

***"Deliver me from the oppression of man:
so will I keep thy precepts."***

Psalm 119:134

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Ps. xxxiv. 19), from external as well as from internal enemies--not only from their own *iniquity*, but *from the oppression of man*. Yet "man is only the Lord's hand and sword" (Ib. xvii. 13, 14), and he can only move under the overruling guidance of our Father's wisdom and love. Not indeed that the believer would (except in submission to the will of God)¹ desire his *deliverance* from this trouble on account of personal pain and distress: but he sometimes finds peculiar circumstances of trial an unavoidable hindrance in the service of his God. And his conviction sends him to the throne of grace: and there he never makes interest in vain. *"He cries unto the Lord because of the oppressors: and he sends a Saviour, and a great one: and he delivers him."* (Isa. xix. 20.)

The power of faith is indeed Omnipotent. Mountains are removed from their place, or they become "plains before" it (Matt. xxi. 21, 22. Zech. iv. 7); or the "worm" is enabled to "thresh them, and beat them small, and make them as chaff." (Isa. xli. 14, 15.) Often is the Christian strengthened to overcome the most formidable opposition, and to "profess a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim. vi. 12), who are "watching for his halting." (Jer. xx. 10.) The grace of Christ will make the hardest duty easy; and the love of Christ will make the sharpest trials sweet: yet, where in the continued exercise of faith the obstacles to conscientious service remain unmoved (as, for instance, a child of God restrained in the fetters of a worldly family from a free and avowed obedience), we may lawfully pray that the providence of God would *deliver from the oppression of man, that we might keep his precepts*.

A time of *deliverance*, as well as a time of persecution, has proved a season of extraordinary prosperity in the church of God. When "the Churches *had rest* throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria," they *were edified*; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, *were multiplied*." (Acts, ix. 31.) And thus in individual experience, whatever be the benefit of persecution, yet the weariness of a long-protracted conflict is often more than flesh and blood can bear; and which he who "knoweth our frame" (Ps. ciii. 14), will not refuse to look upon, and remove, in answer to the prayers of his afflicted people. (Ps. cxxv. 3. 1 Cor. x. 13.) At the same time, our proneness, self-indulgence, and our natural inclination to shrink from discipline--as needful as our food--require this prayer to be presented with exceeding caution and self-jealousy. There is a great danger, lest, in our eagerness to escape from the difficulties of our path, we should lose the most important benefit intended by them. We must therefore accompany the petition for *deliverance* with a sincere purpose to *keep God's precepts*. (Luke, i. 74.) For how many have exposed the unsoundness of their own hearts, when the supplication has been heard, the *deliverance* granted, and the *promise of obedience* been forgotten!

¹ See the example of David. 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26; and of David's Lord, Luke, xxii. 42.

Fellow-Christian! have your circumstances of trial ever dictated this prayer? How then have you improved your liberty, when the answer has been vouchsafed? Has the "way of escape made" for you been kept in grateful remembrance? (Comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 22-25, with Ps. ix. 13, 14.) Has the effect of your *deliverance* been visible in an increasing love and devotedness to the Lord's service? Oh! let a special Ebenezer be set up to mark this special achievement of prayer. (1 Sam. vii. 12.) Let the mercy be connected with the sympathy of our "faithful and merciful High-Priest, who being himself touched with the feeling of your infirmities," has pleaded for your succour and release. (Heb. iv. 15; ii. 17, 18.) And be encouraged henceforth to tread the ways of God with more firmness and sensible stay, "having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." (Eph. vi. 15.) But remember--the blessing of the cross is lost, if it does not issue in a song of praise--if we have not taken it up as a token of fatherly love. At all times the safest and shortest way to peace, is to let God use his own methods with us; to live the present moment to him in the situation he has placed us; not dreaming of other circumstances more favourable to our spiritual prosperity; but leaving ourselves, our difficulties, our discouragements, in his hands, who makes no mistakes in any of his dispensations--but who orders them all, that they "may turn to our salvation, through our prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." (Philip. i. 19.)