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# Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower  
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

**—Proverbs 18:10**

## My God in Whom I Take Refuge

The scribe Ezra wanted to bring a group of faithful Jews from captivity in Persia back home to Judea.

First, he sought God. Then, he managed to get King Artaxerxes’s permission to depart with the group of 1,800 men, plus their families. In fact, the king was so moved that he gave a rich donation for use in the temple for worship (8:24–30).

Ezra gathered the group on the border, packed the caravan, and prepared to hit the road for the perilous thousand-mile, five-month journey on foot.

Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, “The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him” (8:21–22).

Here, Ezra was facing the most daunting hurdle of his life. The road from Persia to Jerusalem was filled

with dangers from brigands and mercenaries, who would have loved to get their hands on the gold and silver they carried, not to mention the livestock and potential young slaves.

Ezra was surely scared to death. The group was slow and vulnerable. He would have been right to seek every kind of protection possible. But I find it very interesting that Ezra was content to trust God. He was convinced that God approved of his errand. He had made a point to assure King Artaxerxes that the Lord was God. Thus, without going so far as to put God to the test, Ezra entrusted Himself to God's protection.

The violence that we read about in the news every day is worrisome. Gunmen shoot up public places. Terrorists plot fear and death. Kids are snatched from sidewalks and are later found murdered. What might the next trip to a restaurant bring? A gas station? Kindergarten?

But we, who know the power of God, can relax in the knowledge that God watches over our lives!

Now, I am not suggesting that we cannot defend ourselves from thugs. (Religious persecution is another matter, however). In Acts 23:12–24, the Apostle Paul notified the Roman centurion of the threat against his life and received 270 soldiers to protect him on the road, even though God had already promised him that he would come safely to Rome (23:11). While I am going to do what is possible to protect my family, ultimately, it's God who saves from physical danger.

Perhaps we all need to worry less and consider these statements:

- Hannah confessed, “the Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up” (1 Sam. 2:6).
- Jonathan bravely said, “the Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few” (1 Sam. 14:6).
- King Asa prayed, “Lord, there is no one besides You to help in the battle between the powerful and those who have no strength; so help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in You” (2 Chn. 14:11).
- Hanani the seer said, “The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His” (2 Chron. 16:9).

- David, a man who often held a sword in his hand, said, “I love You Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies” (Psalm 18:1–3).
- He also said, “Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God” (Psalm 20:7).
- And he said, “I will not trust in my bow, nor will my sword save me. But You have saved us from our adversaries, and You have put to shame those who hate us” (Psalm 44:6–7).
- Jeremiah testified in the face of many enemies, “The Lord is with me like a dread champion; therefore my persecutors will stumble and not prevail” (Jer. 20:11).
- Shadrach bravely said, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not ... we are not going to serve your gods” (Dan. 3:17–18).
- Paul said, as he faced the Roman chopping block, “the Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18).
- And Jesus assured us, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell” (Matt. 10:28).

Ezra’s trust was well-placed. “We journeyed and ... He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way. Thus we came to Jerusalem” (Ezra 8:31–32).

Whether or not your person and your family remain safe is not much dependent upon your aim, your caliber, your judo skills. It’s God whose will is done. Oliver Cromwell quipped, “trust God and keep your powder dry”; but trust God above all. Pray for our enemies. Remember, God can keep us from these encounters in the first place. Besides, the help we’re most interested in is the salvation of our eternal souls.

—John Guzzetta