

The Divine Nearness

... ⁵*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,*

*"Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you." - Hebrews 13:5*

We stand firmest when we stand upon the promises of God. Man's original thoughts and clever pearls of wisdom are occasionally useful, but they are of little worth in sustaining us through life's fiercest storms. Of all the great and precious promises of God, none undergirds believers more than the simple truth that God is with us and always will be.

This promise is the foundation behind a specific instruction that the author of *Hebrews* worded to his readers: *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have ..."* In other words, we do not need to be grabby for things or for money. Ours is the greatest prize conceivable. We stand in fellowship with God. Why should we reduce our lives to the meaninglessness of acquisition? We have God, and He has promised that we will always have Him. We have no reason to hoard up a lot of things as though the future were uncertain, because our futures are unshakeable.

Nowhere is this truth more vividly depicted than in one story from the life of Elisha. The king of Aram was trying to wage a war against Israel, but with every move he attempted, it seemed that Israel already knew his plans. He interrogated his officers as to whether there might be a spy in the camp. His officers told him of Elisha, Israel's prophet, who, they claimed, *"tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom"* (2 Kings 6:12). The king decided to send his armies to capture the prophet. Horses and chariots surrounded the city where Elisha was staying. Elisha had a servant, who was understandably terrified when he saw the foreign king's forces:

¹⁵*When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked.*

¹⁶*"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."*

¹⁷*And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. - 2 Kings 6:15-17*

To have God with us is better than to have an army of ten thousand backing us up. This was true when Noah and his family found refuge from the flood in an ark. This was true when the ancient Israelites were settling in the Land of Promise among hostile nations. The truth of God's faithfulness to His people is evidenced from cover to cover throughout the Bible. But, the Bible is not our only evidence that God is faithful to His promise to never leave us. It has been proven so even in our own experiences. Many of us

have gone through fires and floods and storms of sorts – and, by the grace of our ever-present God, we are still standing.

There are no interruptions to God's presence with His people. Health, availability, prosperity – all of these can factor into the survival of human relationships. There will never be a time when the Lord tires of us. In Jesus, God has united Himself to us. Let the days ahead bring whatever they may, let time roll onward. Still, God will never forsake His people.

It would make little sense for God to leave us now, given all that He has already done to secure us as His own. He has given us Jesus, and by His blood, Jesus' righteousness. Who, spending a vast sum of money to build a house, would abruptly stop and walk away from an uninhabitable shell? God is making a home for Himself out of our hearts, so Paul was sure that "... *he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 1:6). Centuries earlier, Isaiah wrote to God's children:

*"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
Though she may forget,
I will not forget you!" – Isaiah 49:15*

The man who is content in the presence of God can never be shaken even if he does not have two dimes to rub together. He sings in circumstances that find others only murmuring. The assurance of God's presence breaks us of our puny ambitions and petty covetousness. We grow to understand that bulging wallets are a poor substitute for starving spirits. He is as rich as any man can be who believes God when He promises:

*"Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you."*

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