

Psalm 46 There is a river , the streams thereof make glad the city of God

Sennacherib is surrounding the city with the possibility of starving the city. He has already laid siege to 46 walled cities , taken or killed over 200,000 people and described Hezekiah as 'a bird in a cage'. Jerusalem, one of the few major cities not built upon a river, yet the psalmist describes it as having a river /stream in the midst.

What does the stream refer to ? In Hebrew, the word for river gives the idea of streams from the main river , which could easily supply gardens, etc. Some suggest that it refers the brook Kidron with its 2 rivulets, the Gihon and Siloam. Hezekiah built a tunnel, 533 metres in length, leading from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam(2 Chr. 32), which met the needs of the people during the impending Assyrian attack.

The image of this river of God is greater than the pool of Siloam. There is a greater river coming from God, a river that brings extreme happiness, and bursts of emotion that transcend the difficult circumstances. The Head of the river is the Father heart of God, the channel of which runs through Jesus. It starts in eternity. This river of the unfathomable love of God whose heights, depths etc cannot be measured, cannot be fully comprehended but can be experienced and enjoyed. No enemy can thwart this river for its source comes from the very throne of God and of the Lamb.(Revelation 22:1) Its manifestation in times of difficulty is experienced through rivulets of peace and grace. Why these 2 ? At the beginning of Paul's letters, his statement is often a greeting of grace and peace to the reader. We so need God's grace and peace. We will consider these 2 streams or rivulets which are designed by God to meet us in times of difficulty

The stream of peace

What is this peace ? Starts with peace with God. – no longer enemies but friends, no longer alienated but brought near, no longer separated but joined together, no longer under the wrath of God, but under His love, no longer hands as a barrier from us but hands around us from God.

It then becomes the shalom of God. It is a position of completeness, well-being and safety that is not determined by circumstances. Peace within is the sign of balance and order, inner health.

Phil 4 7 It is a peace that passes understanding that keeps our hearts and minds from times when anxiety seems more natural. Our emotions and thoughts so often wont let us sleep and swarm around our minds and we feel unable to control their invasion. Often agitated very a vivid imagination, counting sheep wont help.

How do we access this peace ?

No good saying ' pull yourself together' or ' it will never happen' or 'don't keep thinking about it'. God's peace is already there. It acts as a check point so that peace in the heart, peace in the church, peace in our relationships is maintained. When we go wrong, the peace of God is like the referee's whistle highlighting that we need to get things put right. We need to deal with problems externally from a position of peace internally. Dont tolerate sinful actions or reactions, deal with them, keep a

short account before God by going to the cross for forgiveness. E.g. It is the husband's responsibility to repent first as he is accountable before God, as head, for the spiritual atmosphere in the home.

Answer 1 is to trust God which we considered last week. Don't be anxious but realise that you have a refuge who is God who can and will keep you. I will not believe that I have to be a victim of my past or my circumstances. Rest in God. 'Although He slay me, yet will I trust Him.' God knows what He is doing : He doesn't make mistakes.

No situation so grievous that God cannot make good

No cross so heavy that God cannot lighten

No cross so reproachful that honour cannot emerge from

No calamity that will change God's love for me

We must just lay our problems before God.

How do we maintain this barometer of peace ?

Speak to God, then focus on worshipping Him (Phil 4:6)

Finish with focussing on God's goodness, His love, His sovereignty, His faithfulness. The Bible says that He will keep in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him (Isaiah 26:3). God keeps you in peace: His peace walks around the heart, keeping it free from stress and anxiety.

Remind yourself (Phil 4:8)

Nothing happens apart from God

Every situation unfolds some manifestation of God's goodness

Every situation is a means of developing your relationship with God

All situations are temporary and God's purposes are permanent

God has promised a way through

Practice what you have learnt, heard, received, observed (Phil 4:9)

What does the Bible say ? – be still – don't demand instant responses from God – His timing is perfect

What has God put into your heart and hands – assurance of his love – practical common sense – get enough sleep –

What have you seen – how has the lives of other Christians been an example to you – others have walked through difficulties – God can do it for you

Horatio Spafford

1871 – lost everything in the great fire of Chicago –

1873 – wife and 4 daughters go to Europe to hear DL Moody – boat collides with English vessel and only wife survives and goes to Cardiff. On the journey across, Spafford is told where the collision took place and wrote

‘When peace like a river attendeth my way

When sorrows like sea billows roll

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say

It is well, it is well with my soul’

The stream of grace

‘My grace is sufficient for you’

No matter how desperate you feel, Paul says in 1 Cor 12;1, ‘When I am weak, then am I strong’. You are in the position for God to help you.

You don’t have what it takes but we are not asked to solve the problem.

You cant see the solution but we are not asked to foresee the future .

If struggling, then it is the prime place for God to meet with you. God helps us when we most need His help.

God’s grace is His undeserved strength for today – not tomorrow. Tomorrow’s strength will come tomorrow. Dont anticipate God’s future for you.– not always turns out the way you expect but look back and see the hand of God. (As your days , so will your strength be. Deut 33;25). God drops us like a T-bag into hot water knowing that we are an added strength T-bag so that He can infuse situations with His purposes.

God knows our inadequacies, our weaknesses, our hardships, our calamities but has planned strength to carry us through. Our ability to get through does not rely upon our adequacies but upon God’s sufficient strength. He knows how to balance burden and strength.

Hebrews 4;16 - There is grace to help in time of need

See Jesus – touched with the feelings of our infirmities, He’s been through more than us – Let me hold your hand, He says.

Wait in me – consider me, see that I love you. As you do. Your strength will be renewed as the eagles

How long was Sennacherib’s army there. I don’t know but the river of grace and peace would outlast Sennacherib’s army

‘He gives more grace when the burdens grow greater

He sends more strength when the labours increase

To added affliction. He addeth His mercy

To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace

