

LEST YE FAINT

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE STRATOSPHERE OF SPIRITUAL LONGING

“Lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:2).

WHEN THE PATH OF THE SAVIOUR’S design and the course of the saint’s desire fail to coincide, there is a state of broken fellowship. Such a divergence at once presages a deviation of interests and provides the groundwork for spiritual waywardness. We have yet to learn that while the Master’s yoke is easy it is not elastic, and those who find themselves veering from the path of true devotion would do wisely to emulate the Psalmist in his heart-cry, **“Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I”** (Psalm 61:2).

To say the least, David sensed his own insufficiency and desperately sought needed assistance. Here is one who is not content to pick a path through the jungle of reason. And it is most intriguing to analyze this small part of his recorded supplication.

It has all the earmarks of intense earnestness in its content and all the evidences of eagerness in its transmission. It indicated distance, desire and decision. It bespoke the search of faith for solidity, security and support, all of which he well knew were discoverable in the Rock.

He Advances with a Confession

HERE IS A REVEALING SOUL

The discerning spiritual mind will find more than metaphorical value in David’s use of the term **“Rock”**. His cry was not the hasty, ill-considered and ordinary outburst of an overwhelmed heart—one that is sobbed forth meaninglessly.

On the contrary, it is a choice appellation possessing rare historical beauty, spiritual gravity and inspired design. It was as though his whole soul began filling with the firm assurance that the Infinite God would be his strong defence. Such confidence struggles for expression—it must be expressed—and when it issues full-clothed in clear understandable language it cannot but inspire others even as it has encouraged and strengthened the heart which gave it utterance.

May God bless in our memory the undying experiences of those noble personalities of another day who, though they were thrust by life's varying experiences into the quicksands of dismay, saw luminously before their tearful eyes the unfailing ROCK and knew that He was ever and always within the reach of their feeble hand of faith. May we also learn how to properly recognize the One from whence cometh our help.

THE ROCK OF PERFECTION

Perhaps Moses never waxed more eloquent than when he began to sing of the greatness of his God. The first stanza of his song abounds in rich poetic similes which sparkle as particles of gold scintillating in the noonday sun. **“My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew,”** he sings in the key of jubilant reverence, **“as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass; because I will publish the name of the Lord—He is the Rock, His work is perfect”** (Deuteronomy 32)

THE ROCK OF PROVISION.

“And there was no water for the congregation” (Numbers 20:2).

This posed a problem of disturbing proportions for Moses. The people rose against him. Their cries were distressing. They wished that they were back in Egypt, or that they had died with their brethren.

Pessimism was rampant. It required nothing less than the glory of the Lord to dispel the shadows and to brighten the situation. **“Thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the Rock”** (Numbers 20:8), was the divine instruction to the troubled leader. When Moses had done this, **“the congregation drank.”**

Then the Lord sent them **“honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock”** (Deuteronomy 32:13).

The “Rock-provisions,” therefore, for those who are upon the Rock; are water, honey and oil—the refreshment of grace for the life, the sweetness of grace in the life and the power of grace through the life.

THE ROCK OF PROTECTION

The Spirit of God ever employs expressive imagery. When He desired to show us the great need which mankind has for the Great Deliverer, He called the place of our sojourn **“a weary land”** and used a desert to further symbolize it. Then He presented Christ as the great Rock in such a circumstance (Isaiah 32:2).

- What a hiding place in the midst of a desert storm would mean to a sojourner, Christ is to one in the storm of life.

- What a covert would mean as protection from the blowing sands of the desert is what Christ means when the blasts of adversity strike with crushing velocity.

- What rivers of water would mean to the thirsty traveler over the hot sands of desert wastes, Christ means to the thirsty heart.
- Just what a shade tree would mean to the sun-fatigued desert plodder, Christ means to the trusting one in the heat of life's little day.

And every truly born again person may say with assurance, **"I sat down under his shadow with great delight"** (Song of Solomon 2:3).

THE ROCK OF PROFESSION

The smiting of the Rock in the wilderness might not have meant more than a religious ceremony to many of that day, but it was divinely intended to set forth much profound truth. The Apostle Paul had no doubt about the matter. **"That Rock was Christ"** (I Corinthians 10:4), he pointedly told the Corinthian believers.

- The Rock that followed them, had found him.
- The Rock that had favoured them, had filled him.
- The Rock that had been smitten formerly in a figure was later smitten in fact, and that Rock was his Saviour.

THE ROCK OF PROMISE

The complaint which Jehovah laid against Israel was that the people had lightly esteemed, and had carelessly forgotten, the Holy One Who had intervened in their behalf. Moses made clear the seriousness of this offense by stating that it was against the **"Rock of salvation"** (Deuteronomy 32:15).

When we were extricated from the slough of despond by simple, trusting faith in Calvary's provisions, our feet were set upon a rock (Psalm 40:2 11).

That Rock was Christ. And the salvation found in and through that Rock is of present blessing and prospective bliss. It is the Rock of eternal stability which makes the future so gloriously bright that we may, by faith, exclaim with Rabbi Ben Ezra, "Grow old along with me; the best is yet to be."

He Appeals with Evident Concern

HERE IS A REACHING SOUL

There is something expulsive about David's plea which is not unusual when one's heart is overwhelmed.

The heart, it is said, dilates with joy, contracts with sadness, breaks with sorrow, melts with discouragement, forsakes with terror, is desolate with amazement, and fluctuates with doubt.

When there is a combination of these coronary reactions, one could well be incapacitated or even prostrated. What peace and consolation it affords one to know the “**Rock that is higher**” – the true Source of help from above!

THE OUTREACH OF FAITH

The outreach of faith is prompted by need, promoted by knowledge and made positive by assurance. Faith, though forced by circumstance, will sooner or later accept the invitation to “**come boldly to the throne of grace**” (Hebrews 4:12).

David wanted to know what the righteous can do if the foundations be destroyed (Psalm 11:3).

The first thing the righteousness can do in the midst of life’s terrifying reverses is to ask themselves, “**Why stand we in jeopardy?**” (I Corinthians 15:30).

Christians may not be able to prevent themselves from plunging into disturbing situations, but they can prevent themselves from remaining there. How? By appealing to the One who is mighty to deliver. This is precisely what the Psalmist was doing when he cried, “**Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.**”

The disciples, too, were in jeopardy when the dreadful storm overtook them on the lake and their little craft was beginning to fill. “**Master! Master!**” they appealed with pronounced alarm, “**We perish!**” Luke 8:23, 24)

But they didn’t. Their reach for the Rescuer was richly rewarded.

THE PATHWAY OF LIGHT

Amid life’s varying and inevitable vicissitudes, one may, at any time, find oneself in the dense darkness of perplexity. Yet, there is “**A light that shineth in a dark place**” (II Peter 1:19).

This light not only shines, but it shines ON. It pierces and penetrates the darkness. It is absolutely invincible. “**And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not [overpowered it]**” (John 1:5).

If it could be overpowered by darkness, there would be no vestige of hope for mankind.

THE UPLIFT OF TRUTH

AS the truth is variously manifested, so is the darkness which attempts to militate against it.

God’s Light encounters the darkness of unbelief, the darkness of disobedience, the darkness of rejection, and the darkness of rebellion.

- What is unbelief but indifference?
- What is disobedience but insincerity?

- What is rejection but infidelity?
- What is rebellion but insurrection?

Were all these forces allied in opposition to the Light, and they are, they cannot overpower it. It shines on! Indifference ignores the Light; insincerity evades the Light; infidelity refuses the Light; insurrection opposes the Light, but the Light shines on—ever on! It shines on in spite of treason, treachery, and tyranny.

- The Light will destroy the antichrist (II Thessalonians 2:8 18).
- The Light will reveal sin (John 12:48).
- The Light will fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

But as a timely agent of practical blessing, it is the Christian's indispensable comfort, for it illumines the way through the dismal valleys of dismay to the High Rock that is "**a very present help in trouble**" (Psalm 46:1).

He Admits the Present Course is Low

HERE IS A REASONING SOUL

The Rock to which he was appealing was concededly higher in every conceivable respect.

This must obviously be so since God is in view, but it sometimes requires the presence of an enemy, the pressure of duty or the perplexity of a situation to give one this proper perspective. There is some reason to believe that even David felt sufficiently capable of holding out in the struggle against a foe—at least, for a while, for he said, "**When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.**"

In other words, "I can get on for the time, but when I am incapacitated, transport me to the Rock." This is an exaggerated view, yet it is so like men to look upon God as the last resort. But all the while David reasoned that he would need the Rock that was higher than he. Without this elevated spiritual position, one is operating on a low plane—too low for one's good or for God's glory.

LOW IN DEVOTION

Mary sat at the feet of her Lord to learn of Him (Luke 10:39).

John leaned upon the breast of the Master and felt the heartbeat of His love (John 21:20).

But the Saviour of men waits in vain for the hearts of His people to warm up to Him sufficiently to say in truth "Lord Jesus, I love Thee." Ofttimes, when there is a formal expression, the Lord is forced to say grievously,

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8).

How greatly do we need to be led to the Rock that is higher.

LOW IN DESIRE

How oft would the Lord gather us together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but today, as of old, we will not (Matthew 23:37).

The thought involved is that of the Father cuddling His children to His bosom. What parent does not delight in doing this? But the disposition to respond is lacking on the part of God’s children.

There is a widespread obstinacy and prevailing indifference—an independence which is contributing to present-day spiritual delinquency. The desire to love, honour and serve the Lord is anything but prominent.

LOW IN DEEDS

The neglect to invest the pound (Luke 19:20), the hiding of the talent in the earth (Matthew 25:25), the failure of the son to go to the field when he promised (Matthew 21:30), are but a few of the recorded parabolic incidents of the Lord’s displeasure with the inactivity and unproductiveness of His servants.

He definitely wants us to be **“doers of the Word and not hearers only”** (James 1:22).

Are we low in deeds? Is there a carelessness about the expenditure of our energy? What have we, thus far, to lay at His pierced feet in the way of dedicated accomplishments?

LOW IN DELIGHT

When we love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our might, such devotion strengthens our desire to please Him. Pleasing Him is only possible as we seek to do His will; and doing His will results in the deepest, most soul-permeating joy which man can experience.

- There is joy in following Jesus;
- There is joy in seeing the results of His great power through us;
- There is joy also in seeing others enter into the riches of His grace.

The matter works conversely as well.

- If the devotion to Christ is weak, our desire to please Him will be lessened.
- If our desire to please Him is faint, our deeds for Him will be few.
- If our deeds for Him are sparse, our delight in Him will be almost nonexistent.

How unimpressive is the professing Christian who does not know the joy of the Lord! We must be led to the Rock that is higher.

He Approved the Higher Way

HERE IS A READY SOUL

Active faith not only recognizes a good thing or a better way but is ready to approve and appropriate it. What kind of reticence is it that stands aloof and irresolute when the riches of all heaven are being proffered? What will a man give in exchange for his soul? What will a believer count worthy of being exchanged for his reward?

THE HIGHER WAY PROVIDES BETTER VISION

He who reaches the Alpine peaks of spiritual devotion is rewarded with a clear panoramic vision of the waiting fields in the valley of human need. His view will not be obstructed by the multitudinous mounds of self-interest which hinder the vision of one on a lower plane. Then, too, it is easier to descend to the ministry of work when once we have ascended to the mountain of worship. Lookout towers are ever on the heights—never in the valley. The reason is obvious. Nor is it less reasonable that elevation is of utmost importance in the spiritual realm.

The outlook of God's people is suffering irreparably in this day as a result of the course which is being followed.

It reminds us of an airplane disaster in southern England during World War II. The plane had hit the tree tops and plunged into a burning heap of wreckage, killing all the occupants. The investigators returned this terse report of their findings: "Flying too low."

We would do well to covet that optional spiritual status of "**mounting up with wings as eagles**" (Isaiah 40:20).

We are flying too low. We haven't the vision which makes for an aggressive endeavor of the finer type. The higher way, near to the heart of God, gives one the proper outlook.

THE HIGHER WAY PRODUCES GREATER VITALITY

Life on the higher plane is conducive to better health and greater strength. He who lives in the shadows lacks the sunshine. The mountaineers of God's grace are the sturdy stalwarts who can meet a task and see it through to completion. They know how to climb the steep ascents to heaven. They are not easily fatigued when on assignment for the Lord— never weary in well-doing (Galatians 6:9).

They are hearty and wholesome in their attitude as healthy folk always are. They know the meaning of walking and talking with God (Genesis 5:24).

THE HIGHER WAY PROMPTS WIDER VENTURES

DO you ever dream of doing exploits for the Lord? You begin by asking, “**Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?**” (Acts 9:6)

You grow in willingness to be used as each task is performed, each assignment becoming less a duty and more a privilege. The joy increases until greater joy is desired. The capacity for patience and endurance increases, and boldness with eagerness becomes stronger. Nothing then is too difficult to do for the Lord; no loss is too great, and no danger is too terrifying.

Faith, when properly developed, will venture forth in the face of death and will count it an honor *par excellence*, if need be, to be numbered with the martyrs. We should long to be led to the Rock that is higher, if for no other reason than to be encouraged to attempt great things for God.

THE HIGHER WAY PROMISES CONSTANT VICTORY

“*Now thanks be unto God which always leadeth us in triumph*” (II Corinthians 2:14, Margin).

- To be led to Him is to be led by Him.
- To be led by Him is to be led upward and onward.

It ought to be news of the most sublime character to learn that the Captain of our salvation dearly desires that we shall know the joy and blessing of constant victory, and that He is definitely able to make it an hallowed actuality in our lives.

It is plainly evident that He is more eager to do for us than we are willing to have done. We seem indifferently content to live on low planes of broken fellowship when we might be on the highways of boundless blessing.

- We could mount up on wings as the eagle, but we creep along on the shaky legs of an impoverished faith.
- We might daily follow the paths of righteousness for His name's sake, but we listlessly wander on the bypaths of selfishness for our own gratification.

Let us be advised that only the Rock that is higher can lift us out of defeat and dismay and promote us in the way of spiritual happiness.

He who submits consistently to this able direction will never swerve from the course and make shipwreck of his faith (I Timothy 1:19).

He Acknowledges Personal Incapability

HERE IS A RELIANT SOUL

The one who proceeds in this direction is destined to exult with the victors, but now he says,

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

There is the imposing enemy to plague; here is the impotent man for its prey. He must have a shelter, a strong tower, a tabernacle in which to abide, and a covert (Psalm 61:3, 4).

Relief must be forthcoming—soon. It is then that a most encouraging vision comes before his faltering heart. There, on the horizon of his weakened faith, stands the Rock that is higher—higher than his enemy, higher than his needs, higher than himself— the Gibraltar of Divine Protection.

DAVID IS COMMENDABLE IN HIS DESIRE

“**Blessed are the poor in spirit**” (Matthew 5:3).

Only those who have a sense of spiritual poverty will reach for the riches of God in Christ Jesus, and theirs is the kingdom.

All the succeeding beatitudinal promises which comprise that immortal mountain message stem from the value of that first utterance. “**He opened His mouth**” (Matthew 5:2 80), we are told, and what issued from those sacred lips was richer far than “**apples of gold in pictures of silver**” (Proverbs 25:11).

We call them beatitudes, the simplest definition of which is given as “supreme happiness”. This is the mountain-height desire of our Lord for His people.

“**These things have I spoken unto you,**” He explained, “**that your joy might be full**” (John 15:11).

David was reaching out for such a blessing.

DAVID IS COMMENDABLE IN HIS DECISION

He had an intelligent awareness of the place of refuge. Of course, that in itself was not sufficient. Knowing about a place of security does not make one secure. Many people know about the Saviour but they are not saved. Decision is ever the determining factor. One towers to the apex of better judgment when one says with determination, “**In the Lord put I my trust**” (Psalm 11:1).

The tempter had taunted and jeered at David, urging him to “**Flee as a bird to your mountain**” (Psalm 11:1).

This, of course, was unmitigated folly, and he refused to yield. Now, he has decided to fly as a believer to the Rock, and this was unadulterated faith.

DAVID IS COMMENDABLE IN HIS DOCILITY

“**Lead me to the Rock,**” he appeals with a willing tractableness. It is this attitude that prompts and permits a man to slip his baby hand into the firm and helpful grip of Infinite Power. And is not the Good Shepherd a leader of the sheep?

Is it not encouraging to Him when His sheep show the disposition and determination to follow? He also appreciates the dependence which such a supplication denotes. Here, however, the request is to be led to the Leader.

Reliance is placed upon leadership external to himself and his plea is directed to none other than the Lord God. How good it is that we may with confidence commit our souls to Him “**as unto a faithful creator**” (I Peter 4:19).

And what shall we say more about the practical implications of the text?

Time and speech would fail us.

David in his heavenward appeal, “**Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I,**” accepted more able leadership and showed himself a resigning soul. He also approached with heart overwhelmed and thereby proved himself a repentant soul. After all, there is only One Who can meet our every need— only one “**Friend that sticketh closer than a brother**” (Proverbs 18:24).

To know the approach to Him and to sense His tender, waiting welcome, comprise an asset of immeasurable proportions for the one who finds his own limited resources insufficient for the exactions of life. None is sufficient; all need the Rock that is higher.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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