

Strengthen Thee Out of Zion

by T. Austin-Sparks

Reading: Psalm 20-22.

I think it may be known to you that this first section or book of the Psalms (there are five sections)) is what is called the Messianic character, that is, there is a special prophetic connection between these Psalms and the Lord Jesus as Messiah. Of course there are three aspects of the Psalms throughout. There is that which is personal to the Lord Jesus, and then there is that which relates to Jews, history, and then in the third place there is that which applies spiritually to all the Lord's people, the saints. The first and the second are quite clearly pronounced in their historical outline. The third is that which we all spiritually derive as we read these Psalms and who among the Lord's people have not been spiritually strengthened by the reading of the Psalms.

Now here in these Psalms immediately under our eye we have very clearly that which is personal to the Lord Jesus and that which relates to the Jewish realm, especially in the last times, that realm that will be at the end in the days of Jacob's trouble. There comes out of these two historical things that which is for us spiritually. It is important to recognise that while one does not want to deal with technical details, you must understand that to enter into the meaning of these Psalms.

Psalm 22. We know that was taken up by the Lord Jesus and can see the Messianic side of that quite well, but was it merely only prophetic? There is the historic side to that as again between that and the Jewish remnant that will yet cry "*My God why hast thou forsaken Me*". When you get to that position you can appreciate that fully. So you must understand the applications of all these Psalms in all their direction. There is the personal, the historic, and the spiritual. The fragment here in my heart for these few moments: "*send thee help from the sanctuary and strengthen thee out of Zion*" (Ps. 20:2).

"*Strengthen thee out of Zion*". Taking this as a Messianic Psalm, which indeed it is because the next, Psalm 21, is the answer to the cry of Psalm 20: "*The king shall joy in thy strength O Lord ... thou hast given him his heart's desire*". That is the answer. "*... and hast not withholden the request of his lips ...*", etc. This is the Lord Jesus who is in view. The crown of everlasting life has been set upon His head in view of His sufferings and His death.

Now the cry in Psalm 20: "*The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble ... the Name of the God of Jacob set thee on high*", that firstly applies to the Lord Jesus in the day of His forsaking. In the day when all men are against Him, in the day of His travail, in the day of His cross. He seems to be in an attitude of spirit of crying to the Lord. You notice that the end of Psalm 20 is "*Let the King*" with a capital K "*answer us when we call.*"

Psalm 21 begins with king with a small 'K'; the two are here, God and Christ. The King is God being appealed to. The king here is the Lord Jesus making His appeal. These two are brought into relationship in kingship. He, Christ in the day of trouble to the King, to God, to the Father who is able to deliver Him. In response to His cry there is help sent from the sanctuary and He is strengthened out of Zion. That is a typical phrase as we know, and represents something spiritual in the glory. We remember how in the day when with strong crying and tears He made His appeal unto Him who was able to save him from death and was heard in that He feared, there was an angel sent to strengthen Him. Help was sent out of the sanctuary, succour out of Zion, and He was strengthened to go through, help came; we know that quite well. Then having received help out of the sanctuary, strength out of Zion, and having been carried right through His full cry was answered in His being delivered from death and raised to the glory and the crown of

power, gold, set upon His head and life everlasting given to Him. That is the full answer.

It is the Lord Jesus being brought by the help from the sanctuary, the strength out of Zion, to the place of absolute triumph, absolute glory, absolute victory, the name of the Lord proving its power in the delivering Him from death. Now that is what is personal to the Lord Jesus but then there is that which is spiritual which applies to us, and this has a spiritual application to the saints and to our own hearts. We spiritually enter into, not the same work of the Lord Jesus in His cross, mediatorial, atoning, but we enter spiritually into much of the experience that He knew of rejection, opposition, despisings, sufferings from men. We should read all these Psalms to collect up all through which He went. We go through our darkneses; *"yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered"* (Heb. 5:8). We are in that school, we go that way, we know something of spiritual suffering in relation to the Lord Jesus.

There are other kinds of suffering of course but spiritually there is no suffering that we enter into in relation to the Lord Jesus that is not pre-eminently spiritual. It all bears so strongly on the spiritual life; you cannot separate between this kind of suffering and that kind of suffering. There is nothing out of relation to the Lord; when it is joined to Him it has a spiritual application. By reason of the cloud which the enemy brings around us and of the frailty of our flesh we may even feel that the Lord has left us, forsaken us, and sometimes, although we dare not take these words on our lips, we might say: *"Why have You forsaken us?"* We may experience a spiritual time of darkness when the Lord is hidden and sometimes it seems to us that He is so hid in clouds of trouble, foreboding, depression and so on that we are tempted by the enemy to think that we are forsaken. But what I want to get at is this: the Lord Jesus when He was tempted in all points like as we are, when He entered into the experiences and temptations which are common to man, cried unto One who was able to save Him from death, and was answered, and so fully answered as to bring Him right through out into the place of glory and eternal life, and it is the prayer which will be answered on our behalf in the same way. We can receive the same strength out of Zion, and the final point which I want to reach is this — what Zion is as a resource of strength.

We are getting familiar with Zion these days. *"Strengthen thee out of Zion"*. Zion then is a place out from which strength comes; Zion is that where our strength is from which we draw our strength. What is Zion? Well for us now on New Testament ground Zion is the Lord Jesus glorified, in the place of absolute power, ascendancy, sovereignty and glory in virtue of something that God has done because of His suffering and death. It is the position of Hebrews 1 and 2. *"Because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour"*. It is Christ who has got through and is in possession of the power over death, over all His enemies. He has defeated the many bulls of Bashan, now He is vested with that power over which there is no power, that life which is death defying and death destroying, vested with full glory. He is the sum total of all that which is necessary of the power of God to bring Him through all this, out of all this and put Him there. That is Zion, that Person the Lord Jesus in a position and seat absolutely glorified. His endowment death-conquering life and all the power over hell, the devil, men, the world and everything else all in the Person of the Lord Jesus as He is there; that is Zion.

Now, strengthen thee out of Zion, minister life to you out of death, glory in the hour of suffering, minister to you what Christ is while you are here. The Father is there, the Son is here, the Son is going through all this; He makes His appeal out of Zion that the Father ministers His own life, strengthens Him, ministers Himself to the Son, for He came through in the power, life, strength, grace, love of God. Christ is in that position. He is Zion. We are going through, not what He went through but a shadow of it. Our prayer is to Him and out of Zion He ministers to us Himself.

Zion is the ministration of the Lord Jesus to us in our hour of need; when we are in trouble, suffering, trial we say: *"Lord help me"*. That is a very simple way of putting it,

perhaps the child's way of putting it, but if we do not know any better perhaps the Lord answers us on that level; but the Lord would have us understand what we mean by being helped. He would have us come to draw upon the power of resurrection that is in Jesus Christ, draw upon what the Lord Jesus is by reason of where He is in the power of God.

That is Ephesians. *"The exceeding greatness of His power ... according to that working of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead ..."* (Eph. 1:19-20). That is Zion and that ministration of Christ to us is sending help, strength out of Zion and Ephesians is the sanctuary, the City, and it is the ministration of what Christ is in the heavenlies to us as we are passing through trial and difficulty here. So getting strength out of Zion is simply drawing upon Christ as already triumphant, glorified. "We will triumph in His victory." His Name is above every name because He was obedient unto death. *"In the name of our God we will set up our banners"* (Ps. 20:5), drawing on what the Lord Jesus is now in virtue of the power that is vested in Him and which has proved itself sufficient to get Him through. That power is for the remnant, to get them through. And while there may be a Jewish remnant, we also are a remnant and we have to be got through.

Let us say to ourselves and to one another, *"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee, send thee help out of the sanctuary, strengthen thee out of Zion"* (Ps. 20:1-2) — minister to you the victorious Christ in your hour of need. Draw on Him and we shall get through.