

Help Laid on one that is Mighty

10th June 1987

“I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.”

Psalm 89:19

These words apply pre-eminently to the Lord Jesus Christ, David’s greater Son, of whom, in many aspects, King David was a type, being the anointed of God to hold and to exercise that high office in Israel of the sovereign of God’s chosen people. That which is of the greatest significance is the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ by God the Father, as this mighty one chosen out of the people, upon whom he has been pleased to lay this help, which in every consideration and aspect of it is blessedly suitable. It is so abundantly sufficient and also exactly fitting to the cases of God’s people, who alone are brought to know and experience, in every aspect of their hearts’ feelings and circumstances, that they are in and of themselves a helpless people, and therefore, dependent, quite dependent, constantly dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ for enabling grace and sufficient help in all seasons and under all exercises and in all circumstances. Well then, this provision spoken of in our text will be good news unto such. God the Father in his infinite goodness and unerring wisdom, boundless love, unfathomable mercy and covenant goodness has been pleased to make a wonderful provision to meet the sensible and really felt need of those who are taught of the Holy Spirit, in regard to their own impotence and who, therefore, need to look and to lean heartily upon the strength, grace and help that is in Christ. “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.” (Psalm 146:5)

Let us first notice that these words are the words of God the Father. ‘I have laid help.’ It is then, the provision of the Father in his grace, goodness, mercy and kindness toward poor sinners whom he has loved and blessed with an interest in his appointed salvation and whom he will be pleased, by and through his dear Son, to restore, redeem and deliver from the fall and sin, and all that is the result and effect of that fall and sin. Our impotence and our helplessness are upon us because of our sin and default. It is not an excusable helplessness, it is a sinful helplessness, not something to hide under but something to mourn over, confess and seek pardon for, because it is the result and effect of our own default; by our fall in Adam we are in a state of total, complete and absolute spiritual impotence. It is

impossible for us to do anything right or good apart from grace and that enabling help from Christ to influence in our hearts that which is right and good in the sight of God: but now there is this provision: ‘I have laid help,’ abundant help, suitable help, free help, timely help, gracious help, ‘on one that is mighty.’

Now it is on account of this mightiness of the Lord Jesus Christ that there is an abundant sufficiency. It is God’s eternal Son who is this exalted one, chosen from among the people, the true King of Zion, the great High Priest of the church. How mighty he is! He is almighty, as the hymn writer says: “A mighty Saviour suits me well.” (*Gadsby’s* 592)

He is omnipotent, he possesses all power. It is given to him to exercise this in his mediatorial office—all power. Not some, not a little, but “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matthew 28:18) There is no deficiency, there is no inability, and there is no insufficiency where this mighty one is concerned.

His power is almighty; he is the omnipotent God; he is a mighty helper and a mighty Saviour. That which he has in a communicable nature, measure and degree is of an infinite character; it is undiminishing in its fullness; it is abundantly sufficient to meet the worst of the cases of his people. Help is ‘laid upon one that is mighty.’

What a wonderful mercy if we are brought to truly believe, to truly credit and to humbly receive the precious truth in regard to the greatness of Christ; that he is the almighty Saviour, the almighty Redeemer, and that with him as such there is salvation and help; he having redeemed his people and being the blessed Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Those words in Proverbs 8:14 are sweetly and blessedly true of him: “Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding, I have strength.”

Now these four things, amid so many other things, God’s people are brought sensibly and feelingly to stand in need of. They need his help—his counsel in their ignorance; they need his help in communicating wisdom in their foolishness; they need him to communicate understanding, to help them because of their utter ignorance in and of themselves; and they need him to communicate promised strength, for they are all weakness. They need this gracious Saviour to communicate that power according to their need, day by day, to help them in their temptations, oppressions, difficulties, trials, their felt and utter insufficiency, so that under the sanctified effect of these afflictions and trials they may receive strength from him who is mighty. It hath pleased God the Father to lay this help upon his Son; gracious help, suitable help, help for sinners who feel their need. ‘I have laid help upon one that is mighty.’

Not only is he mighty in regard to the communicable greatness of strength that dwells so richly in him and is so abundant in its fullness to answer our felt and sensible need, but he is also mighty in his Kingly office, in his suitability to manage, govern, dispense and direct everything which concerns his people in their spiritual and temporal needs. All things are possible with this mighty one. He is able to deliver, able to uphold, able to save, able to direct all matters that concern our souls and our circumstances. He rules, and all is under his command. He commanded the troubled seas to be calm, he spake and it was done. He is still mighty in his ability to perform miracles on the account and behalf of his people. None of our impossibilities, none of our extremities, are too high, too great, too deep or too large for him to deal with, for he is mighty. This help for the helpless is laid upon him and it is his sovereign prerogative to exercise it accordingly in his love, pity, mercy and goodness toward his people.

But not only is he mighty in his glorious and eternal person, but there is also that about him, and the help that is with him, which is so sweetly suitable in that it is granted so freely and so willingly and so readily on account of the compassion, pity, understanding and kindness that dwells in his heart toward his people. For this precious person is one chosen out of the people and exalted by God the Father: 'I have exalted one chosen out of the people.'

This sets before us once more that fundamental and glorious doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God; the foundation doctrine, God in human flesh. The Son of God in our nature is that blessed foundation upon which all real religion rests. There is nothing without it. Apart from this there can be no help for us, no salvation for us, no gospel, no redemption, and no heaven. That amazing condescension of the Son of God is seen in his willingly partaking of our nature, descending into the lower parts of the earth, so willingly accomplishing the work the Father gave him to do, and accomplishing it perfectly, enduring all that was laid upon him to endure, obeying all that was incumbent upon him to obey, to do the will of his Father and then to be exalted as the God-man, chosen to that high and exalted office of absolute Sovereign in the church of God. He who sits upon the throne wears the crown, wields the sceptre, holds the sword, governs all things, and he is Christ exalted in our nature, chosen from among the people. This high office he is fit, suitable, able and worthy to exercise. God the Father has anointed him and given him authority to exercise this precious position in the church.

He is also exalted in the High Priestly office. That which was typical of the high priestly work of Christ was a high office, it was an exalted office, and it was an office appointed by God. The high priest was anointed with the holy anointing oil.

Christ is the true and great High Priest, exalted in his person and in his human nature, and in his office he has a heart filled with boundless sympathy, pity, kindness and understanding. This is his by virtue of the personal experience of trials, weakness, fears, distresses, temptations, afflictions, sorrows and woes. He knew what sore temptations meant. Christ as a man knew hunger, thirst, exhaustion, weakness and weariness. He knew what it was to pour out his soul with strong cries and tears. He knew what sorrows and temptations are and, therefore, he is such a suitable person to afford help sympathetically, feelingly, graciously, tenderly, sufficiently and suitably. This is so wonderful and attractive to those who are brought to stand sensibly in need of his help. There is one to go to upon whom help is laid, who will show himself to be kind and sympathetic, ready to help, willing to help, on account of that which he himself has suffered being tempted. He has been made perfect through sufferings, that is, perfectly fitted as the High Priest of the church; perfectly fitted to be that sympathetic Saviour who is able and willing to help and save his people.

This is the one upon whom the help is laid, Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son in our nature, King and Priest. He is exalted in that wonderful sense that he is now glorified at the right hand of the Father: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." (Philippians 2:9) both in this world and that which is to come, far above all principality and power and might and dominion. He is highly exalted; as highly as it is possible he should be exalted; he is above all. God the Father has been pleased to invest in his dear Son infinite authority and the warrant and anointing to exercise that power which he has given him, and to communicate to his people that sufficiency of sovereign grace and needful help and timely support and gracious deliverance. Now this is the person to whom we may go; this is the one God has appointed; this is the one upon whom he has laid help; this is the one to whom we have every warrant to look and to whom we can take our cases and needs, with the sweet encouragement that from him we shall receive, obtain and find help in our time of need. It is laid upon him; it is there in all its communicable suitability and fullness for this very purpose, to supply our need of this gracious aid and assistance. 'Help upon one that is mighty ... one chosen out of the people.'

Now this is God's choice. The human nature of Christ, his holy body and holy soul, was a particular soul and a particular body, prepared for him by the Father. There was nothing haphazard about it, but it was by God's choice and election. A particular human nature conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary was taken into union with his divine person; chosen of God: 'Chosen out of the people.' This one

glorious man whose human nature is indissolubly united to his Godhead forms one person with two natures. Now as I have said a number of times before, the divine nature of Christ is capable of no exaltation, it is eternally glorious, equal with the Father and the Spirit. There can be no increase in his essential divinity; the exaltation is of Christ in his humanity. God has given to Christ, as God and man, that glory which he had with him from before the foundation of the world. In this we have the greatest demonstration possible that God is well satisfied and well pleased with his dear Son and the work which he has accomplished on sinners' account and behalf. That salvation is perfect; it is finished, the law is honoured and sin is put away; justice is satisfied on sinners' account. The whole church of God is redeemed with a sovereign redemption, and the work being finished, Christ is exalted to continue his people's cause above, to communicate sweetly, suitably and feelingly the benefits and blessings of salvation which they are brought to stand feelingly in need of. O how heaven rejoiced at the exaltation of the Saviour! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle ... The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." (Psalm 24:7-10) "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" (Psalm 24:3) Christ has, and seeing that he is the true and living Head of the church, which is his body, so every member of his mystical body also one day will ascend into the hill of the Lord and stand in his holy place. What is true of Christ the Head is true of every member of his mystical body. The important point is as to our personal interest in this great one upon whom God has been pleased to lay help.

Well now, to come to this help that is laid upon the one that is mighty. What is needful in our own experience is to be the happy and blessed recipient of that help which he has so freely, kindly and sympathetically to give. It is just the degree and the measure of our own personal sins and helplessness, and impotence. Now it is a solemn fact and a real truth that we are all, through the fall and by nature, spiritually impotent and helpless; but we do not know it and we do not feel it until God in his mercy—and it is a mercy—is pleased to break our working arm and to spoil us utterly of all our fancied strength and help in self. The hymn writer learned the lesson; he knew it by experience when he penned those words:

No help in self I find,
And yet have sought it well;
The native treasure of my mind
Is sin, and death, and hell.

(Gadsby's 739)

It is utterly impossible that we should do any good apart from God's grace being bestowed upon us and being born again of the Holy Spirit. There is an article of the Church of England which is a true article: "All works previous to regeneration have the nature of sin." Now it is the Holy Spirit's work to teach us our spiritual impotence. Once this is really felt, confessed and mourned over by us as being the effect and the fruit of our own sin, we shall see the beauty in the assistance of the help that is laid upon the one that is mighty. Jesus is a mighty Saviour—he is, there is no doubt about it.

Jesus is a mighty Saviour,
Helpless souls have here a Friend;
He has borne their misbehaviour,
And his mercy knows no end;
O ye helpless,
Come, and on his grace depend. *(Gadsby's 593)*

There will be no honest, heart-felt, unreserved and sincere dependence upon him until we come to the end of our own strength, for so long as we have got any left at all we shall not lean on him. All the time we feel or think that we have any help in ourselves, we shall be looking to that. We must be utterly stripped of all help in self before we begin honestly to seek help from God. There are those of us who, I believe, have honestly been taught our spiritual helplessness: "For without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5) This the apostle Paul himself learned—I can do nothing without thee. And nothing is nothing; it is not a little something, a little of our own help to help him, no, but complete and absolute dependence. And yet "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13) That is a different thing altogether. It is one thing to be able to do, it is another thing to be enabled to do, and that enabling is in Christ; it is communicable grace and strength. So before there can be any appreciation of him or any looking to him or coming to him for strength, there must be a sensible feeling of our helplessness, impotence and utter dependence.

Now this help that is laid upon this mighty one is in every way sufficient and suitable. I will look at this next before considering the various seasons in which the Spirit-taught impotent soul feels a need of Christ's help. First we will look at what help this is. It is abundantly sufficient, all sufficient. It is communicated by him in a sufficient measure and degree, not a surplus; it is as thy days thy strength shall be: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25)

Let not thy heart despond and say,
How shall I stand the trying day?
He has engaged by firm decree,
That as thy days, thy strength shall be. (*Gadsby's* 328)

So that although it is all sufficient, it is exactly fitted to the case and circumstances and need; not more nor less, but a sufficiency. It is also help that is exactly suited to the particular and peculiar need; for as I hope to look at in a moment, our needs in regard to this are various, multitudinous, diverse and many, and the help that is granted exactly suits the present necessity, not something different or something other, but exactly suited. It is also help that is granted freely, graciously, without merit or desert, in rich mercy, so that this help which is granted is freely of Christ's mercy. He looks for nothing from us, he looks sympathetically upon our need and hears the needy sinner's cry for help.

Now let us look at some seasons of need. Firstly, that which concerns us foremost and primarily. That is the matter of our never-dying souls in the pathway of communion with God and of seeking salvation and waiting upon him for his help and pardon and grace and salvation. In all this we are impotent. We need help to pray, we need grace for grace, and we need help to wait upon God with earnest, constant, suppliant, importunate petitions. We cannot pray of ourselves; we would, we sometimes attempt to—but we need divine assistance to pray acceptably before God. We need help to believe. None but those who are possessors of real faith know anything of the trial of faith and of the difficulty of believing, and at times it seems impossible in regard to these matters. O, says the hymn writer:

I would but cannot pray...
I would but can't repent...
O could I but believe ...
I would but cannot love ...
I would but cannot rest...

Good Newton learned the lesson well:

O could I but believe,
Then all would easy be;
I would, but cannot; Lord relieve!
My help must come from thee. (*Gadsby's* 278)

So that in regard to the exercise of faith we need help, particularly when we are sorely beset by Satan and unbelief: "Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief." (Mark 9:24) That is help laid upon one that is mighty.

We need help to hope. Hope at times is so sorely tried by difficulty, temptation, the assault of the adversary, that we feel well-nigh in despair and cannot hope without his divine help. But 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." (Psalm 146:5) One who at times feels his experience is to hope against hope, needs help.

We need help to love. O the coldness, the hardness, the indifference, the lethargy, the want of feeling! We cannot learn to love, we cannot love of ourselves; we can only love the Lord with his own love as he is pleased to communicate that love to us. Our help must come from God.

There is help laid upon one that is mighty. If we, in all our sensible impotence are enabled to call upon him for help and he sweetly enables us to believe, repent, love, serve, obey and walk in his ways by imparting to us the help laid upon one that is mighty, it is then alone we can do these things. Can we do anything with our wicked hearts, hearts that are desperately wicked and deceitful above all things? The flesh lusteth so mightily against the Spirit and there are times when we feel very down, as was the Psalmist: "Iniquities prevail against me." (Psalm 65:3) That army we feel within, such a mighty army of doubt, unbelief and infidel thoughts, atheism and every other evil iniquitous thing! We have no might nor power against this great army; our help then must come from God. We may spiritually feel to stand in a similar circumstance as Jehoshaphat of old. "Neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee." (2 Chronicles 20:12) O, in substance how he cried unto God and with the arguments of faith pleaded with his God for help against that mighty army. There are times when God's people feel to be in a similar circumstance. They need help.

There are times too when Satan with all his subtle temptations comes and seeks with all the power at his disposal to cast us down with gloom, darkness, fear, depression and bondage. Are we a match for that dreadful foe? We need the Lord to help us. 'Help, Lord!' O the cry that goes up out of the heart of God's people under a feeling sense of their impotence and utter dependence for present, timely, sufficient help in their urgent and extreme needs! We may have a cause or a case that is similar to the poor and yet most favoured Syrophenician woman. She had a sore condition, something she could not do anything with, she was helpless; her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil and she brought her case unto the Lord Jesus Christ. I might comfortably conclude that her short prayer has been uttered by the people of God in all ages and circumstances, perhaps more than any other that has ever been put up to God. It was very short, but just suited to the condition:

“Lord, help me.” (Matthew 15:25) How many times have some of you uttered those three words? How many times have I! Our needs, spiritual needs, recurring and increasing needs as we learn more and more of our own impotence, helplessness and dependence! What should we do without a throne of grace? What should we do without a mighty Saviour? What should we do without help laid upon one that is mighty? Where could we go, where should we find help? Our eyes are up unto thee, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68) Lord, do help me, do appear for me, do undertake for me, do deliver me from sinking; do hold me up; do save me from myself, do save me from Satan, do save me from my oppressors and my fears and darkness; Lord, do help me! Well, that is the feeling of a dependent soul.

Now what a wonderful thing that there is help for us, that God has laid help upon one that is mighty, even upon his dear Son, who is the Friend of sinners. It is true, I do wish I could believe it, I would believe it firmly and sincerely. Christ is the Friend of sinners, and what a friend he is! A friend in need, a friend able and willing to help, a friend with whom there is sufficient, suitable, gracious and timely help! ‘Help upon one that is mighty.’

How many of us at this present moment need his help? You have got your circumstances, your pathway, your trial, your fear, your apprehensions, your mountains, your impossibilities, your difficulties, your burdens, your responsibilities. I have got mine, and we need his help. How shall we continue without his help? help to be patient in trouble, help to bear our cross, help to deal with matters that we cannot deal with ourselves; counsel to direct our poor foolish hearts; wisdom to instruct us, daily strength to help and support us under our providences and responsibilities, help in our afflictions to bear us through; support for our heart and mind and body in some feared and dreadful ordeal through which we think we shall never come—we need his help. There are times when the Lord is pleased to so order our circumstances that we are brought to the place of wit’s end corner, we know not what to do, we are nonplussed; we do not know which way to turn, which step to take, nor what to lay down or take up. It is utterly impossible for us to enter into anything graciously and rightly or to come out of anything graciously and rightly without the Lord’s help. We need his help in all those things, and it is a mercy if he makes us feel our need of his help and causes us to cry unto him upon whom help is laid. ‘I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.’

I believe the Lord is more willing to help than we are to ask for his help. There are times when we might have similar circumstances to the blessed man who had

a devil possessed son. He brought him to the disciples but they could not help, they had no power; they were helpless, powerless; but O those blessed words! O that your heart and my heart might take hold of them: “Bring him hither to me.” (Matthew 17:17) Be not doubting, but believing, Christ is able; “Bring him hither to me.”

Well, have we got anything to bring? It is a wonderful mercy to have a case. Our flesh does not like it. If there is anything that our wretched proud flesh dislikes it is a pathway of complete dependence. We do not like to have to wait upon God continually for everything, every moment of the day for assistance and help, but it is the way that he will have his people to go. He will have his people dependent on him. If there is anything the Lord hates it is independence of him. The effect of his teaching both with regard to salvation and in our circumstances will make his people completely dependent upon him. O to be given that help and grace we need to choose the path of dependence! They that are enabled and caused more and more to lean, with all their weight, wholeheartedly in dependence upon the almighty arm of Christ will never fail, will never be overcome. He has promised that he will uphold, deliver, save, guide and grant grace and strength equal to our need and to the day—daily help, help at all seasons, under all circumstances. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 41:14) “Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Isaiah 41:10)

Blessed promise! The Lord be pleased to apply and influence it in our hearts increasingly. “Fear thou not ... for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Isaiah 41:10) God could not promise that if he were not able to perform it; he would not promise it if he were not willing to do it; he would never exhort us to wait upon him for help if he did not intend to give it to us. That is not like the God of Israel; he never influences or instructs anyone of his people to ask for something he never intends to give them. The very fact that he constrains us and causes us to wait upon him is a sweet pledge that he is willing to bestow those things he causes us to ask of him. May we prove it and come into an ever increasing and closer knowledge and acquaintance with the blessed person in our text upon whom help is laid—help for the helpless, strength for the impotent, wisdom for the foolish, counsel for the ignorant, understanding to those that feel their need and their darkness. There is a fullness in Christ, and may the Lord be pleased constantly, in soul and in circumstances, in our profession, in our gathering for worship, in our daily tasks,

in our relationships, in everything which belongs to us, grant a feeling sense of our need of the Lord to help us. If we have his help we shall prove it to be a sufficiency. “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Hebrews 13:5-6)

The Lord enable us to say it from sweet experience.

Amen.