

A Secret Place “Protected from Strife”

I. SCRIPTURE

“You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion [shelter] from the strife of tongues.”¹ (Ps. 31:20; [NKJV]).



1. Ps. 32:21; Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *New King James Version*.

II. A CHAOTIC WORLD

(Describe today's photo: an impoverish neighborhood with a young mom and her two very young children peering out, riot over a strife of tongues [words], a man of color sitting in despair on the doorstep next to the garbage, and a police officer chasing a man down the alley. Above it all and in front of this young family's window, the nail pierced hand of Christ is extended. This is definitely a dated picture; probably the police car is a 1969 Ford Fallon. By definition, this is not a ghetto. Describe my own personal ghetto experience: July 2, 1972, on the way to the Temptations and Supremes concert at the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium in downtown Sacramento, CA... in a Ford Pinto, running out of gas in a ghetto; the miraculous restarting of a car empty of gas.)

Regardless of the date of this artist's painting, a similar chaotic situation is still present in today's world. It seems to me that nowadays that there are other hands that are being extended over our cities and neighborhoods... and they are not the hands of Christ. We have those people, those spirits today who try to incite hatred between us... between the different ethnic groups... between the rich and the poor... between the police and the civilians... between the difference in ideologies, of the different political and religious groups. Even many in the media and others of influence in today's politics and society... They look at all of today's chaos, the riots and the strife of words between the different classes, and they will refer to it all as "peaceful". "Peaceful" protests, "righteous" causes, they say... all for good of the world, a better society. [Humor: maybe it is all just a result of climate change.] And yet YAHUAH [God] sees it all for what it really is, and rightly calls what is going on in today's world, and He justly condemns it. He says, "woe to those [people and spirits] who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa. 5:20).

III. A SECRET SHELTER FROM *STRIFE*, INCLUDING THE *STRIFE* OF TONGUES

Many of us today are blessed, as we do not live nearby the cities, or the neighborhoods that we just talked about, where there is all this poverty... rioting... hatred for the police... and interracial divide. And yet, we are not totally spared by the distance. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *strife* as a "bitter, sometimes violent conflict or dissension political strife, an act of contentions, exertion or contention for superiority". And so among ourselves, within our families... within the greater church body... and even within our own church body... and within our neighborhoods, and even within ourselves... we are experiencing spiritual poverty...

we have a beef with others around us because of what they think or say, because of their political and/or religious views... or just their heated feelings toward us, or that they want us to think that they are somehow much superior to us... that their way of thinking, their politics, their religious positions, their whatever... are somehow superior to our own. And in our desperation, our restlessness, our fear for what we see, we turn to YAHUAH [God]'s promises in today's scripture. (Read today's Scripture.)

In today's scripture, we have a picture of David, who is under attack from a type of strife, that he called "the strife of tongues". He is pleading with YAHUAH [God], and maybe you can relate. He starts out by feeling sorry for Himself; he prays to YAHUAH [the LORD]:

"I am a reproach [despised thing] among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and [I] am repulsive to my acquaintances; those who see me outside flee from me. I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken [perishing] vessel. For I hear the slander of many; fear is on every side; while they take counsel together against me, they scheme to take away my life." (Ps. 31:11-13).

But then He recognizes that God [YAHUAH]'s extended hand is protecting him, and he continues in his prayer...

"But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD [YAHUAH]; I say, 'You are my God [ELOHIYM]'. [These] times are in Your *hand*; deliver me from the *hand* of my enemies, and from those who persecute me. Make Your face shine upon Your servant; save me for Your mercies' sake. Do not let me be ashamed, O LORD [YAHUAH], for I have called upon You; let the wicked be ashamed; let them be silent in the grave. [Yes,] let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men [and women]! You shall hide them [the righteous] in the secret place of Your presence from the plots of man [and woman]; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion [shelter] from the strife of tongues. (Ps. 31:14-20).

IV. PROTECTED BY THE HAND OF YAHUAH [God]

As you and I now begin to figure this out... that regardless of whether we are vulnerable by our physical environment... regardless of whether we live in the inner

city, the suburbs, or in the rural areas... whether we run out of gas in the ghetto, or that we are facing either physically or spiritual strife... or whether we are vulnerable because of our emotional or spiritual environment, by what others think about us, our socioeconomic or religious views... then you and I should begin to realize that YAHUAH [God]'s nail-pierced hand is outstretched and protecting us... regardless of where our vulnerabilities lie, because we are His righteous.

We now begin to take courage as learn now that that David's Psalm 31 is not the only promise of protection that we can rely on. David, in Psalm 91, also wrote down Moses's prayer, which says, "Return, O LORD [YAHUAH]! ... And have compassion on Your servants. Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil. Let Your work[s] appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God [YAHUAH ELOHAYNU] be upon us, and establish the work of *our* hands for us; Yes, establish the work of *our* hands. [For I know that] he who dwells in the secret place of the Most High [EL ELYON] shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty [EL SHADDAI]. [And] I will say of the LORD [YAHUAH], 'He is my refuge and my fortress; My God [ELOHIYM], in Him I will trust'."

V. THE VALUE OF A SECRET PLACE

With Moses's prayer, the psalmist is writing in Psalm 90 and 91, that YAHUAH [God] has a secret hiding place. And He invites you and me to join Him. He invites us to go and visit Him within His place; His promise is to those of us who "dwell" or "live" in this place. And so, we learn that it becomes an address of our own, that He invites us to just go... to go to His secret place [in our present spirit, our present way of thinking]. And so, to do what He say, we learn that we must walk away from all the chaos and the enticements of the world. We must be willing to, we must somehow believe that He can and will quiet our hearts before Him. Yes, we submit to Him and we allow Him to investigate our inner recesses... those thoughts and places that we reveal to no one else but Him. Sometimes not even to our spouses, our best friends, our whoever... We realize that we must have complete honesty with and trust in Him, for we cannot join ELOHIYM [God] in His secret place, unless we are willing to be transparent and honest with Him.²

². "What does the Bible say about the value of a secret place?" Got Questions: Your Questions. Biblical Answers, accessed April 24, 2021, <https://www.gotquestions.org/secret-place.html>.

YAHUSHA [Jesus] instructs us, “but you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly”. (Matt. 6:6).

I don’t think that YAHUSHA [Jesus] is necessarily indicating a physical location, because we can pray anywhere, in every place, at any time, and in every situation, can’t we? But to really connect with YAHUAH [God], we must enter this secret place with Him... in which we bring our own spirits, whether of good or not, and at that moment we enter this special, secret place to meet YAHUAH [God] there. We begin to learn that quiet locations help, because we are seeking solitude... where we will spend uninterrupted time with the Almighty One, the Master of all that exists.³

YAHUSHA [Jesus] did exactly this while He was on earth. Although He often prayed in public, He always also slipped away from the crowds and even His closest friends to spend time alone with His Father in solitude... in uninterrupted time with Him.⁴

When we choose to leave behind the world’s delights in favor of a lifestyle of spiritual devotion, YAHUAH [God] draws near to us in new, and more beautiful ways. James writes, “Therefore submit to YAHUAH [God]. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to YAHUAH [God] and He will draw near to you. Clean your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord [YAHUAH], and He will lift you up.” (James 4:7-8,10).⁵ And as we do this, we begin to see our attitude, our sin, our ways as He does, and we will begin to say as Isaiah said in His presence, “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man [a woman] of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have [now] seen the King, the LORD of hosts [YAHUAH TSEVA’OTH].”⁶ For... time spent in the presence of YAHUAH [God] reveals our own true thoughts and our selfish motivations, that we would otherwise not notice. And from this secret place, the fruit of the RUACH [Spirit] will *now* begin to take root and grow... the other spirits that are not in sync with the RUACH HA’QODESH [Holy Spirit] within us *now* begin to disappear. *Now*, we begin to see our lives differently, from His eternal perspective, rather than from our own. Our earthly frustrations *now* lose significance.⁷

³. Ibid.

⁴. Ibid.

⁵. Ibid.

⁶. Ibid.

⁷. Ibid.

Meanwhile, however, we realize that we do not have to neglect our responsibilities or relationships in order to dwell in our secret place with Him. We realize, though, that the key to moving to this space is our total surrender to the RUACH HA'QODESH [Holy Spirit] and the will of YAHUAH [God] for our lives.

This decision *now* dominates our actions and it *now* changes our outlook. Now, we realize that it is within this secret place, it is through the working of the holy RUACH [Spirit] of YAHUAH, sent by YAHUSHA [Jesus] to us, that we have been praying for... ... we realize that we have now entered into this rebirth process that YAHUSHA [Jesus] was trying to tell the *self-righteous* Nicodemus that he must go through in order to enter into the His Father's kingdom.⁸

VI. CONCLUSION & APPEAL

And so... today, brothers and sister in Messiah [Christ], let's lay down our weapons, whether offensive or self-defensive... let's lift our heads up out of our despair... let's recognize that the hand of ELOHIYM [God] will help us put away all of our fear... whether a fear of the world, with all its chaos or the riots... or the fear of the strife of tongues that we experience, that are spoken between ourselves and other classes of people, with our neighbors, and between ourselves and our brothers and sisters in the church... in our own body... and in the wider body of YAHUSHA [Jesus].

Yes, brothers and sister, let's seek that secret place today.

Amen.

VII. CLOSING MUSICAL MEDITATION

(I have not rights to today's closing song, by Sovereign Grace Music and found on YouTube, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ox8rX rd-KE>.)

⁸. Ibid.