

## The Lord Is Thy Keeper



David Wilkerson July 1, 1984

There is a thrilling Old Testament story that best illustrates what it means to be kept by the power of God. It is found in 2 Kings 6.

Benhadad, King of Syria, declared war on Israel and marched against them with a great army. As his forces advanced, he often called his war counsel into his private chambers to plan the next day's strategy. But the prophet Elisha kept sending word to the King of Israel, detailing every move of the enemy troops. On several occasions, the Israelites escaped defeat because of Elisha's warnings.

Benhadad was furious. He called his servants and said, "Show me who the traitor is! Tell me who is revealing our plans to the King of Israel!" The servants told him, "It's not what you think, my lord, O king. There is not traitor in thy camp or in thy court; we are all true (loyal) men. The man of God (Elisha) telleth the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchambers." (2 kings 6:12)

Benhadad immediately dispatched a host of horses, chariots, and soldiers to capture Elisha. "Go to Dothan; bring him to me," he demanded. They went by night and surrounded the city, intending to take the old prophet by surprise. But Elisha's servant awakened early and saw that "an host encompassed the city both with horses and chariots." Terrified, he ran to Elisha. "Alas, my master, what shall we do? We are surrounded."

Confidently smiling, Elisha said, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them...And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, 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 6:14-17).

Elisha, like the psalmist, could stand in the midst of crisis and say with absolute assurance:

- "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about" (Psalm 3:6).
- "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident" (Psalm 27:3).
- "He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me." (Psalm 55:18).

My prayer is that of Elisha: "Lord, open our eyes that we may see and behold the mountains filled with the horses and chariots of fire - of the Lord of hosts..."

Kept by the Lord of Hosts

Old Testament saints knew God in a way we New Testament saints know very little about. They knew Him as THE LORD OF HOSTS! Over 200 times in the Old Testament - from Samuel through Malachi - God is referred to by this name. We read that "David waxed greater and greater, for the Lord of hosts was with him." This majestic title is found repeatedly in the Psalms:

- "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (46:7).
- "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong tower like unto thee? Or to thy faithfulness round about thee?" (89:8).
- "Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer" (84:8).
- "The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory" (24:10).

The Hebrew word for "hosts" is tsbaah. It means "an army ready and poised for battle." Soldiers, horses, and chariots ready to do to war at an appointed time. An army assembled and mustered, waiting for instructions.

To Elisha, God was the Lord of tsbaah - the Lord coming to his assistance with an army poised for battle. An army of multiplied thousands of soldiers, horses, chariots - assembled and waiting for instructions.

On another occasion, the Assyrian army came against King Hezekiah and Judah. No wonder this king was unmoved when surrounded by a ferocious army. He said to God's people: "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh: but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested on those words" (2 Chronicles 32:7,8).

The Old Testament saints rested in their vision of an Almighty God whose all-powerful, unseen army was assembled for their protection. David boasted, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: and the Lord is among them..." (Psalm 68:17). According to the psalmist, they are enlisted for us: "The Lord is thy keeper" (121:5).

Peter said, "We are kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). I see in this a prophecy that God is once more, in these last days, going to reveal His keeping power to the saints.

Christ prayed to the Father concerning His disciples: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those thou has given me I have kept, and none of them is lost" (John 17:12). The disciples did not keep themselves in the will of God. They were kept by a mighty power, outside of themselves. They could not have made it a single day without Christ's keeping power.

What a glorious prayer Christ prayed on our behalf: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

I want to show you what an incredible thing it is to be kept by the power of God through faith.

KEPT, in English, means:

- To retain possession of - to take into one's charge.
- To provide all necessities - to raise and feed.
- To protect and preserve - to have in control.

But in the Greek, the work KEPT is very expressive. As used in 1 Peter 1:5, it is phroureo, meaning:

- To establish a military outpost.
- To guard, hem in, protect with a garrison.
- To establish a fortress with a full military line, with full military apparatus.
- To discern the enemy far in advance and protect from danger.

Not only is the Lord a strong tower - He establishes in us a military outpost, manned by a fully-equipped army. We actually become a powerful military out post with armies of soldiers, horses, and chariots ready for combat - and with a sentinel that sees the oncoming enemy far in advance.

Jesus prayed, "Keep them from the evil..." The Greek word for keep here is poueros, another comprehensive word. It means:

- Deliverance from the effect or influence of anything bad, evil, grievous, harmful, lewd, malicious, or wicked.
- Deliverance from Satan himself and all that is corrupt or diseased.

Put it all together and it seems almost too good to believe. We are God's military outpost, protected by a fully-equipped spiritual army of innumerable horses, chariots, and soldiers in full battle array completely informed of every enemy plan and device - wholly defended against Satan and all the evil powers in the universe. Now maybe we can understand what the Scripture means when it says, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Also reconsider these verses in light of this revelation: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer - and my high tower" (Psalm 18:2). "Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy" (Psalm 61:3).

We do not keep ourselves from evil. We do not do battle with Satan. The Lord of hosts must do the keeping. Hear what the Bible says: "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy... for they were too strong for me" (Psalm 18:16,17). In Jude we are promised, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

The enemy without and the enemy within

We are kept from the enemy without as well as within. The enemy without is suffering, caused by manifold temptations and fiery trials. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6,7). The key words here are "heaviness" and "fiery trial." In the Greek, "heaviness" signifies grief, sorrow, or trouble: "fiery" suggests lightning-like test or trial.

Are you in a season of grief because you failed God and gave in to temptation? Are you sorrowing because of a sudden lightning-like disaster that struck your life? Are you experiencing a worrisome financial crisis? Do you see it as a test of your faith? Can you rejoice in spite of it? Will you rise above it by faith and glorify the Lord through it? Will it all end in praises to the Lord?

Those who believe overcoming Christians need not suffer do not really know God or His Word. Suffering in the lives of believers is not always the result of sin. Christ was sinless, yet He suffered. And in His suffering, He set an example for us. "For even hereunto ye are called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:21,22).

How long has it been since you heard this kind of gospel preached: "Here is what you are called to! Here is how you follow the example Jesus set - through suffering! And that includes those without sin!"

The enemy without is formidable, but it is the enemy within that causes us the most distress. David said, "In my distress I cried" (Psalm 120:1). Here is a great and holy man of God crying out his heart to the Lord - desperate to be delivered from himself. "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue," he pleads (Psalm 120:2).

David sought God to keep him from the evil and deceit of his own heart. He looked at the sin and weakness in himself and saw only that he deserved the wrath and judgment of God. "What shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper" (Psalm 120:3,4). "Woe is me!" he cried, when he saw the exceeding sinfulness of his soul. He knew he should be punished. Arrows are synonymous with judgment; fire, with wrath. "God is after me now," he thought.

God has a divine purpose in allowing his servants to experience such distress. We can never understand grace until we see the total wickedness of the flesh. We cannot know grace until we see the exceeding sinfulness of our sins - that by all rights we deserve God's arrows of judgment and His fires of wrath. We must feel the total wretchedness of our humanity. We must come to the end of ourselves and in our distress cry out, "Oh, God, it is your mercy and grace, or there is no hope for me."

It was in his worst hour of distress that David caught a vision of God's grace and of His keeping power. I am sure he came to the place of resignation, knowing that only the Lord of hosts could deliver and keep him from the power

of evil. His eyes, cast down by failures, now looked up: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord...He will not allow thy foot to slip: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper" (Psalm 121:1-5).

Oh God, open our eyes. Let us by faith lift them up to the hill of God. To the unseen armies of the Lord of hosts. To a loving Father who never slumbers. To Him alone who can keep us from falling. One translation of the Psalms describes God's keeping power this way: "He will hedge you about with thorns, keeping you safe from all evil" (Psalm 121:7).

We are preserved in every situation

David's faith in God's forgiving, keeping power brought him to a glorious conclusion. It is perhaps one of the most encouraging insights in all Scripture:

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and for evermore" (Psalm 121:8).

Going out here is synonymous with failure and sorrow. The prodigal was preserved during his going out and was brought back to a coming in. We are forever going out on the Lord. We go out of His will, out of His presence, out of His love, out of His holiness. We go out into despair, into fear and doubt, into lust and sensuality.

"How," you ask, "does God preserve me when I'm going out on Him?" By constantly reminding you that He is standing by. The Spirit keeps you under conviction. You sin but you can't enjoy it. You grieve over it; you cry for deliverance from its power. Even while you are sinning, you hear the voice of the Lord whispering, "This is wrong. This is not what you really want. This will not satisfy." And in your weakest moment, you still feel His love and mercy flooding your soul. You sense His forgiveness and grace. Your loving Father welcomes you back with open arms, kisses your neck, and brings you into His house.

We need just as much delivering, keeping power in our coming in. We come in to a glorious place of peace and rest. Our sins are forsaken and our shame is gone. We see others about us failing the Lord, but we are high in the Spirit, praising His name. All seems pure, sweet, and holy. This is the very time we need to be kept and preserved - from pride! From judging others! From a holier-than-thou attitude! From a sense of having "arrived" in God. From being a spiritual bore. The going out publican is nearer to God than the coming in Pharisee.

It has been during my going out times that the Lord has so marvelously revealed His loving grace to me. He came to me recently when I felt so down, so alone, so sinful and unworthy. I had come to the end of my patience and endurance. I felt I had let the Lord down. Like David, all I could see were the lies and deceit in my heart.

I picked up my Bible and opened it to a passage declaring God's judgment and wrath against sin. I quickly closed my Bible, wept like a child, and cried out, "Oh, Lord - no wrath! No judgment! I can't take that right now! I know what I am - but I know You love me. Please, Lord, love all the hurt out of me." And for an hour I lay there, letting Him love, feeling His grace and mercy. He healed me!

Have you sinned? Have you gone out on Him? Do you feel unworthy, unclean, destined to wrath and judgment? Lift up your eyes to the hills - to the loving Lord of hosts. He is not out to hurt you or to send wrath into your life. He is even now preserving your going out. He is loving you, sheltering you with Christ's precious blood, yearning for you to run to His open arms and be kissed. He desires only to set you in heavenly places and feast with you.

In one of David's goings out, he felt he had gone so far that he was forever lost. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep," he said. Then he pleaded, "Seek thy servant!" (Psalm 119:176). He was saying, "Lord, come to me in my sin and failure. Bring me back. Keep me from going astray. Keep seeking me!"

I don't care how far you've fallen or how lost you may think you are. It doesn't matter what you have done. All you need to do is cry out, "Lord, I'm lost! Seek me. Come after me." He will!  
Finally - A word of caution to all who suffer

When you are suffering, don't threaten! Here is an amazing truth connected with Christ's suffering:

"When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (1 Peter 2:23).

What a tremendous statement: "When he suffered, he threatened not!" He never once defended Himself against those who mistreated Him. He punished no one - never retaliated against any.

How unlike us! We threaten when suffering gets unbearable; we defend ourselves; we constantly protect our rights and reputation. And we withdraw from those who mistreat us. We hope the Lord will get even with them on our behalf!

Worst of all, we threaten God. It's a very subtle thing, and most of us are not aware of what we are doing. When our prayers go unanswered - when help or deliverance doesn't come - when we fall into the clutches of temptation - when trouble and disaster strike our lives - when it seems like the Lord has let us down and we end up lonely and in pain: we pull back on God. We slack up on prayer and Bible reading. We still love God, but we let go of our zeal. We begin to drift. Our faith becomes dull, inactive. Those responses are all threats against the Lord.

Every time we back off from seeking the Lord with all our hearts, we are threatening Him. It's a subtle way of saying, "Lord, I did my best and You let me down."

Multitudes of Christians live in a stunned state of mind. They are not evil, backslidden, or rebellious; they are simply overwhelmed by the problems and trials thrust upon them. They go about in a kind of spiritual and physical fog.

The Lord has infinite patience with those of us who hurt. He waits lovingly until we return to His tender care. But it can become a way of life, a threat to God's faithfulness, if we refuse to wake up and renew our faith and hope in Him. Some become so disillusioned, they give in to their lusts and passions. They indulge their desires because the battle seems so hopeless. It's their way of saying, "What's the use? I try so hard, and I can't seem to get victory. I call on God to help me, to deliver me - but help never comes. I've still got this thing in me, after all my tears and prayers."

It finally comes to this: "I have a right to do it - because I've been hurt so badly." It's a threat to God, a way of getting even with Him for not answering prayer on schedule.

Beloved, there is hope! The Lord of hosts is with us! He alone is our keeper. He will not let His children slip or fall. We are held in the palm of His hand.

Let us do as Christ did. He "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). "To commit" is to place your life completely in His hands. Give up your struggle, quit trying to accomplish anything in your own strength, and commit the keeping of your body and soul to the Lord of Hosts!

[Download PDF](#) [1]

#### **Links**

[1] <http://worldchallenge.org/printpdf/4835/>