

Help from God

Bible Words
Grace –
Matthew Higgins



The life
of **John
Newton** –
**Philip
Knowles**



**Not to the
Strong** –
**Jill
Saunders**



Editorial

Making Plans

Man, by nature, is very presumptuous. We often make plans for the future, presuming that we will live to see the planned day, have the health to fulfil it, and that circumstances will be favourable to facilitate our plans.

Such a presumptuous spirit often neglects to seek God's leading and blessings as well as forgetting to pray, "Thy will be done" (Matthew 6:10).

I remember speaking to a lady some time ago whose adult daughter had experienced sudden sickness and was critically ill for some time. She related to me that the experience had changed her outlook on life. Now, rather than making many plans for future days, she lives from day to day, as the Lord permits.

It is not wrong to make plans or to look forward in anticipation to such preparations. But we are reminded in Scripture that such plans must be made with the attitude, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:15).

There are, however, some things that we can fully be sure of, as they are revealed to us in the Word of God. Upon these things, we can certainly presume, and take heart, as we live from day to day.

The Sovereignty of God

CH Spurgeon wrote: "There is no attribute of God more comforting to His children than the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty hath ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. When you go through a trial, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head."

The Lord is working His purposes out. We

often question our circumstances and wonder what exactly is going on. How precious to rest upon the fact that God has a plan and purpose for each of His children. How blessed to be able to sincerely pray the words: "Thy way, not mine, O God."

The Knowledge of God

The omniscience of God brings a further comfort to the Christian. He knows all that there is to know about us. He knows our faithfulness and our failures, our blessings, and our times of besetting. This truth should cause us to trust in, and seek by faith, the provision of the One of whom Paul wrote in Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

The Truth of God

God has revealed Himself to mankind through His holy Word. While some societies seek to rewrite what is good and evil, God's Word abides forever and cannot be altered. As we live our lives in this world by the light of the God's Truth, we can be certain that God will be honoured and we will be blessed. The plans I have written in my diary may come to naught, but every word that God has given will be honoured and fulfilled.

Spurgeon: "Purposes, plans, and achievements of men may all disappear like yon cloud upon the mountain's summit; but, like the mountain itself, the things which are of God shall stand fast for ever and ever."



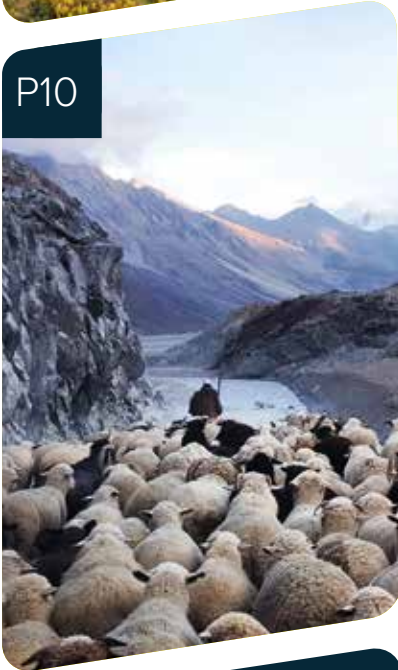
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Help from God

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Nepal Radio Update

A fully operational station broadcasting the Gospel to the entire Kathmandu Valley of some five million people is now much closer to realisation. When initial registration was sought and granted, not unexpected difficulties arose. One objection was raised as to the location, and another was on the grounds that it would be a 'Christian' broadcasting station. Thankfully, the Lord overruled, and progress continued.

Suitable rental premises were acquired which would give space for a studio and installation of all necessary equipment. Assemblage work has been on-going along with programming preparation and scheduling.

When transmission begins, compliance with government rules means a trial

broadcasting period of

up to four months.

Pray for the Lord's continuing help and guidance so that the station will be on-air with the Word sounding forth the message of Christ and Him crucified.

Report from Rev. Leslie Curran

Programme Director of LTBS in Northern Ireland and Convener of the LTBS Committee

Change of Editorial Assistant

It has been my privilege, as editor since 2017, to work with Mary Christopher in her role as editorial assistant. Mrs Christopher resides near Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. She has worked diligently in proofreading the articles and magazines that have been produced over these years, as well as for many years before my involvement. I want to express my personal thanks to Mary for her labours

with the magazine. It is not an easy task, but she has

been diligent and accurate, resulting in a quality publication each quarter. The LTBS Committee also wish to express their thanks to Mary and wish her every blessing in future days.



Having considered the matter prayerfully, the LTBS Committee have approached and appointed Hazel Campbell as the new editorial assistant for the magazine. The committee and I welcome Mrs Campbell on board and trust that she will be blessed as she serves the Lord in this way. Hazel is a native of Co. Down, Northern Ireland.

Report from Rev. Ryan McKee

Editor of LTBS Magazine



LTBS 2021 Accounts

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Balance @ 01/01/21	310031.16	Purchases (CDs, etc)	0.00
Church Donations	54916.78	Broadcasts Africa, India, USA	10527.26
Church Deputations	21075.25	London	12999.96
Church Donations (Broadcasts)	7334.35	Irish Republic	15629.23
Nepal LTBS Radio Ministry	19004.37	Nepal	20000.00
Bi-Monthly Covenant Donations	2119.54	Kenya Radio	1577.27
Gift Aid Donations	26780.00	Telephone & Broadband	1880.79
Other Gifts	35721.59	Stationery/Postage	1768.27
Quarterly Magazine Gifts	0.00	Equipment & Maintenance	359.95
Sales—Calendars	3298.74	Insurance (Radio Station)	305.11
Monthly CDs	115.63	Paypal	147.80
A New Beginning	25.00	LTBS Quarterly Magazine	7047.00
Books/Literature	0.00	Xero Accounts Package	351.40
T.V.	0.00	Calendar	1650.00
LTBS Studio Project	550.00	Rev. Curran—Wages & Expenses	33513.12
Inland Revenue—Gift Aid	22736.02	—Tax & NIC	835.40
Interest	2541.87	Bank Charges	138.68
Bequests & In Lieu of Flowers	7575.00	T.V. Studio Project Expenses	28384.73
LTBS Retail Unit Sales	40810.60	Gratuties	2645.00
Paye A/c	845.90	LTBS Retail Unit	17500.37
Postage	14.99	Paye A/c	908.70
Debtors Adjustment	591.17		
		Balance @ 31/12/21	398,006.92
	556,176.96		556,176.96

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LTBS 2021 Church Contributions

Ballymena	£11,091.25	England	£1,630.00
Randalstown	£9,196.25	Rasharkin	£1,535.00
Armagh	£6,900.00	Londonderry	£1,481.00
Ballymoney	£6,495.22	Aughnacloy	£1,170.00
Cookstown	£6,280.00	Mourne	£1,099.00
Tandragee	£6,250.00	Lisburn	£990.00
Omagh	£5,622.70	Newtownabbey	£979.00
Comber	£5,609.53	Sixmilecross	£935.00
Martyrs Memorial	£5,430.00	Ballynahinch	£800.00
Portavogie	£5,154.18	Markethill	£758.00
Magherafelt	£4,620.00	Tyndale	£750.00
Moneyslane	£4,593.84	Newtownards	£690.00
Hillsborough	£4,200.00	John Knox	£607.87
Lurgan	£4,176.00	Mulvin	£600.00
Banbridge	£3,932.00	Annalong	£525.00
Portadown	£3,915.61	Ardarragh	£505.00
Clogher Valley	£3,750.00	Antrim	£500.00
Dromore	£3,556.00	Garvagh	£476.25
Coleraine	£3,450.00	Crossgar	£460.00
Mount Merrion	£2,607.50	Larne	£400.00
Donaghdee	£2,525.00	Gardenstown	£350.00
Enniskillen	£2,508.00	Mullaglass	£350.00
Carryduff	£2,450.00	Cloughmills	£345.00
Bangor	£2,330.00	Convoy	£329.54
Corragary	£2,233.11	Gilford	£300.00
Dungannon	£2,140.00	Kilskeery	£275.00
Scotland	£2,120.00	Castlederg	£250.00
Sandown Road	£2,026.00	Ballymagerney	£200.00
Tullyvallen	£2,025.00	Bushmills	£200.00
Portgleneone	£1,800.00	Singapore	£200.00
Kesh	£1,730.00	Dunmurry	£180.00
Ballygowan	£1,719.00	Carrickfergus	£160.00
		Australia	£1,551.13
		Isle of Man	£72.00
		Businesses	£3,700.00

A sincere thank you to those who also gave anonymous donations throughout the year.

Psalm 121:1-2

Help from God



“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1-2).

A number of years ago, while on a pastoral visit with an elderly lady from an Irish Presbyterian background, I asked if I could read the Psalm 121 before offering prayer. Without hesitation, she began quoting the metrical version in a way that I have never forgotten:

I to the hills will lift mine eyes,

From whence doth come mine aid.

My safety cometh from the Lord,

Who heaven and earth hath made.

That encounter was a never-to-be-forgotten reminder of the value of memorising, reciting, and singing psalms. Other songs and tunes will come and go but the words inspired by God endure forever, teaching, edifying,

and encouraging, as long as life will last.

The 121st belongs to the section of the Psalter known as the ‘The Songs of Degrees’ or ‘The Songs of Ascent’. Written in the period after Solomon’s fabulous temple was erected, they captured the spirit of the pilgrims as they approached Jerusalem for worship. As they came from different parts of the country, they travelled upward to Jerusalem, with the temple occupying the highest point in the skyline.

Tradition records that as they ascended, they chanted these spiritual songs in much the same way as Chaucer’s Canterbury Pilgrims told stories to break the monotony of the journey. These were not idle tales though, that the ancient pilgrims recited; these were the songs of Zion.

In a future day, the Babylonians would plead with the weeping Jews to sing the songs of Zion, but they could not, preferring to

hang their harps upon the willows. That dark day had not yet arrived. These were times of light, of hope, and optimism. As they climbed the hill, drawing closer to the gates of the Holy City for one of the great gatherings known as feasts (Passover, Pentecost or Tabernacles) their chants grew louder and more earnest; they were coming to the place where God’s honour dwelt. They lifted their eyes, and with swelling hearts, they approached Jerusalem:

Other songs and tunes will come and go but the words inspired by God endure forever, teaching, edifying, and encouraging, as long as life will last.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

They acknowledged the person in whom their help was found.

Employing the holy and reverent name, "Jehovah", they viewed Him as the covenant-keeping God of Israel, first revealed to Moses at the burning bush. This is the God who does not change, who is the eternal "I AM".

In their ascent to the sanctuary these pilgrims also recognised the power of the one who was their help.

In the natural realm, some are unfaithful due to a lack of honour, while others are hindered by a lack of strength or resources. Our God has no such restraint placed upon His person because He is the one who made the heaven and earth. With very few words, the pilgrims articulated the ability of this helping God.

The vastness of this universe, of which we are such a small speck, is but a reflection of the immensity and infinity of God. Looking into the night sky on a clear night, we view the band of light, which is the Milky Way. The stars of our home galaxy are known to number billions. This band of light is held together in a spiral formation

by what appears to be the gravitational pull of a black hole in the heart of the galaxy. In one little section of this myriad of stars, planets, comets, and asteroids is our solar system, with one planet in which life is found.

Earth is a place to which Jesus Christ came to redeem His fallen creatures – a place of wondrous beauty set in the majestic canvas of the Universe, but marred by a mutinous humanity, which God loves like nothing else. It is a place He made to help.

This entire galaxy and universe, which reflects the glory of God, was erected for humanity, the crown of that creation – a creature made just a little lower than the angels.

Every problem and fear pales into insignificance in the light of who He is and what He can do – the maker of heaven and earth.

Yet, we look beyond the Milky Way to other galaxies' constellations, other solar systems – a vast expanse with seemingly limitless boundaries, but the God who made it all, is bigger still. And still, we are humbled that somewhere in this vastness,

He made a home for a people to love and help.

And He is our God; He is our help.

Every problem and fear pales into insignificance in the light of who He is and what He can do – the maker of heaven and earth.

Is He your God today? This world was graced by Christ's presence, yet He came for you, to save you. Does that same presence fill your soul; are you resting in the peace that flows from the love of God in Christ? He is our only help – one worth trusting. Only then, can the weary, sinning, broken person find rest; only then can the hungry, needy soul be satisfied, and experience what the Creator designed us for – His glory.



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Psalm 121:3-4

Sustained by God



Countless thousands of Christians have been consoled in seasons of trouble in periods of uncertainty, and in sickness, by Psalm 121, verses 3 and 4.

The word 'keepeth,' appears in both verses and has several shades of meaning, including TO PRESERVE, TO OBSERVE, TO GUARD.

God sustains His people preserving them as Sovereign

Kings ought to purpose in their hearts to provide care and assistance for their subjects. The Bible demonstrates again and again how this is evidenced in God sustaining His people.

IN DANGER

In 2 Chronicles chapter 13, King Abijah who was a godly king who sought to honour God in good days and in bad, found himself surrounded, hemmed in, by his enemies (13:14). In all likelihood, some in Abijah's army were losing heart and there did not appear to be any way of deliverance. However, they "cried unto the LORD" (v14) and He, as their Sovereign, delivered them (see verse 18).

IN DOUBT

In 2 Chronicles 14 and 15 Asa got off to a wonderful

beginning as king. He was prayerful, careful, forward-thinking, and an encourager. He experienced considerable victory for quite a while. Then, in chapter 16, for some reason, doubt came! In the face of new challenge, Asa did not look to his Sovereign who had never failed him; in his doubting he turned for assistance to Benhadad: this was Asa's undoing. He is reprimanded by Hanani in verse 7, and reminded of his folly, and what doubt cost him.

IN DESPAIR

One of the most miserable disciple scenes in Luke's Gospel is recorded in 22:54: "Peter followed afar off." Peter went on to deny the Lord; then bitterness and despair filled his heart. He may well have felt that his days of usefulness were over, as far as serving Christ was concerned.

All was not lost!

In Mark Ch 16, when the two Marys were told that Christ had risen, they were to tell His disciples "and Peter" (v 7). God saw to it, that Peter was reminded that Divine Love is unchanging.

In Luke 22:61, "the Lord turned, and looked upon

Peter." This 'looking' was dealing with Peter's heart; he then remembered what the Lord had told him about his denials. Peter, who sometimes seemed too sure of himself, learned that only God could sustain him, and in future days, would sustain him.

Whether in Abijah's danger, Asa's doubt, or Peter's despair, it was God who could 'keep'/'preserve'.

When you and I feel that we are in unique circumstances, let's remember, whatever they are, our Sovereign can sustain us.

God sustains His people compassionately as their Shepherd

Sheep are quite vulnerable creatures. The shepherd can feed them sufficiently, yet wandering, weak, and with a will of their own, rightly describes them. Our Shepherd has given us His Word to provide us with 'food sufficient,' yet, being known as 'sheep', is a title not lost on us. How vulnerable we can be!

In any deviations into 'worldly ways' our weakness constantly surprises us. Our

wandering seems, at times, to come to us unnoticed. In the end, our human nature can be very self-willed.

Sheep, who stray, usually end up shaken, and sometimes hurt! Despite this, they are still sheep, and their shepherd will go searching for them. Sheep are also poor navigators, so he guides them safely to appropriate pastures.

Many calls come your way and mine, seeking to entice us to stop following our Shepherd. There is often great disappointment and heartache if we yield; this requires us to check our hearts, regularly!

The Lord, who is compassionate towards His sheep, can guard and keep us sustained, if we stay close to Him.

If we are reading His Word, fellowshiping with His people at church, listening with a teachable spirit to the under shepherd, not only will we be sustained, but we will also be joyful! If some reader has been searching for sustenance elsewhere, now is the time to get back to fellowship with the Lord. Don't waste another day feeding on the husks of the world.

Christian, you do not belong at the world's broken cisterns or swine troughs. The Good Shepherd loved you and can provide the best for you.

God sustains His people providentially as their supervisor

John had served the Lord and helped the witness at Ephesus; then he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos by

Domitian, the Roman Emperor (Revelation 1).

This was a big change as far as fellowship, opportunity, and happiness was concerned! Or was it? In Revelation 1:9, John recognised he was there in God's Providence. He lost nothing by being there, but rather continued to serve the Lord from a full heart.

It is vital to seek the Lord's guidance and He then sustains us in His providential dealing with us. Whether Ephesus or Patmos, His faithfulness does not change.

I am fairly certain that as Joseph lay in a cold Egyptian prison, he at least momentarily wondered what was going on. He had lived honestly and honourably yet, at times, it seemed like people were queuing up to wrong him. He later told his brothers: "God did send me before you." Joseph experienced God's supervision in all his serving. Ultimately, he was vindicated and was a blessing to many.

Maybe there is a person reading, and at this point in your life you are confused; you don't really understand what is happening. You are a person of integrity, and you love the Lord. Remember John and Joseph: they were walking with God, as well. God's providence is reliable and, as your supervisor, He will not lead you, then leave you.

Remember, reader, He is never indifferent to our need, and He never wavers in helping us.

In the Gospel of Mark chapter 6, John the Baptist seemed

deserted. Influential Herodias was scheming and seeking to have John killed, yet God had a purpose in John's experience.

Herod did not have much by way of honourable principle, nor a tendency to acts of goodness, yet 6:20 tells us he "observed" John.

The word 'observed', here, means 'kept out of harm's way'! Eventually, John was martyred, but not until God had fulfilled His divine purpose regarding him.

Note that whether it was John on Patmos, Joseph going through a harsh, unjust experience, almost since he left his father's farm, to seek the welfare of his wicked brethren, or the Baptist appearing before Herod, the Lord, as Supervisor, kept or 'observed' them where they were, so that the Divine Purpose might be fulfilled.

You and I can look to Him today, with confidence – the one who sustains His work and His workers.

He never slumbers.



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Psalm 121:5-6

Protected by God



In the wonderful hymn, *Amazing Grace*, we have the words:

*Through many dangers,
toils and snares*

I have already come;

*'Tis grace has brought me
safe thus far,*

*And grace will lead me
home.*

This hymn is obviously about the amazing grace of God, and the focus of this verse is the amazing grace of the protection of God. John Newton, in these words, testified of that protection that he had known, and was going to trust, until called home to glory. And what he and every other Christian can testify to, is declared in verses 5 and 6 of psalm 121.

Psalm 121:5 – "The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand."

Psalm 121:6 – "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night."

Psalm 121 verse 5 speaks of the Lord as our keeper.

This speaks of the Lord as our protector. We are taught much about being protected by God through this statement and that which follows in the remainder of verse 5 and verse 6.

In considering these verses, and thus being protected by God, it is worth noting **the promise**.

***We can be sure of
God's protection
because He is
present with us.***

The words of these verses are not words of possibility, but they are words of promise. It does not say, "The LORD may be thy keeper" or "the LORD may be thy shade", but, with certainty and assurance, it is declared, "the LORD is thy keeper" and "the LORD is thy shade". Both these phrases promise the Lord's protection to those who are His, through the

Lord Jesus Christ. God's Word is full of promises for the Child of God. We must learn to trust them all; we can trust them all; we can trust the promise of God's protection.

Looking further at verses 5 and 6, and considering the protection of God, we can also note **His presence**. In verse 5, the statement is made that, "the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." This brings to our attention God's protection through His presence with us at our right hand. He walks with us; He communes with us; He teaches, and He protects us. He is the shade upon our right hand. He is "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isaiah 32:2). We can be sure of God's protection because He is present with us. It must be noted that the presence of God is only made possible by the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The Lord will only be present with those who have been reconciled to Him through the blood of His

Son. How precious it is to know that the Lord is at our side, whispering in our ear, “For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee” (Isa 41:13).

We are protected by God. This protection is promised, and it is secured by the Lord’s presence. As we would consider such protection, we can also rejoice in **its permanence**. Our God is not a part-time protector. Our Lord’s protection of us is permanent. There is not a time when the child of God is not protected by Him. This is a fact clearly brought forth in verse 6 of Psalm 121. By day and by night we are protected by God. As Newton said, “Grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.” God’s protection is unfailing, and it is unending in our journey through this life to our home above. It was the great evangelist, George Whitefield, who said, “We are immortal until our work on earth is done.” While we are not to be reckless with the life that the Lord has given us, what a truth it is, that God preserves and protects us until that appointed day.

God’s protection of us is permanent; there is never a time that we should doubt it. Verse 6 presents two extremes – the day and the night. Whatever the

circumstance, let us rest in the fact that we are protected by God.

While we are not to be reckless with the life that the Lord has given us, what a truth it is, that God preserves and protects us until that appointed day.

It should be of immense comfort to us that we feeble creatures are protected by the Almighty Creator. He has promised us protection. He is present to protect us, and that protection is permanent. However, the question must be asked: what is it we are to be protected from? We must consider **the particulars** of this protection. As Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, put it: “It is the spiritual life, especially, that God will take under His protection.” It is the protection of the spiritual life that should matter most to this question. Some would look at these verses and try and promote the idea of guaranteed health and prosperity, however, we know from experience, that we all, at times, must suffer, and hurt can come our way. But what is guaranteed

by the protection of God, is protection of that which is spiritual. There is much that could be said of this protection, for example, the Lord protects us from temptation and sin by always providing a way of escape for us (1 Corinthians 10:13). Even just from this one example, we see how essential it is that we are protected by God. How hopeless we are without His protection. Yet, with His protection we can have victory over temptation and sin. Oh, how important it is that we are protected by God!



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Psalm 121:7-8

Preserved by God



In the two last verses of Psalm 121, the word “preserve” is used three times. What makes this occurrence significant, is that the Hebrew grammar has no superlative; the way the superlative (meaning most or greatest) is expressed in Hebrew, is by repeating a word three times, e.g., “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3), meaning that the LORD is not only holy, but beyond most Holy. Thus, through the Psalmist, God here, in Psalm 121, is strongly emphasizing that He is preserving us in a supreme fashion.

Every day, we go out and we come in. We go to work, we go to school, we go shopping and different places, but we go without an assurance that we will return to our homes safely. Whatever we do, we really do not know what the future is, and we do not even know if we will still be alive for the next few minutes or hours. These verses remind us that God promises to watch over our comings and our goings now and

forevermore. This, literally, applies to the time that we will go out to work or for school or for anything. Let us examine that principle more closely.

Firstly, the Psalmist says that God *will preserve from evil* – in fact, he says that God will “preserve thee from all evil” – not some evil, not the occasional evil, but ALL evil. It does not matter what nature the evil is, how strong it is, or how many times it crosses our paths. And it does not matter whether it is the evil that exists within us or the evil that is without.

First, the Lord will help us overcome evil within. Notice this promise from Jude 24: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

But the Lord also indicates that He will preserve us from evil without. The Lord taught us to pray, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13). That evil

can come from antagonism of the world against godly things, and it can come to us in the form of satanic attack. It can also come from sickness or persecution and many more things. The Lord has promised that He will preserve us from these.

Perhaps you say, “But wait a minute; this is a staggering promise. Are we to really believe that no harm will ever befall the believer? God’s people have suffered, been enslaved, imprisoned, and killed in numbers.”

Could it be that the Lord has failed? Indeed, other passages in the Word of God bear witness to the reality that God’s people can suffer harm.

So, what does this mean? Well, it is completely true that the Lord preserves us from all evil. It just depends on the sense of the word “preserve.” The Hebrew verb used here can also mean “guard, watch, or keep.” Moreover, there is a future sense to this word as well as a present sense. Therefore, we rightly

understand that at every moment, God is watching over us. God is with us, caring for us, even in times of hardship and suffering. God is keeping us, even though we are experiencing difficulties. Furthermore, God will ultimately take away from us all suffering and sorrow. As Psalm 71:20 affirms: “Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.”

We realise that nothing in heaven or on earth can take away the life we have in Christ. This is how goodness and mercy can follow us even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

But secondly, the Psalmist affirms that God preserves

We realise that nothing in heaven or on earth can take away the life we have in Christ. This is how goodness and mercy can follow us even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

in every episode. He says, “The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in” (Psalm 121:8). This is one of the verses that devout Jews recite when they leave or enter their homes.

Have you noticed that it’s usually the changes in life that trip us up? Once we are safe in our routines, things usually go pretty smoothly, but it’s the in-between times – the commute; the move; the change of jobs; the change of health; the change of relationships – that we usually struggle in.

David prayed to the Lord in Psalm 139:2-3: “Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.” This is another example of the Hebrew language using a pair of opposites to express totality – your comings and goings and everything in between. So, it’s not just referring to the transitions in life; God watches over all the in-betweens as well. You are safe because God is with you in every episode of life.

Thirdly, the Psalmist affirms that God preserves for eternity.

He watches over you “from this time forth, and even for evermore” (v8). God is watching over you

God is watching over you now, and he will continue to watch over you forever.

now, and he will continue to watch over you forever. Both of those promises are wonderful! If you had to choose one or the other, which would you choose? Now? Or for evermore? It’s a tough choice. But, praise God, you don’t have to choose. They are both true for the believer in Christ!



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The Life of John Newton



John Newton – 1725-1807

John Newton was born on 24 July 1725, in London. His parents, though not wealthy, were respectable. John's father, also called John, was not a born-again believer, however, his mother, Elizabeth, was a godly woman, whose faith rested in Christ alone.

Since John was Elizabeth's only son, his mother devoted all her time to bringing him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. John was taught the Westminster Catechism and the hymns of Isaac Watts.

It was Elizabeth's desire to see John enter the Christian ministry when he became of age. In his biography, John wrote, "When I was four years old, I could read (hard names excepted) as well as I can now: and could likewise repeat the answers to the questions in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, with the proofs; and all Dr. Watt's smaller Catechisms, and his Children's Hymns."

In 1732, when John was six

years old, his mother was called home to be with Christ. His father remarried, but John's stepmother was not a Christian, meaning there was no spiritual interest, instruction, and influence in the home. John was left to himself and began to mingle with ungodly crowds and learn their ways. Over the next twelve years, John sought to do away with his mother's godly instruction.

At the age of eleven, John began to sail with his father and made five journeys to the Mediterranean until he was eighteen. During these years, John's behaviour as a sailor lost him the respect of his officers and sailors.

On 21 March 1748, on his way home to England, the prayers sown by John's mother on earth more than sixteen years previously, were reaped. God providentially stepped into John's life at sea and rescued him by His amazing grace. During a violent storm near Ireland in which one sailor was already washed overboard, this rebellious young man named

John Newton, cried unto God for mercy.

Years later, John wrote these words in his journal on 21 March 1796 (at the age of seventy), forty-eight years after he was saved. He described it as a "great turning day." He is quoted as saying, "Oh, it was mercy indeed to save a wretch like me!" In his own words, "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see." He spent the rest of the voyage reading and praying over the Scriptures.

John was a new man in Christ and grew in grace. In 1770, John met Alexander Clunie, a naval captain, in St. Kitts; such a meeting was providential for John's spiritual growth.

Later, John wrote concerning Alexander Clunie: "He not only improved my understanding but inflamed my heart. He encouraged me to open my mouth in social prayer. He put me upon an attempt to make my profession more public, and to venture to speak for God." John would later

be acquainted with George Whitefield, John Wesley, William Cowper and other men of God, who, by their preaching and writing hymns, would centre their thoughts upon Christ's perfect person and precious blood as the only way to satisfy God's just demands and save His people from their sins.

On the 12 February 1750, John married Mary Catlett. They never had children of their own but adopted two orphaned girls. In November 1754, due to an epileptic seizure, John's time as a sailor had come to an end.

In 1764 he accepted the call to the pastorate of the Church of England parish in the small village of Olney in Buckinghamshire, where he served for almost sixteen years. In his diary for 27 January 1765, John wrote of one Sunday meeting, "We have now a little company who come to my house on Sabbath evening after tea. We spend an hour or more in prayer and singing, and part between six and seven." These prayer-meetings marked his entire ministry at Olney until he left for London in 1789.

At the age of fifty-four, John accepted the call to be the minister of St. Mary's Woolnoth in London where he began his 27-year ministry on 8 December 1779.

The last time John was in the pulpit of St. Mary's was in

October 1806 when he was eighty-one years old. John was called home to be with Christ on 21 December 1807 at the age of eighty-two.

While John accomplished much in his ministry, yet he is recognised and remembered for over sixty hymns, but especially his hymn, "Amazing Grace". In 1835, William Walker put the words to the tune "New Britain". "Amazing Grace" was based on 1 Chronicles 17:16-17.

John had been struck by the parallel between the grace of God in his own life and that of David's. It seems that the hymn, "Amazing Grace", was written to go with his morning sermon on that scriptural passage for New Year's Day, 1773.

The hymn, "Amazing Grace", is John Newton's testimony of God's amazing grace in saving his soul. John put it in these words: "Amazing grace; how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see." John describes his cry to God for mercy upon the ship as "the hour I first believed."

One verse of scripture that John always kept before him in prayer and sermon preparation was, "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee" (Deuteronomy 15:15). The verse formed the basis of his quote, "I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to

be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am."

In closing, I encourage parents to teach their children in the ways of the Lord and to continually pray for them, for the Lord's word will not return unto Him void. John's life demonstrates that Christ has power to redeem a rebellious sinner by His amazing grace.

Believer, surround yourself with company that will influence you in the ways of God and catch the prayerful zeal of John Newton. Strive to be young men and women of prayer by attending the place of prayer.

On one occasion John Newton said, "When I was young, I was sure of many things; now there are only two things of which I am sure: one is, that I am a miserable sinner; and the other, that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour."



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One Minute After You Die



Is it not striking that the one thing that every single person in this world needs more than anything else is the one thing nobody seems to want – salvation? God's Word reminds us in Romans 3:23 that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Then, in James 1:15, we are warned that “sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” This is further supported by God's own declaration in Hebrews 9:27 that “it is appointed unto men once to die,” but the verse does not end there! It goes on to affirm that “after this” comes the judgment! So, from that, it is obvious

... it is obvious that while death will come to all men, it will not mark the end of their being, rather, it will mark the beginning of an eternal existence ...

that while death will come to all men, it will not mark the end of their being, rather, it will mark the beginning of an eternal existence – something that will never end! That is something our finite minds have difficulty comprehending. Nevertheless, because God says it will be, then it behoves every soul to be ready for that eternity!

We're dealing here with:

1 – Reality

The question we all need to face is: “Where will you be one minute after you die?” Beloved, you will be in eternity before the doctor even confirms you are dead.

The market is flooded to-day with multi-vitamins, anti-ageing creams and all the rest of it, but the best these things can ever hope to achieve is to have you looking good in your coffin. There is not a product anywhere that can stop you getting older or stop death coming. God's Word is clear on this, as Hebrews 9:27 shows. We have, further, our

Saviour's relating (in Luke 16) to a certain rich man who had everything this world could give him, that the one thing he did not have, was faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

That chapter carries the sad record that “in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” This surely leads to the thought of:

2 – Remorse

How many good people in this world would love to live like that rich man, but when it comes to dying, they want an eternity like that being enjoyed by the poor beggar, Lazarus, whose home was a ditch outside the rich man's gate. That rich man had his life of refinery, his well-to-do social friends, and all the comforts we can imagine. But God's Word declares that “except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3). And that rich man had never been born again. He had no interest in Christ. And our hearts go out to the many in our own land whose attitude is just the same: they do not

want the Lord!

We can just imagine poor souls lifting up their cries in hell and lamenting: "I wish I had listened to that preacher when he urged me to seek the Lord while He may be found; I wish I hadn't binned that gospel tract; I wish I hadn't spurned the love of Christ for my soul; I wish I had heeded all those invitations to receive Christ into my heart and life; I wish I had taught my children to love the Lord Jesus; I wish I hadn't listened to the devil when he told me I had plenty of time to be saved; I didn't realise death would take me so suddenly; I wish ... I wish ... I wish ..." – but it is too late!

Like that rich man, too many souls are going out into a lost eternity, and the worst part of it all must be the realisation that it did not have to be this way!

We don't know how much that rich man knew of the Gospel – but you, beloved? How many times have you been advised of the danger of dying in your sin? How many times have you heard the Saviour's invitation, "Come unto Me"? But, to this day, you are still refusing to quit your sin and let Christ Jesus into your heart and life. The awfulness of your hell will be beyond description – as you will find out one minute after you die – but it will be too late to be saved then! There are no second chances after death comes!

Like that rich man, too many souls are going out into a lost eternity, and the worst part of it all must be the realisation that it did not have to be this way!

You may have lived an exemplary life up to now, but you should know that a lot of fancy words round your grave will do nothing for your soul! All your "righteousnesses are as filthy rags" in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). But, if you receive Christ to-day, you can go on your way:

3 – Rejoicing

We have mentioned Lazarus in Luke 16; he had absolutely nothing of this world's goods, but the Scripture record has it that when he died, he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (v. 22). That is just an old Jewish term for God's paradise. When death came for him, all he had to do was die. In fact, it seems that he did not even have a funeral service: his body was just dumped somewhere. But what is he experiencing now? 1 Corinthians 2:9 states: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into

the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Revelation 21:4 says: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

Beloved, which eternal experience is ahead of you? Are you trusting Christ for full, free salvation or are you determined to linger on in sin? Your answer to that will tell you where you will be one minute after you die.



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Bible Words – Grace

Grace is a prominent word and theme throughout Scripture because it is at the heart of the gospel: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). Furthermore, its importance is amplified by Jehovah declaring Himself to be: “The LORD God, merciful and gracious” (Exodus 34:6). His gracious nature was revealed in the Triune God’s work of redemption: God the Father has chosen, predestinated, and adopted us “to the praise of the glory of his grace” (Ephesians 1:6); God the Son has redeemed and forgiven us “according to the riches of his grace” (1:7); God the Spirit has “quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Ephesians 2:5). He is the God of all grace because His nature is grace itself and all that God does for us comes from this blessed cause.

The Old Testament word for grace is *khen*, meaning

to show unmerited favour and kindness. The New Testament word for grace is *charis*, meaning God’s favour, love, and power to save sinners through Christ. Grace is deeper and more comprehensive than mercy. Consider the following scene: an individual is in court before a judge, being guilty of certain crimes, and deserving punishment. If the judge desired to be merciful, he would not give the criminal what he

However, grace means the judge, after pardoning the criminal, would bring him to his home, adopt him into his own family, take responsibility for all his needs and grant him all his wealth.

deserved – but would pardon him. However, grace means the judge, after pardoning the criminal, would bring him to his home, adopt him into his own family, take responsibility for all his needs and grant him all his wealth. A biblical example that is similar to this illustration, is the case of King David’s treatment of Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9). Dr Alan Cairns summarises this meaning succinctly: “It is undeserved favour bestowed upon those who are positively deserving of the wrath of God.”

Grace, then, encompasses the whole action of God on behalf of hell-worthy sinners, beginning with their election in eternity to their glorification for all eternity. By grace, we are called (Gal 1:15) regenerated (Titus 3:5), justified (Rom 3:24), sanctified (Heb 13:20-21), and preserved (1 Peter 1:3-5).

The first use of the word is in Genesis 6:8: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” The context tells

us about this grace:

Firstly, it is sovereign. God put a difference between Noah and the rest of the world by showing Him grace and passing by the rest. Noah found grace, not because of anything in himself or any action of his, but by God's election. The Lord declared to Moses: "I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious" (Ex 33:19). Secondly, it is saving. God's grace being bestowed on Noah resulted in the salvation of himself and his family when the rest of the world was destroyed. As Paul says, we are saved by grace, as "the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

The last use of the word is in Revelation 22:21: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." These last words of the Bible call us to find grace by seeking God in Christ, who is full of grace and truth. All spiritual blessings come through our Mediator, and it is by union with Christ that we receive His fulness, whereby we experience grace upon grace. Paul says that "we have access by faith into this grace" (Rom 5:2). It is in grace that we particularly fellowship with Christ (2 Cor 13:14).

What are the practical implications of grace in our lives?

Firstly, since we are saved and kept by grace, we ought

to live our lives by grace. This means that we recognise our spiritual insufficiencies, confess the unlimited riches of grace in Christ, and draw all our strength and life from Him, by faith. The answer to all our needs is grace, so we need to live in complete dependence on the Spirit of Christ, fighting against pride and self-righteousness, for God "giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6).

All spiritual blessings come through our Mediator, and it is by union with Christ that we receive His fulness, whereby we experience grace upon grace.

Secondly, since we receive and experience grace through the means of grace, we must be faithful in their use. The Word of God, primarily, prayer, Baptism and the Lord's Table are essential to a healthy spiritual life. By abstaining from them, you are limiting the ways Christ imparts grace to you and starving your soul of spiritual food. These means are wonderfully combined in scriptural worship, which we ought to engage in as individuals, families, and congregations.

Thirdly, God's grace calls us to live vigorously for Christ and labour fervently for His kingdom. Paul explains that God's grace motivated him to do all he could to glorify Christ: "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1Cor 15:10). We must not abuse God's grace by using it as an excuse for irresponsibility, but press forward with determination, while depending on grace.

Fourthly, when believers meet to worship God, they come to the throne of grace, and God greets them through the Holy Spirit, with grace – "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:3). This ought to fill us with holy desire for God's courts and boldness to approach Him in our Saviour's name.



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Overview of the Book of 2 Chronicles

The books of first and second Chronicles were written as one complete book. The book was probably written shortly before or during the ministry of Ezra and some believe that Ezra, the scribe, was the one who penned the book. The book of 1 Chronicles ends with the death of King David and the book of 2 Chronicles begins with the reign of King Solomon. As we overview the contents of the book of 2 Chronicles, we begin with:

The Reign of Solomon

Solomon's reign was marked by peace and prosperity and was a golden age for Israel. The book of 2 Chronicles begins with the detail that Solomon was strengthened in his kingdom and the LORD his God was with him and magnified him exceedingly. It was at Gibeon, after Solomon had worshipped the LORD, offering a thousand burnt offerings, that God appeared to Solomon and said, "Ask what I shall give thee" (1:7). Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge to fulfil his duties as king and God granted him this request and gave him much more than he asked.

It was during the reign of Solomon that the temple was built in Jerusalem. The

opening verse of chapter 2 records, "And Solomon determined to build an house for the name of the LORD." In preparation for the building of the temple, there was organising of the workers and materials. Hiram, King of Tyre, was asked to send a man, cunning or skilful, to work in the materials needed for the temple and its furniture, along with the men of Judah and Jerusalem. The timber was also provided by the King of Tyre. Hiram testified of the wisdom of Solomon.

The temple was constructed upon Mount Moriah and when the work was finished the temple was dedicated to the glory of God. Solomon offered prayer to God at the dedication and then the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings and the glory of the LORD filled the house. The LORD

Solomon's reign was marked by peace and prosperity and was a golden age for Israel.

appeared to Solomon to tell him that his prayer was heard and that the temple had been chosen by God as an house of sacrifice and the LORD spoke to Solomon those words which are so familiar to us, when we consider the need for revival: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (7:14). The Queen of Sheba, as well as all the kings of the earth, sought the presence of Solomon, to hear the wisdom that God had put in his heart. Solomon, in his reign, in his wisdom, and in his building of the temple, points us to the Lord Jesus, "[i]n whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3), who is building His church – that spiritual temple, and will return as King of Kings – the one we must seek for salvation.

Civil War in Israel

When Solomon died, his son, Rehoboam, went to Shechem to be made king. At this time Jeroboam, who had fled from the presence of Solomon to Egypt, returned and went with representatives of the

people, to ask Rehoboam to ease the burden which his father had placed on them; then they would serve him. Rehoboam followed the counsel of the younger men and told the people that he would place a heavier burden upon them than their father had. Israel rebelled as a result, and Rehoboam was left to reign over Judah and Benjamin, while Jeroboam reigned over the rest of Israel.

The Kings of Judah

The record of the book of 2 Chronicles continues with a summary of the kings of Judah from which would come the promised Saviour. Many of the kings were evil but there were some good kings under whose reigns there were times of spiritual revival and reformation. They were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah and Josiah. Those times of reformation are most encouraging portions to study.

The Captivity

Despite the seasons of reformation, such was the sin of the people in mocking the messengers of God, despising His words, and misusing His prophets, that “the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (36:16). The people were carried into captivity in Babylon,

the temple was burnt, and the wall of Jerusalem was broken down. This had been prophesied by Jeremiah.

The Return and Restoration of Judah

God, in His gracious purpose, would bring about a return from captivity after seventy years and the temple would be rebuilt. The book of 2 Chronicles ends with this fact. We read of King Cyrus of Persia making a proclamation and putting in writing that the LORD God of heaven had charged him “to build Him an house in Jerusalem” (36:23). He gave the challenge to the people, “Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up” (36:23). These words are repeated in the next book, the book of Ezra, which records the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple. Sin brings consequences, but God continues to build His church and work out His eternal purpose.



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Not to the Strong

I came across an inspiring statement, recently, written by a Christian who was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp in World War II. She said this: "If God sends us on strong paths, we are provided strong shoes." The world measures strength in bench press kilos, marathon kilometres, and rating scales like "1RM"—one repetition maximum (the measurement of the greatest load that can be lifted, pushed, or pulled once without failure or injury). Last year, the global fitness industry was worth nearly \$160 billion. Being active is important, but the world makes an idol of physical strength.

God doesn't measure strength in the ability of the fittest or in the muscle of the strongest, but God's strength is often found in the weak, the elderly, the young, the handicapped, and the least likely. That's why Deborah found herself working for God as the fourth and only female judge of Israel, living near the well-known palm tree landmark on the road from Ramah to Bethel. There is no might attributed to her, like her predecessor, Shamgar, who killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad. Deborah was a prophetess, a woman

in touch with the Lord, and her only other credential was that she was married to a man called Lapidoth. God chose Deborah for His work because He chooses to empower the weak and the "things that are not" (1 Corinthians 1:28) to confound the mighty.

Judges 2:16 tells us that when God raised up judges in Israel, He was "with them." It was and is unusual for God to raise up a woman to civil and religious prominence like Deborah. It reminds me of what missionary Gladys Aylward once said: "I wasn't God's first choice for what I've done in China. I don't know who it was — it must have been a man, a well-educated man. I don't know what happened. Perhaps he died. Perhaps he wasn't willing, and God looked down and saw Gladys Aylward and God said, 'Well, she's willing.'" There is no indication that Deborah was strong or brave or mighty, but she was willing to do what God needed her to do. He equipped her.

After Shamgar died, the Israelites grew careless, and did evil in the sight of God, so He "sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan" (Judges 4:2) and Jabin "mightily" oppressed them for twenty years. That's what

happens when God's people turn away from Him, but when they cried unto the Lord, He graciously raised up Deborah and promised her that He would deliver His people. So, Deborah sent Barak, Israel's army commander, to lead 10,000 men against Sisera (Jabin's captain) famous for his 900 high-tech chariots of iron. Despite Barak's military skill, he humbly asked Deborah to go with him: "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go" (4:8). Without hesitation, Deborah promised, "I will surely go with thee." This was a big step of faith for both of them.

Have you ever wondered why Barak wanted Deborah to accompany him? God gave instructions through Deborah. Israel was heavily outnumbered and even though Barak would have been a strong commander, he knew that he needed the Lord's strength and direction to face the enemy.

Jabin's massive army was positioned by the river Kishon, and Deborah gave the Lord's word, "Up!" but a torrential rainfall flooded the



plains, turning them into a quagmire. On hard, dry ground, Sisera's chariots would aid his lethal weaponry, but not stuck in the mud! "And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots" (4:15).

Sisera had to flee on foot (through the mud?) and took refuge in the tent of Heber the Kenite. Heber was not at home, but his wife, Jael, was. Deborah called her "blessed above women" because she courageously killed the great enemy captain — not with an impressive weapon of war — but with a simple tent peg. God gave the Israelites a unique victory and peace for forty years.

DEBORAH'S STRENGTH

In retrospect, God gave Deborah a tough assignment to go to the battlefield against a formidable enemy that were paralysing her people with fear. As a woman, no doubt her heart beat wildly in her chest at the prospect, but faith propelled her, God empowered her, and she went forward "in the strength of the LORD God" (Psalm 71:16). This reminds me of a verse of a hymn written by another weak vessel who was valiant in the Lord's strength, Fanny Crosby. Fanny lost her eyesight shortly after birth, but God enabled her to write 9000 hymns which have blessed Christians for over a hundred years. Based on Ecclesiastes 9:11, she wrote:

Not to the strong is the battle,

*Not to the swift is the race;
Yet to the true and the faithful
Vict'ry is promised through grace.*

DEBORAH'S SONG

When the battle was done and the victory won, Deborah could have proudly congratulated herself as a heroine, but her song tells us what she truly felt:

"Praise ye the LORD, for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even, I will sing unto the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel... there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD" (Judges 5:2,3,11).

Deborah knew that God was the source of her ability and He alone brought deliverance. God was able to empower her because she was willing, submissive, and humble. And yes, Deborah was mighty, but not in her own strength.

Deborah, Gladys, Fanny, Jael — just ordinary women. What about you? Are you walking a rough road? It is good to recognise that you cannot walk it on your own (John 15:5). The world will tell you to be strong in yourself and believe in yourself, but God wants us to realise our weakness and be strong only in Him.

"God does not need your strength, He has more than enough power of His own. He asks your weakness: He has none of that Himself, and He is longing, therefore, to take your weakness, and use it as the instrument in His own mighty hand. Will you not

yield your weakness to him, and receive His strength?" (C.H. Spurgeon)

As I began to write this last paragraph, I had to put down my pen for a few hours to go to a funeral where I witnessed in action another case of God's strength empowering the weak. A friend lost her husband suddenly to a heart attack at sixty-eight — a tragic situation, but I could easily detect the Lord holding this dear lady up. The days ahead will be challenging for her and maybe for you too, but God will provide "strong shoes" — His strength — to keep going.

*God hath not promised skies
always blue,*

*Flower-strewn pathways all
our lives through;*

*God hath not promised sun
without rain,*

*Joy without sorrow, peace
without pain.*

*But God hath promised
strength for the day...*

(Annie Johnson Flint)



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