

Spring Forward Fall Backward.

Or

The Ministry of Angels.

On Saturday the 30th of October I went through the annual ritual of altering the clocks. I brought to mind the tip given a few years ago of spring forward and fall backward which helps to put an end to the confusion of losing an hour or gaining an hour, I did not realise at the time that by altering the clocks I would fulfill this little adage literally. There are two wall clocks in the kitchen. The first one is always fiddly being a pendulum clock that entails taking the back off, turning the little adjusting wheel a few times to get the second finger to stay on the right minute, and then replacing the clock hook bracket to synchronise with the screw on the wall. Next came the one on the opposite wall which could have done with a miss as it never keeps the right time anyway. However, it needed changing, better a few minutes out than an hour, and a few minutes.

I have some small step ladders in the kitchen but decided to use the dining chair instead. I managed to retrieve the clock from the wall and set the time but was having difficulty locating the screw in relocating the clock to the right position on the wall. The linen basket was in the way so decided to transfer one foot onto the linen basket which wasn't a good idea. My right foot disappeared into the basket as the lid gave way. The outcome was that I fell backward followed by the ironing board, the clock, the linen basket, a couple of adjustable chairs, a load of towels and everything else bar the ceiling. I am 82 and my dear wife who suffers from MS carried on in the next room eating her raspberries, and bananas topped with yogurt unaware of what all the noise was about.

As I lay there on my back on the hard tiled floor thinking I had broken my elbows I began to think of the verse in the Old Testament and Matthew chapter 4 *'He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands, they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'* Now, thought I, why not elbows? Having sufficiently recovered to just about stand up I informed both my sons that I thought I may have broken my elbow, but after my eldest son asked if I could move it and replying that I could, howbeit painfully, suggested I put a bag of frozen peas on the injured elbow. After applying the remedy and nearly freezing to death the pain in the elbow began to ease and the following day I was able to push my wheelchair-bound wife to church unaided.

Thinking about the incident on Sunday afternoon and having a closer look at Psalm 91 and Matthew 4 I realised I had fallen into the trap of Satan's misquotation. It is wrong to assume that because the quotation in Matthew is in the context of falling headlong from the Temple that we too will be prevented from serious injury each time we do silly things like standing on a flimsy linen basket lid.

In my study on this subject, *'Lest we dash our foot against a stone'*, I came across this helpful quote from one commentator who said that the Aramaic word for stone in Matthew's account is *capha*, which means rock and really nothing else. The arch deceiver had misquoted the passage because the word used in Hebrew in the Psalm is *eban*. *Eban* is 'a little stone, a pebble, one that can be thrown'. Over the sixty years of following my Saviour there have been many hidden pebbles that have proved challenging, the rocks, however, being rocks can be avoided if we are truly walking in the Spirit.

Another part of the quotation in Psalm 91 conveniently missed by Satan is the important part of the verse *'He shall keep you in all your ways'* which helps to put the rest of the verses in context. John Calvin gives a helpful comment on this psalm. He goes on to say and I quote:

'The inspired writer of the psalm gives us a high idea of the guardianship of the angels, informing us, that they not only watch lest any evil should befall us, and are on the alert to extend assistance but bear up our steps with their hands, so as to prevent us from stumbling in our course. Were we to judge indeed by mere appearances, the children of God are far from being thus borne up aloft in their career; often they labour and pant with exertion, occasionally they stagger and fall, and it is with a struggle that they advance in their course; but as in the midst of all this weakness it is only by the singular help of God that they are preserved every moment from falling and from being destroyed, we need not wonder that the Psalmist should speak in such exalted terms of the assistance which they receive through the ministrations of angels.'

Even the nasty hidden pebbles of sin can be avoided. In commenting on Psalm 91:12 most commentators remind us of the verse in Proverbs 3:23 that by obtaining the wisdom described in the chapter *we will walk safely in our way, and our foot will not stumble*, and in connection with this wisdom from the book of proverbs we have it reiterated in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians: *See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise*, 5:15 thus avoiding those hidden pebbles.

Turning back to the subject of angels. Though the verse in Psalm 91 does not refer directly to aiding the Christian in his daily protection from physical harm, that does not mean they are passively uninvolved in caring for us. Some Christians might ask why we need angels when we have Jesus Christ. In answer to that, we could ask another question, why does God need pastors and teachers? Our Saviour is the Lord of Hosts and as the writer to the Hebrews reminds us when referring to angels *'Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? 1:14.* Of course, our Saviour could do it all in his own power but he has chosen to use agents to care for his flock, whether angels or men.

In conclusion to this little exhortation, I would like to add something else to my mishap in changing the clocks. A couple of days before the time came to change the clocks I decided to gather some unwanted clothes for the charity shop which filled two large plastic bags. Now, where do you think I placed them ready for removal to the charity shop? I could have placed them anywhere in the house, but I just happened to place them behind the kitchen door exactly where my head landed. I wonder who was involved in that action that highly likely saved me from cracking my head on the floor? At the direction of the Lord of Hosts, it seems like the angels had already been busy long before I decided to put my foot on a very flimsy linen basket lid.

Les Yates.