

A Very Present Help In Trouble

Summary

We frequently encounter trouble; our destiny is the peace of God and peace with God.

1st hymn *by HK White* (Tune University College H. Gauntlett)

- 1) Oft in danger, oft in woe, onward, Christians, onward go;
Fight the fight, maintain the strife, strengthened with the Bread of Life.
- 2) Shrink not Christians, will ye yield? Will ye quit the painful field?
Will ye flee in danger's hour? Know ye not your Captain's power?
- 3) Let not sorrow dim your eyes, soon shall every tear be dry;
Let not fears your course impede, great your strength if great your need.
- 4) Onward then to glory move, more than conquerors ye shall prove;
'Though opposed by many a foe, onward Christians, onward go.

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Prayer:

Thank you, Dear Father, for our freedom to meet in your name, and to know that our worship is received and our prayers heard. Such is our privilege because we come today in the name of your Son. Lead us in our worship now, and speak to us from your word, for we pray in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

2nd Hymn *by Augustus Toplady 1740-78* (T Petra Richard Redhead 1820-1901)

- 1) Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee,
Let the water and the blood from Thy riven side which flowed
be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power.
- 2) Not the labours of my hands can fulfil Thy law's demands,
could my zeal no respite know, could my tears for ever flow
All for sin could not atone, Thou must save, and Thou alone.
- 3) Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling,
naked come to Thee for dress, helpless look to Thee for grace,
Foul I to the fountain fly; wash me saviour or I die.
- 4) While I draw this fleeting breath, when my eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown, see Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.

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Readings:

- Psalm 46:1-7
- 2 Cor 4:7-17

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Intercessions:

Dear Heavenly Father, We come to pray for your world, which is usually in trouble, so often with wars and rumours of wars. The Middle East is at war again, Israel with Hamas, replicating an ancient fight between Jew and Arab as has been the case for at least 4 millenia. We find it very hard to pray, for bad things happen in all wars, and we do not know all that is happening, but you do know what is happening on the ground and in peoples' hearts. So Father bring justice and truth to this place we pray.

We pray for the people of Ukraine, grateful that many in that land look to you for your help. Thank you also that the world sees their invasion as wrong, and supports Ukraine in attitude and substance.

We pray for those who preach in the pulpits of our land; grant them to be true to your word, and boldness in their proclamation, and let your word still reach the furthest places and bring your light.

And so continue to speak to us and keep us in that same truth, for we ask these prayers in the all-prevailing name of Jesus the Christ, Amen.

3rd Hymn by Henry Baker 1821-77 (*T Dominus regit me* John Dykes 1823-76)

- 1) The king of love my Shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never,
I nothing lack if I am His, and He is mine forever.
- 2) Where streams of living water flow my ransomed soul he leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow with food celestial feedeth.
- 3) Perverse and foolish oft I strayed but yet in love he sought me
and on his shoulder gently laid and home rejoicing brought me.
- 4) In death's dark vale I fear no ill with Thee dear Lord beside me,
Thy rod and staff my comfort still, Thy cross before to guide me.
- 5) Thou spreadst a table in my sight, Thy unction grace bestoweth,
and O what transport of delight from Thy pure chalice floweth!
- 6) And so through all the length of days Thy goodness faileth never;
good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise within Thy house forever.

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Message: "... a very present help in trouble"

It often takes a crisis to show us what we really need – a measure of our stubborn-ness maybe.

The history of Israel is a series of episodes, of their stubborn-ness and slowness to learn:

- * they had been warned about the requirements of God....and His promises
- * But they wandered off into idolatry and disobedience
- * these required crises of judgment by God
- * and eventually they came to repentance which brought them *shalom*.

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I would like to share with you something I have learned both in Australia and U.K. about the keeping power of God.

We (I and my wife) have seen the dramatic and rather spectacular things as promoted by a charismatic church, such as miracles of healing, the power of God over a satanist group, and even the casting out of animist spirits from an African Christian! We saw some of these things in UK in a charismatic Baptist church (almost a contradiction in terms in Australia especially at that time!) But I think there is a risk in emphasising such things. Human beings can be impressed by such things - they are rather "showy", and open to abuse.

But this mind set makes us vulnerable to triumphalism which is inherently dangerous. Jesus said "Rejoice *not* that the spirits are subject to you, but that your names are written in heaven". (Lk 10:20)

He also taught, to Samuel when he was choosing a man to be king in Israel (because the people of Israel were insisting on a king to lead Israel "like the other nations have", and despite God's warning) "*Don't look on the outward appearance...God looks at the heart.*" (1 Sam 16:7) He also taught that God was a rewarder of "them that diligently seek Him". In Isaiah God says "*This is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word*" (Is 66:2). In a circumstance when David was with Achish the King of Gath, and was really at risk of his life because he King's servants were telling the King who David really was, David pretended to be mad, and the King sent him away ("*Do I lack madmen?*"). Psalm 34 tells the real heart of David at the time as David says in his psalm; read the title of the psalm and verses 4, 6, 7, 8, 17, 19 for instance ...

"I sought the Lord and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears"

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles"

"The angel of the Lord encamps around those that fear Him and saved him out of all his troubles"

"O taste and see that the Lord is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in Him"

"When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles"

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all"

Do these sound like the words of a madman? David gave God the credit for saving his life in this crisis.

So these verses tell us what was really going on in David's heart, and give us the clue that David was inspired by God to behave as if mad. (Feeble-mindedness was common in those days from inbreeding; David was simply playing *that* part - of course if Achish were smart he would know that David could not have been mad if a little earlier he had been the warrior who had killed their champion.).

Ps 27:1 David tells us that if the Lord is our salvation we need fear nothing.

2 Cor 4:7-11 encourages us by telling us how God will carry us, and my wife and I experienced just that in U.K. when God provided for us when we were very poor!

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So the *end* of our resources can be the *beginning* of God's demonstration of His.

The Scriptures have many examples of this, e.g.

Romans 4:19 reminds us about Abraham who was 99 or so, and Sarah decades beyond the menopause, God promised him his own son (not from a servant) and set about proving that these were no barriers to Him. This proved the real strength of Abraham's faith as well as the power of God.

Haggai 2 tells us that God says He will once more shake the heavens and the earth, and all nations, and the treasures of all nations shall come in, and He will fill His house with treasures and splendour. This will happen at the end of history.

There was a shaking of the earth (earthquake) when Moses was on Mt. Sinai...and the earth shook again during the crucifixion of Christ as he was in fact bringing in the "unshakeable Kingdom". But isn't there also a shaking of all things even at this time - yes even the "lucky country" is being shaken! We always have unemployment, now a recession for many and this is world-wide, and inflation is always with us (Malcolm Muggeridge called it God's little joke.) We have tripled the laws we live under, but this has not solved crime in our community or made it a safe place to live in. Death from the roads, and suicide is rising (currently youth suicide is at an all-time high). And marriage seems singled out for a special attack - 2 out of 3 marriages fail now. Every family seems to be touched by it. The causes probably have not changed. Fidelity within marriage is now rare, and chastity before marriage even rarer. Unchastity is constantly paraded before us and if we are silly we sit and watch it like Zombies in front of a TV, and read it in papers, while marriages continue to fail. We are being attacked! This is just as dangerous as open warfare as the enemy comes to steal, to kill, and destroy.

We have been well advised to:

- sow a thought, and reap an action
- sow an action and reap a habit
- sow a habit and reap a character
- sow a character and reap a destiny.

The church needs to get its act together...God calls us to holiness!

We should follow the behaviour, that, when temptation calls, think! What would be the next likely step if I took *that* one? If it sounds unsafe or likely to lead to trouble - *don't do it!*

Yul Brunner made a call to the community... whatever you do, *don't smoke!*

We saw a prominent TV Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart crash socially – it featured in the common media – he had been consorting with a prostitute. He made a rather silly statement "the devil made me do it! He is very clever – the devil makes you do things." Oh no he doesn't! He can't make you do *anything*.

The word of God tells us "*each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death.*" (James 1:14-15) We invite such problems by our silly behaviour.

God says in Malachi "*For I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel, and the covering one's garment with violence says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not*

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be faithless". (Malachi 2:16) Remember Jesus only sanctioned divorce "*for your hardness of heart, but from the beginning it was not so.*" (Matthew 19:8)

What does the church do when the land is being shaken?

Probably the same as when God is withholding the rain! In 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 the Lord calls his people to pray in that instance, or if a plague of locusts attacks them "*If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land.*"

So we know what we should do! And we should also engage in the spiritual battle, for that it is. St Paul would advise us "*therefore take the whole armour of god, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil in the evil day.*" This is spiritual warfare! And we need to stand with the armour appropriate for the battle. "*And having done all we should stand with God's truth, and righteousness, the shield of faith, the gospel of peace, with God's provision of salvation, the sword of the Spirit (the word of God) and prayer in the holy Spirit.*"

These do not seem strong weapons, but in our world God has equipped us with these means of attack. And God declares that these weapons have divine power to destroy the strongholds of the enemy. So "*to battle!*" Amen.

4th Hymn by William Cowper 1731-1800 (T Irish Sacred poems Dublin)

- 1) God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.
- 2) Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill
He treasures up his bright designs and works His sovereign will.
- 3) Ye fearful saints fresh courage take, the clouds ye so much dread
are big with mercy and shall break with blessings on your head.
- 4) Judge not the Lord with feeble sense, but trust Him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.
- 5) His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;
the bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.
- 6) Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His work in vain;
God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain.

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Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God, and
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.

This service was prepared by Neil McIntosh (M.B.B.S. F.R.A.C.S.) for HopeNet SA