

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will focus on the fact that God is a very present help in time of trouble. While this is stated many times in the Bible let us focus in particular on Psalm 46:1: **“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble”**.

The Hebrews had a practice of composing songs to commemorate special events. The Song of Moses, for example, commemorated the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian army (Ex. 15:1-21). David composed a song to lament the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17-27). Zechariah composed a song to celebrate the birth of his son, John the Baptist (Lk. 1:67-79), Etc. Scholars tell us that the 46th Psalm was composed to commemorate the deliverance of Jerusalem and King Hezekiah from Sennacherib the King of Assyria. This amazing story is found three times in the Bible (2 Ki. 18:17 – 19:37; 2 Chron. 32:1-23; Is. 36:1–37:38). Here is a brief summary:

- In the 14th year of Hezekiah Sennacherib attacked all the fortified cities of Judah.
- Every city they attacked was defeated and Jerusalem was the next on their list.
- Jerusalem was surrounded and the Jews were so outnumbered that the Captain of the Assyrian army offered Hezekiah 2,000 horses if he could put riders on them.
- The Assyrian commander spoke in Hebrew to the men on the wall of Jerusalem and promised them that soon they would be eating their own filth and drinking their own urine.
- Hezekiah went to the temple and sought the help of God in prayer.
- God answered his prayer and sent word through the prophet Isaiah that the King of Assyria would not shoot an arrow, build a siege ramp, or enter the city of Jerusalem.
- That very night God sent an angel who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.
- The next morning Sennacherib broke camp, withdrew, and returned to Nineveh where he was killed by his own sons (Is. 37:38).
- Berossus, a secular Babylonian historian, confirms the Biblical narrative: *“Now when Sennacherib was returning from his Egyptian war to Jerusalem, he found his army under Rabshakeh his general in danger, for God had sent a pestilential distemper upon his army; and on the very first night of the siege, a hundred fourscore and five thousand, with their captains and generals, were destroyed. So the king was in a great dread and in a terrible agony at this calamity; and being in great fear for his whole army, he fled with the rest of his forces to his own kingdom, and to his city Nineveh; and when he had abode there a little while, he was treacherously assaulted, and died by the hands of his elder sons, Adrammelech and Seraser, and was slain in his own temple, which was called Araske.”*
- This was just one of many confirmations that God is a very present help in time of trouble!

Everyone has trouble! Job said that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7). He said that man is of a few days and full of trouble (Job 14:1). Job also spoke of being overwhelmed by trouble, weeping with troubles, and his enemies gloating over his troubles. These Scriptures confirm that at some point in time everybody has troubles. This, of course, includes both you and me. Job's troubles involved his family, his finances, and his health. Don't be surprised if our troubles also involve our finances, our family, and our health!

Here is the 46th Psalm which beautifully celebrates the help of God!

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. (Selah) There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. (Selah) Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. (Selah)”

FYI the word “selah” is found 74 times in the Hebrew Bible (71 times in Psalms and 3 times in Habakkuk). While no one knows the exact meaning of the word, scholars suggest that it may mean “Amen” or “So be it”. When reminded that God is a very present help in time of trouble everyone should say “Amen!” Note also that when the mountains crash and quake, when the seas roar, and when the nations are in an uproar, that’s when we are to “Be still” and recognize the reality of God. He is a very present help in time of trouble.

Jesus sent out His disciples like sheep in the midst of wolves, yet He still promised them peace. Jesus said: **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33)**. Paul echoed this message and wrote: **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6,7)**. Paul called it a peace that transcends all understanding while Isaiah called it a “perfect peace” (Is. 26:3). The good news is that this peace is available to all believers.

The expression “wits’ end” comes from the Bible (See Ps. 107:23-31). It described some sailors who were caught in a storm. The huge waves mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths. The sailors **“reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits’ end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress”**

When you are at your wits’ end, remember to cry out to the Lord for He is a very present help in time of trouble.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce