

Spiritual Fortress Part III: Call for Backup

In the previous articles, we discussed the first two steps of an emergency plan to protect ourselves from the attacks of demons. The first step of the emergency plan is to **flee** from temptation; the next step is to **seek refuge in our spiritual fortress** – the church. In this article, we will discuss the last step of the emergency plan, which is to **call for backup**.

If, for example, you heard a thief breaking into your house, chances are you would run to a bedroom, lock the door, and then call 911. I imagine the 911 dispatcher would advise you to wait for the police to arrive and arrest the criminal. When the police arrive to the crime scene, they will use whatever force necessary to save you, the victim. In an analogous manner, once we have fled from temptation to our spiritual fortress, we should call on God to defend us and to fight on our behalf.



It would be unwise to call for backup without first retreating and seeking refuge in a fortress, and it would be even more foolish not to call for backup. In our analogy of the robbery, the homeowner had enough time to call for backup and for the police to arrive because of the security provided by the locked door of their room. If, however, the homeowner did not flee to his fortress before calling for backup, chances are the robber would immediately come into the home, find the owner, and hurt him. In our spiritual lives, we must play defense before we play offense. From the safety and security of our impregnable fortress, we can call on God to be our offense.

This was the emergency plan King David wrote about in the Psalms. He says, **“For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me...”** (Psalm 27:5). Then he implores God saying, **“Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice...Do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation”** (Psalm 27:7, 9). Take note how the Psalmist flees to the tabernacle during his affliction and then calls for backup.

Sometimes, it may seem that backup is taking a while to arrive to the crime scene. The moments while one is under attack may seem like an eternity, and, at times, it may seem like God is slow in His response, yet God never abandons those who call on Him. For this reason, the Psalm ends with the beautiful verse, **“Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!”** (Psalm 27:14). Those who wait for the Lord will be strengthened when the Lord arrives on the scene! King David was aware of the remarkable strength of the Lord. Accordingly, he says, **“When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident”** (Psalm 27:2-3).

In fact, there is even more reason to be confident as we have a gracious mother, hosts of angels, and fellow saints who are always willing to be our backup. In the 3rd Litany of the first watch of the midnight hour, we pray, **“You are the rampart of our salvation, O Mother of God the Virgin, the mighty and impregnable fortress. Abolish the counsel of adversaries, and transform the sorrow of your servants into joy. Fortify our church, defend our fathers, and intercede for the peace of the world; for you are our hope, O Theotokos.”** Truly St. Mary, as a good mother, is our “impregnable fortress,” who not only protects us, but also fights on our behalf and “abolishes” our evil adversaries. In a similar fashion, the angels and saints are always willing to be our backup. Just as Pope Kyrillos VI was supported by St. Mina, and *Tamav* Irene was supported by Philopateer Mercurius, we too, should depend on the heavenly to protect us. We can also take comfort in knowing that our heavenly backup is more powerful than the evil attacking demons. These modern-day saints were saved from difficult circumstances when they called for backup.

As we conclude this series, let us remember to practice our emergency plan when we fall into temptation. Remember to: 1) flee from the sinful environment; 2) seek refuge in our spiritual fortress, the church; and 3) call for backup through prayer to God and His saints. If we follow this procedure, we will be saved from the attacks of the demons and experience the joy and victory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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