

And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. (Psalm 30:6-7)

It is difficult to think of cold when we are warm, hunger when we are full, weakness when we are strong, sorrow when we are merry, failure when we are successful.

Tragedies generally hit us with a shock. We are seldom prepared for hunger if our bellies are accustomed to being full. If things have been going smoothly for us for some time, we forget that they can get very rough. If we have been on top for a while, it is an awful awakening to wake up suddenly on bottom.

These setbacks come as surprises because we quickly forget that “man born of woman is of few days and full of sorrows,” that this earth is suffering under a load of sin, all creation is groaning from the perversion and disuse it is subjected to from God-hating men.

We, too, are likely to forget that whatever brief success we might have or whatever comforts we may be allowed to enjoy are not the fruits and rewards of our own skill, labors and clever planning, but the gracious provision of the Lord. If our “mountain” stands strong, it is God Who has intervened with His grace and His angelic hosts and has built a hedge about us so that our adversaries could not touch us.

In such circumstances we usually say, this will go on forever. I will never be moved. We may not speak these words out loud, but we think them and allow ourselves to hope and expect it to be so. We become presumptuous, and forget what Isaac Newton reminded us of in his immortal Hymn:

“Shall I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease?
While others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?
Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the tide?
Is this vile world a friend of grace to help me on to God?”

So when God hides His face from us for a moment, He is reminding us that we are not home yet. There is a battle to be fought before we rest in comfort.

-C.M.