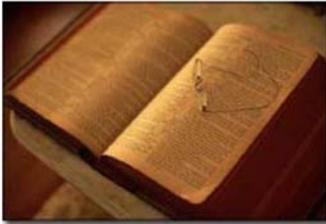


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A view of God not often considered



For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him , 2 Chronicles 16:9.

When Asa, king of Judah, foolishly and in a spirit of unbelief, relied upon the Syrians to assist him in repelling an attempt by King Baasha of Israel to blockade his kingdom, rather than looking to the Lord for help, he was rebuked by the prophet Hanani. The prophet reminded the king of the mighty deliverance that the Lord wrought when Judah was attacked by the Ethiopians and Lubims with an army of one million men, 2 Chron 14:9. *And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand , 2 Chron 16:7-8.*

The prophet also told the king that the Lord would have intervened again on his behalf, had he only trusted Him. The proof of that is set forth in our text.

Here is the abiding readiness of the Lord to help His people whenever they are threatened.

When I read this text earlier in the week past, I was greatly comforted and encouraged with regards to the situation in which Christians find themselves in Ulster. The tide of political events has been running very much against truth and decency in Ulster. However, that must not cause us to think that the Church of Christ must go under, because we see our land taking a most unwise path politically.

Ulster has chosen to follow the present path of political folly because the people of Ulster have rejected the Word of God and the call to turn from the ecumenical union with idolatrous Romanism, that has been urged upon them by false prophets. In consequence of this rejection of God's Word, Ulster has chosen to follow the political lead of blinded politicians. It is for this reason that we find ourselves under a Roman Catholic/Republican-dominated political structure. Evidence of that is seen in the fact that the SDLP and Sinn Fein control the important ministries of Education, Finance and Personnel, Agriculture, Health and Social Services and Higher & Further Education in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Such dominance of important ministries by the two parties whose combined vote amounts to only 42 out of the 108 seats is but a foreshadowing of what is to come.

Despite the atmosphere of opposition to Bible Protestantism we see developing in our land, the people of God may know spiritual blessing and advance. The spiritual health of the church is not dictated by the political health of the nation. This is something we in Ulster need to learn. We have become used to the cause of Christ being allied to the political cause of our Province, so that we have begun to think that the well-being of the Church of Christ is indissolubly linked with the political entity of Northern Ireland. That is not the



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case. There was a Kingdom of Christ in this land before there was a Northern Ireland state. God's Kingdom is superior and unaffiliated to the kingdoms of men. It is true that we should look and seek for a government that is favourably disposed toward the gospel of Christ, but we ought always to remember that the times of greatest advancement in the cause of God, the times of the apostles, were under the rule of heathen Imperial Rome!

God's cause can flourish despite the wicked intentions of men. God's cause in our land may spiritually flourish, irrespective of who sits upon the throne of government. Doubtless, were we to have a government that was sympathetic to the cause of God, we would find our earthly circumstances much easier. But God's cause can go forward even under a Caesar, even though it be through fire and trial. And fire and trial may be what we will face. Many Christians in Ulster have carelessly frittered away the wonderful opportunities we enjoyed here in Northern Ireland. There will be a price to be paid for such folly. Our backsliding and our worldliness have offended God, that we cannot doubt. A humble return to God is required urgently in our province. Many are awakening, I believe, to see that as the need of the hour.

Were that awakening amongst Christians to take place, then we would see blessed times, despite the political betrayal.

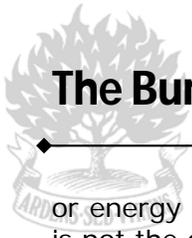
Come to our text.

I. THE PEOPLE FOR WHOM GOD IS LOOKING

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him . Those whose heart is perfect toward Him. What does that mean? It is not speaking of sinless perfection. Rather, it refers to an undivided heart. Moses commanded that the stones used in the building of the altar of God be whole stones, Deut. 27:6. The word whole is the same one translated perfect in our text. The person God is looking for is one who has no other God before Him.

1. A heart that trusts God entirely. A heart like Abraham's. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God , Romans 4:20.* Despite the demand that Abraham sacrifice his son Isaac and thus cut off the only possible source of seeing the promise of God to make him the father of numberless descendants come about, Abraham trusted God and not his own thoughts and thus sought to obey God. The person who trusts God entirely is a person who shares Elisha's calm trust of God and His power to guard from all danger. *And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, 2 Kings 6:17.* Let others panic and fear but not the one who has a heart that is perfect toward God.

2. A heart that is yielded to God entirely. It is ever submissive. It always asks, "What will please the Lord?" It is a heart like the Saviour's Who said, *I do always those things that please him , John 8:29.* Oh for a heart that considers only God and His honour when choosing our path through life! Materialism has conquered our hearts. A love of ease dominates us today. God is considered only if His requirements do not cost us too much in time



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or energy or effort. Few will inconvenience themselves for God today. Such a heart as this is not the one God is looking for.

3. A heart that loves the Lord entirely. It is a heart that complies with the first great commandment. *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment,* Mark 12:30. ALL the heart loves God. It is whole in its affections toward Him. Consider also:

II. THE EARNESTNESS OF GOD TO FIND SUCH A HEART

This is what I particularly was comforted by. I have often pondered the question, "Is it God's time for revival?" Here is the answer. God is LOOKING FOR ONE UPON WHOM TO POUR HIS BLESSING MIGHTILY.

1. He eagerly searches with His eyes. *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro.* This is the pace of eagerness and haste. God most willingly looks for those to bless.

The Prodigal's father pictures God's merciful vigil. And he arose, and came to his father. *But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him,* Luke 15:20. It was not the view of his father that the Prodigal had. It would seem that he had a picture of a father most reluctant to have him back. How different was the truth! Likewise, we do not rightly perceive the eagerness of the Lord to bless His people. The Lord is the very opposite of the devil. He ceaselessly patrols the earth seeking to do evil to men, Job 1:7. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,* 1 Peter 5:8.

2. He constantly watches. He is ever on the watch. He was then and He is now. God is acting in keeping with His covenant of grace.

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me, Isaiah 49:13-16. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul,* Jeremiah 32:40-41. These verses underscore the continual and constant disposition of God's heart toward His people to do them good. The blood of Christ has purchased for the elect all spiritual blessings. There is never a moment in which God does not desire to bless His people and do them good.

3. He is watching everywhere. The most forgotten and overlooked corner of this earth is searched by God's eyes to see if there be those whose heart is perfect toward Him. No matter where His remnant is to be found, this is a word for them. We in Ulster today need to heed and claim these words for ourselves.



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Consider also the purpose of God's search.

III. THE MEASURE OF HELP THE LORD WILL GIVE

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong. This is why God searches. He would put forth His strength on behalf of His people.

1. He has shown Himself strong to save His people . *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power ,* Ephesians 1:19. How little we know of the mighty power God employed in the salvation of His people. Chrysostom said that the conversion of the soul was a more wonderful miracle than the resurrection of the body. It is indeed, the overcoming of the mighty power of the devil and death and sin. That mighty power is ever at the disposal of those whose hearts are perfect toward God.

2. He has shown Himself strong to preserve His people. What a story the slaying of the Assyrian host makes in 2 Kings 19! What a swift end God made of the enemies of His people! *And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses ,* 2 Kings 19:35. *The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them,* Psalm 34:7. Daniel was able to testify of that power put forth on his behalf to the king of the Medes and Persians. *My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt,* Daniel 6:22. The Saviour's promised watch over His people entails the putting forth of His power to preserve them. *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,* Matthew 16:18.

3. It is through the adversities of God's people and their deliverances from them that God puts His power on display. What a time is this for God to show His glory! Paul recognised that his own dangers and afflictions were an opportunity for God to put His power on display. *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong ,* 2 Cor 12:9-10.

Even so should we see this day as one in which God can wonderfully display His power by rescuing the church from its weakness and decline.