

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

349

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with Ps. 46:1 - **"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble"**. The purpose, of course, is to encourage you to seek God as a refuge. God is a very present help in time of trouble!

Some may remember that on May 22, 2011 Joplin, Missouri was hit by an EF5 tornado that killed 158 people outright and 8 others indirectly. 1,150 people were injured and there was \$2.8 billion in property damage. It was the deadliest tornado to hit the U.S. since 1947. On a normal day the citizens of Joplin were working, shopping, playing games, or relaxing, but on that day every rational person was looking for a refuge.

The 46th Psalm is thought to have been composed to honor of the deliverance of King Hezekiah from the Assyrians. This remarkable story is found three different times in the Bible (2 Ki. 18-20; 2 Chron. 32; and Is. 36-37). The essence of the story is that the mighty Assyrian army had defeated everyone they fought. When they surrounded Jerusalem with an overwhelming number of soldiers they expected Hezekiah to surrender. Jerusalem was so weak and outnumbered that the king of Assyria offered to give Hezekiah 2,000 horses if he was able to put riders on them (Is. 36:8). Jerusalem was facing certain death and destruction. Instead of surrendering, however, Hezekiah chose to call upon God in his time of trouble. Because he sought God as his refuge, Isaiah promised him: **"This is what the Lord says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard – those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me"** (Is. 37:6). Isaiah prayed: **"Now, O Lord, our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O Lord, are God"** (Is. 37:20). The Scriptures record that God answered his prayer: **"Then the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp"** (Is. 37:36). The Assyrians withdrew and went home in shame. The victorious Hebrews enthusiastically sang **"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble"**.

Some day everyone will need a place of refuge. There is an old story about a 104 year old woman who was asked the secret of her longevity. She replied: *"Just keep breathing"*. The truth, of course, is that everyone "wants to keep breathing", but everybody still "dies". The Guinness World Book of Records notes that in 1957 Paul Anderson solidified his title as "The World's Strongest Man" by back-lifting 6,270 lbs. Paul even came to Carthage and demonstrated his amazing strength at our local high school. On Aug. 16, 1994, however, Paul Anderson died. The strongest man in the world became so weak he could not even take another breath of air. He was only 61 years old. Thank God he was a Christian. Paul was famous for reminding everyone: *"If the strongest man in the world needs Jesus, so do you"*! When Paul was young and in good health he chose God as his refuge. That was a very wise decision. It was just one more thing he did early in life so that he didn't have to worry about it when he was struggling to take his last breath. As you know, we too will someday die struggling for another breath of air.

On most days we can take care of ourselves. On most days we don't have a thing to worry about. On most days we do not need a refuge. Common sense, however, compels us to realize that someday we will be in desperate need of a refuge. Someday every one of us will reach the end of our rope. Someday every one of us will need some help. Someday we will all be in so much trouble that finding a refuge will be our # 1 priority. Why not make that decision now and get it out of the way?

Often trouble comes unjustly and without warning. In 1992, for example, Cameron Todd Willingham's house burned down with his three children inside. Incredibly, Willingham was arrested and charged with murder. He insisted that he was innocent but they arrested him anyhow. In 2004 his legal appeals ran out he was strapped to a gurney and given a lethal injection. He died still professing his innocence. Sadly, the Texas Forensic Science Commission later found that the evidence against him was misinterpreted. They belatedly concluded that the fire was accidental and that none of the evidence against Willingham was valid. Unfortunately, the correct information came too late! This is a teachable moment. Sometimes we are in trouble for the mistakes we have made, but sometimes we are in trouble even when we are innocent. The point is, at some point in time every one of us will be in so much trouble that we will need God as our refuge!

God is just and therefore detests acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent (Prov. 17:15). Consequently, in Old Testament times God provided six special cities as a "refuge" for innocent people. According to Nu. 35:11-34 those unjustly charged with a crime, could flee to a city of refuge and be safe. In order to take advantage of this option, however, you first had to know about it. Secondly, you had to get busy and go there. These same advice applies to finding refuge in God! "Knowing" about God isn't enough! You have to "do" something to find refuge in God!

Have you every had an automobile accident? If not, someday, you probably will. The time, of course, to buy insurance is before you have an "accident". Nobody plans to have an "accident" that's why they are called "accidents". If you happen to at fault without insurance you can possibly lose your license, go bankrupt, or even go to jail. It is foolish to drive a car without insurance. It is even more foolish to go one more day without giving your heart to God. We become children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Once you are in God's family you can be sure that your Heavenly Father will be watching over you. God is a very present help in any time of trouble! Do not procrastinate! **"Now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).**

In conclusion, try to look at yourself through the eyes of Jesus. Remember, Jesus loved the world but was **"despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering" (Is. 53:3)**. Rejected love hurts deeply! Some of you know this by personal experience. This is one reason why Jesus was a man of sorrows. He loved us but we didn't love Him. **"He came unto that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (Jn. 1:11)**. Jesus said: **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing" (Matt. 23:37)**.

Jesus loved you so much that He died for you. PLEASE DO NOT REJECT HIS LOVE!

I love you too,

Grandpa Boyce