stoned, and finally put to death because he was a faithful messenger for God to the Gentiles. And John was banished to the Isle of Patmos 'for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.' These examples of human steadfastness bear witness to the faithfulness of God's promises—of His abiding presence and sustaining grace. They testify to the power of faith to withstand the powers of the world. It is the work of faith to rest in God in the darkest hour, to feel, however sorely tried and tempest-tossed, that our Father is at the helm. The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time to estimate aright the worth of the eternal riches. Jesus does not present to His followers the hope of attaining earthly glory and riches, of living a life free from trial. Instead He calls upon them to follow Him in the path of self-denial and reproach. He who came to redeem the world was opposed by the united forces of evil. In an unpitying confederacy, evil men and evil angels arrayed themselves against the Prince of Peace. His every word and act revealed divine compassion, and His unlikeness to the world provoked the bitterest hostility. So it will be with all who will live godly in Christ Jesus. Persecution and reproach await all who are imbued with the

Spirit of Christ. The character of the persecution changes with the times, but the principle—the spirit that underlies it—is the same that has slain the chosen of the Lord ever since the days of Abel. In all ages Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has tortured them and put them to death, but in dying they became conquerors. They bore witness to the power of One mightier than Satan. Wicked men may torture and kill the body, but they cannot touch the life that is hid with Christ in God. They can incarcerate men and women in prison walls, but they cannot bind the spirit. Through trial and persecution the glory—the character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones. The believers in Christ, hated and persecuted by the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. On earth they walk in narrow paths; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial and experience bitter disappointments; but thus they learn the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ's sufferings, they can look beyond the gloom to the glory, saying, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' Romans 8:18."—Acts of the Apostles, pg. 575-576.

### Conclusion

There is a time of trial just before us. It is coming sooner than we think. All of these examples teach us about the wrath of Satan against the people of God. He comes as a thief, a roaring lion, a dragon, to kill, steal, and destroy without warning. But each of these examples testifies to the faithfulness of God's promises, of the power of His sustaining grace that is available without measure in our time of need. Offer up thanksgiving now, pay your vows to God now, surrender your life to Him now. Then in the Time of Trouble, call upon Him, and He will deliver you. We need a faith that can see the unseen, a trust like Job, an understanding like the three men on the plain of Dura who said, "Our God is able to deliver, but if not, we will not bow down and worship." Who can tell how much honor God is waiting to bestow upon them? Perhaps God will give you the most weighty trust and highest honor that Heaven can bestow upon men. Or perhaps He will take you to Heaven in a chariot of fire without ever seeing death.

"The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers.... And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?' 1 Peter 3:12, 13. When Balaam, allured by the promise of rich rewards, practiced enchantments against Israel, and by sacrifices to the Lord sought to invoke a curse upon His people, the Spirit of God forbade the evil which he longed to pronounce, and Balaam was forced to exclaim: 'How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?' 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!' When sacrifice had again been offered, the ungodly prophet declared: 'Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them.' 'Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!' Yet a third time altars were erected, and again Balaam essayed to secure a curse. But from the unwilling lips of the prophet, the Spirit of God declared the prosperity of His chosen, and rebuked the folly and malice of their foes: 'Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.' Numbers 23:8, 10, 20, 21, 23; 24:9."—Great Controversy, pg. 529.

Does God care for us less than He did Israel? Surely He loves us the same! For we have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in all you do and forget not all His benefits. Who is he that will harm you if you are a follower of Christ? In life, we are His witnesses; in death, we are more than conquerors. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

*For a finished work,*



**Jonathan Taylor**

*Wisdom is justified of all her children. -Luke 7:35*

*More Food for the Little Flock —*