

Our Refuge in the New Year

The God of Jacob is the Lord of heaven and earth, who revealed to Abraham, “In your Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18), and repeated this promise to Isaac and Jacob. He is the God of grace in whom these patriarchs believed. He is the God of all believers. He is the God who led the Children of Israel through the wilderness, spoke by the prophets, was manifested in human flesh when Christ was born, lived among men, was crucified, died, and was buried, and rose again from the dead on the third day. He sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, spoke through the apostles, and still speaks to us through the Word they have written.

This is the God of Jacob, our Refuge, as He has been in all generations, for He does not change. He is ever and always the same eternal, almighty, all-knowing, ever-present, and faithful God—the Fortress and Help of all that call upon Him. He will also, in this coming year, be our safe retreat from everything that annoys us.

We know that in the coming year, too, the devil, the world, and our flesh will assail us, seeking to lead us into despair, unbelief, and other great shame and vice; they will entice us and make things unbearable for us, so that we feel our utter weakness and cannot prevail—but the God of Jacob is our refuge (Psalm 46).

We need only retreat to Him and commune with Him in prayer, and we are safe from their cunning and power. We may face want and disaster in the new year, including business failure, sickness, accidents, the loss of a loved one, and the loss of our possessions, job, and livelihood; relatives and friends may turn against us, leaving us feeling forsaken, alone, and distressed—but what of it? The God of Jacob is our Refuge! A retreat to Him supplies all our wants—for the soul that has Him and retreats to Him can say with infinite satisfaction: “Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. 73:25-26).

We shall surely also sin and fall short of the requirements of the moral law in this coming year, no matter how hard we strive for perfection; as a result, our conscience will smite us, and the Law of God will condemn us and threaten us with God’s wrath and damnation; there will be times when the floodgates of hell overwhelm us, and there is no escape—then we lift up our eyes to the God of Jacob, retreat to the cross on Calvary, and remember: “*God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*” (2. Cor. 5:21). “*The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7) — and the storms subside and peace reigns in our heart again.

There will certainly be moments in this coming year when our faith in God’s providence will be shaken, and we shall become discouraged by the way things are going in the world, the nation, and the church, like Jonah and Elisha of old. We shall see the righteous abused and the wicked triumph; we shall observe true wisdom ignored while sophistry and folly are accepted; we shall hear and read of the integrity of the Word of God being attacked and discredited by the arguments of brilliant men—and we shall be tempted to cast away the fear of God and follow them—our flesh will demand it.

What shall we do then? We shall flee to the Rock that is higher than all, to the God of Jacob, our Maker and Redeemer, the Just One and the Holy One, whose Word cannot be broken by the ingenuity of men; and we remember that “*How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!*” (Rom. 11:33), and we rest our souls there in the knowledge that He has all things in His hand, that He does all things right, and will not let us perish. If we are weak, He is strong; if we are weary, “*underneath are the everlasting arms*” (Deut. 33:27). In this faith we enter the new year with confidence.