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God Guards His Servants

"He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." — Psalm 105:14–15

Summary:

God's care for the patriarchs shows that his servants are precious to him and never without a divine Guardian. Though they were few, vulnerable, and strangers, he restrained rulers and surrounding peoples from harming them. The world may overlook believers because they are poor or afflicted, yet God values them above earthly power. His protection remains with them through opposition, travel, useful service, old age, and death. God exercises both spiritual and providential rule: he renews hearts by grace and can restrain unrenewed people, turning their purposes so that his people are preserved. Therefore, the Christian may follow conviction without fear, refuse retaliation when reviled, and entrust every outcome to the righteous Judge. If God is for his people, no enemy can finally prevail against them.

Outline:

1. **God protected the patriarchs**
   - Though few, vulnerable, and unsettled, they were preserved from powerful enemies.
2. **His servants are precious to him**
   - Those whom the world despises are more excellent in God's sight than kings.
3. **They always have a divine Guardian**
   - God keeps them through opposition, travel, service, old age, and death.
4. **God rules and restrains every heart**
   - He renews by spiritual grace and directs unrenewed people by providential control.
5. **Believers may obey without fear**
   - They can follow conviction, refuse retaliation, and commit themselves to the righteous Judge.

Text

He protected the patriarchs when they were few, strangers in foreign lands, and vulnerable to powerful, unscrupulous foes. He did so through dreams, visions, words, and deeds. Pharaoh was rebuked over Abraham in Egypt, and Abimelech over Isaac in Gerar. After Jacob's sons destroyed Shechem, making their family odious to neighboring clans, God protected them as they traveled: "the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after them."

> *"He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."*

God's servants are dearer to him than kings, though the world does not know them. Often poor and afflicted, they are dismissed by those who judge by appearances. "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" Yet the world is not worthy of them.

In their condition and character, they are more excellent than their neighbours, wherever they may be placed or whatever gifts they may have. The Lord watches over them and delights in them. "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." We also learn that his servants are never without a divine Guardian. When they first flee to him for refuge, he encourages them, as David encouraged Abiathar, who had escaped Saul's fury: "Abide thou with me; fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard."

They may lose support, feel helpless or friendless, and face hatred and opposition. Yet no enchantment is against Jacob, and no weapon formed against them shall prosper. Whether travelling, the Lord keeps and protects them from evil. They are immortal until their work is done. In old age, privation, infirmity, or depression, He will not cast them off but carry them to grey hairs. He will never leave or forsake them:

"Though I should walk through death's dark shade, My Shepherd's with me there!"

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All creatures remain under the Lord's control; when he does not renew them in salvation, he can restrain them. His greatest agency, however, is spiritual: he opens understanding, reigns in hearts, transforms views and feelings, and makes people new creatures. Are we subject to this agency? God also acts providentially. Solomon writes, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." A farmer may redirect a stream without changing its flow or qualities.

Esau left home ready to kill Jacob, but the Lord softened his heart without sanctifying it. When they met, Esau embraced and kissed Jacob. When a man's ways please the Lord, even his enemies are at peace with him. Though a heathen, Cyrus was moved to favour Israel and free the Lord's captives, giving them not only release without ransom but provisions for their journey. At three Jewish festivals, every male had to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem, leaving the country seemingly undefended. Surrounded by enemies poised to exploit their absence, the people might have wondered, "What will become, in our absence, of our fields, vineyards, houses, wives, and children?"

But God, who controls hearts and events, said, "I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year." In dealing with others, let me follow my convictions. If reviled, let me not retaliate, but entrust myself to him who judges righteously. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" If God is for us, who can be against us?

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, Morning and Evening Exercises (January 29, Evening), first published in 1854.