

"Pray, Sir"

BY JOEL STEPHEN WILLIAMS

The following story tells of a dramatic event in the life of Thomas Campbell while he was preaching in County Armagh in northern Ireland in the early 1800s. It was a time of violence between Catholics and Protestants.

Mr. Campbell was one day preaching to a congregation, when the house was suddenly surrounded by a troop of Welsh Horse, notorious for their severities and outrages on those they conceived to be rebels. The captain, conceiving that in this remote place he had come upon a meeting of the rebels, dismounted, and in a threatening manner marched into the church. It was a moment of awful suspense. The audience were panic-stricken, expecting every moment to be subjected to the fury of the soldiers. Just at this moment, as the captain stalked up the aisle, casting fierce glances on all sides, a venerable elder sitting near Mr. Campbell called to him solemnly: "Pray, sir." Whereupon, in response to the call, and in a deep, unfaltering voice, he began in the language of the forty-sixth Psalm: "Thou, O God, art our refuge and strength: a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the depths of the sea." No sooner was the first verse uttered, then the captain paused, and, apparently impressed, bent his head, listened to the close, then bowed, and retracing his steps, mounted his

horse and dashed away with his entire troop (A. S. Hayden, Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, pp. 42-43).

It seems apparent that the captain was convinced by the sincerity of Campbell's prayer and devotion to God. Through that means, and possibly in other ways invisible to our eyes, God protected the little congregation from harm on that day.

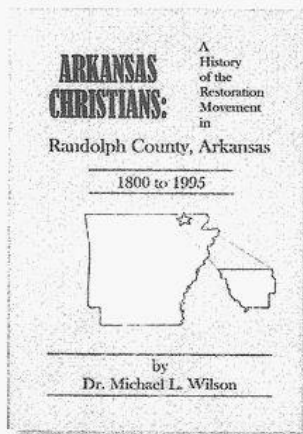
In times of danger and duress, God's people have always turned to

him in prayer. Sometimes the danger is removed suddenly, while at other times only after a delay, as with Daniel (6:1ff).

Whether God removes the danger or not, the faithful are emboldened by the faith of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who said, "The God we serve is able to save us ... But even if he does not, ... we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Dan. 3:17-18).

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