

**July 14**  
**8th Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Theme: God upholds us in time of trouble.**

**Psalm 42 .1-5**

**2 Kings 18.28-35, 2 Kings 19.1-7**

**Acts 4.23-31**

**Mark 4.35-41**

Good morning, dear congregation. Today, we come together to explore a theme that resonates deeply with all of us: "God upholds us in times of trouble." Life often presents us with challenges and adversities, and it is during these times that we seek comfort and strength from our faith. Our scriptures today provide profound insights into the reasons for troubles in life, and more importantly, how God supports us during these difficult times. Let us open our hearts and minds to receive the wisdom and encouragement from God's Word.

### **1. The Longing for God in Troubled Times: Psalm 42:1-5**

Psalm 42 captures the deep yearning of a soul in distress seeking solace in God:

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."

The psalmist's cry reflects the anguish of a soul in turmoil. This longing for God, described so vividly, mirrors our own experiences when we face life's trials. In moments of despair, we yearn for God's presence, just as a deer longs for streams of water. The psalmist encourages us to put our hope in God, reminding us that despite our troubles, God is our Savior and our source of strength.

### **2. Standing Firm Against Intimidation: 2 Kings 18:28-35; 19:1-7**

The story of King Hezekiah provides a powerful example of facing intimidation and seeking God's intervention. In 2 Kings 18:28-35, the Assyrian king's messenger attempts to instill fear and doubt among the people of Jerusalem:

"Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord when he says, 'The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'"

Despite this intimidation, Hezekiah turns to God for help. In 2 Kings 19:1-7, we see his response:

"When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord. He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz."

Hezekiah's act of seeking God through prayer and the prophet Isaiah exemplifies faith in the face of overwhelming odds. God responds through Isaiah, assuring Hezekiah that He has heard his prayer and will deliver Jerusalem. This narrative reminds us that God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. When we stand firm in our faith and seek God's guidance, He upholds us and delivers us from our fears.

### 3. The Power of Prayer and Community: Acts 4:23-31

In the New Testament, we find the early Christians facing persecution and threats. Acts 4:23-31 recounts their response to these challenges:

"On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God."

The believers' immediate reaction was to come together in prayer, seeking God's intervention. Their prayer was a collective act of faith, acknowledging God's sovereignty and asking for boldness to continue their mission despite the threats. God's response was powerful:

"After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

This passage highlights the importance of prayer and community support in times of trouble. When we face difficulties, gathering together in prayer and supporting one another strengthens our faith and invites God's presence into our situation. God upholds us by filling us with His Spirit, granting us the courage and strength to persevere.

### 4. Trusting Jesus in the Storm: Mark 4:35-41

The Gospel of Mark presents a vivid illustration of Jesus' power to calm the storms in our lives. In Mark 4:35-41, we read about the disciples caught in a fierce storm while Jesus is asleep in the boat:

"A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'"

This passage teaches us that even when it seems like God is silent or asleep during our troubles, He is fully aware and capable of bringing peace to our storms. Jesus' rebuke of the wind and waves demonstrates His authority over nature and all circumstances. It calls us to trust in His power and presence, even when we are surrounded by chaos. God upholds us by calming the storms and reminding us to have faith in His unwavering support.

### Conclusion

Beloved, as we reflect on these scriptures, we see a common thread: God is always with us, upholding us in times of trouble. Whether it is the deep longing for God in the psalms, the steadfast faith of Hezekiah, the power of prayer in the early church, or the calming presence of Jesus in the storm, we are reminded that God never abandons us. He is our refuge, our strength, and our ever-present help in trouble.

### Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your unwavering presence and support in our lives. In times of trouble, help us to remember that You are our refuge and strength. Strengthen our faith and grant us the courage to face our challenges with confidence in Your power. Lord, we pray for those who are experiencing difficulties today. Comfort them with Your love and peace. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit, that we may boldly proclaim Your goodness and trust in Your deliverance. Remind us, Father, that You are always with us, calming the storms and upholding us with Your mighty hand. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

**The Revd. Dr. D.J.Ajith Kumar**  
General Secretary, CNI Synod

