

TRUST THE LORD TO TAKE CARE OF YOU

46 Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are borne by beasts of burden, [they are placed] upon the cattle. The [images] that are carried around are burdensome; [they are] a burden to the weary beasts. ²They stoop low and bow down together; they could not bear the burden; rather, they themselves have gone into captivity. ³Listen to me, O house of Jacob, and all you who remain of the house of Israel—those who have been borne [by me] from [the time of] their birth, those who have been carried [by me] from [the time they came out of] the womb. ⁴Even to your old age I am he—Jehovah, [your God]; and even when you have gray hairs, I will carry [you]. I have made [you], and I will bear [you]; indeed, I will carry [you] and I will deliver you.

⁵To whom can you liken me, and with whom can you equate me, and with whom can you compare me, and whom do I resemble? ⁶There are those who pour gold out of their money bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god. [Then] they bow down to it; indeed, they worship it. ⁷They bear [their idol] upon their shoulder; they carry it and set it in its place, and there it stands—from its place it will not move. One may cry out to it; but it cannot answer, nor can it save him from his troubles. ⁸Remember this, keep it in mind; take this to heart, O you transgressors. ⁹Remember the former things of long ago; for I am God and there is none other. [I am] God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰declaring the end from the beginning and declaring from ancient times things that have not [yet] occurred. I declare, My purpose shall stand; and I will accomplish all that I please. ¹¹From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far country I call the man who will fulfill my purpose. Indeed, I have spoken, I will also cause it to happen; that which I have planned, I will also accomplish. ¹²Listen to me, you who are stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness. ¹³I am going to bring my righteousness near, it shall not be far away; and my salvation shall not tarry. I will grant salvation to Zion for Israel my jewel. (Isa. 46:1-13)

Introduction

One of my friends who had looked forward to receiving a substantial monthly benefit at retirement is now without a job. The company he worked for went bankrupt. Moreover, the retirement funds no longer exist. Suddenly the future for him and his wife is far less secure than he thought. (*Our Daily Bread*, 8/19/93)

Another friend, a man with financial security who had anticipated a decade or more of happy retirement, is terminally ill. The good years he was anticipating are not going to become a reality. (*Our Daily Bread*, 8/19/93)

The two people here mentioned have both stated that they do not live in continual worry. They sleep well. They trust God. (*Our Daily Bread*, 8/19/93) One of them related this sound advice: The God who cares for me never sleeps. I see no need in both of us staying awake. (*Our Daily Bread*, 8/19/93)

When we face a present crisis or contemplate an uncertain future, we will feel threatened, if we lose sight of the God who can take care of us. In the midst of a

crisis, or when facing an uncertain future, let us be sure to place our trust in the LORD our God, because He alone is the God who can take care of us. This is the message of the passage presently before us.

In Isaiah 46 we are transported into the distant future, from Isaiah's time in history, to the time when the mighty Babylonian Empire was invaded by the Medes and the Persians under Cyrus the Great. At that time, the Babylonians would look to their idols, their "gods of gold," for deliverance, but to no avail. The LORD directs His covenant people's attention to that tragic scene, and assures them that, as the true and living God, He is not like the impotent "gods of gold." On the contrary, His people can confidently put their trust in Him to take care of them.

I. Trust the LORD to Take Care of You, Throughout Your Life (Isa. 46:1-13)

In verse 3 of Isaiah 46 the LORD declares,

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, and all you who remain of the house of Israel—those who have been borne [by me] from [the time of] their birth, those who have been carried [by me] from [the time they came out of] the womb.

Just as a father carries his new born babe in his arms and lovingly cares for the little infant, so the LORD lovingly cares for each one whom He has begotten by His Holy Spirit—each one whom He has brought to faith in Christ Jesus.

In verse 4 the LORD assures His covenant people, *"Even to your old age I am he—Jehovah, [your God]; and even when you have gray hairs, I will carry you."* Even in old age, even when our hair turns gray and white, the LORD will continue to take care of His children in Christ.

Why can we continue to rely upon His loving fatherly care? We can do so because He ever remains the same, He ever continues to be the great *"I am."* Note Hebrews 13:8, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."* The LORD's covenant people can have confidence in His continued loving care because He, as our Maker and Redeemer, faithfully assumes responsibility for us: *"I have made you, and I will bear you; indeed, I will carry you and I will deliver you"* (Isa. 46:4b.)

Do you sometimes express the same concerns as the Psalmist, *"Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone"* (Psl. 71:9), especially in this present age with its orientation towards youth and its view of the elderly as being an expendable inconvenience?

When the LORD's people utter the plea of Psalm 71:18, *"Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God,"* they need to remember the LORD's reply as recorded in Isaiah 46:3-4,

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, and all you who remain of the house of Israel—those who have been borne [by me] from [the time of] their birth, those who have been carried [by me] from [the time they came out of] the womb. ⁴Even to your old age I am he—Jehovah, [your God]; and even when you have gray hairs, I will carry you. I have made you, and I will bear you; indeed, I will carry you and I will deliver you. (Isa. 46:3-4)

As a Christian, you may confidently trust in the LORD to take care of you, throughout all the years of your life. The writer, Erma Bombeck, tells a touching story of the transition to old age:

When her daughter was a very young girl, Erma would place her in the passenger seat of the family car and buckle her in. When she had to slam on the breaks, Erma would instinctively thrust out her arm to restrain her little daughter. Now, Erma found herself occupying the passenger's seat in her daughter's automobile. As they drove along, suddenly her daughter had occasion to slam on the breaks. As she did so, she instinctively thrust out her arm to restrain her mother. That little incident brought home to Erma the fact that the years had passed, now it was the mother who needed to be cared for—and she was grateful for a caring daughter.

As a Christian, you can be grateful for, and place your confidence in, your caring heavenly Father, knowing that He will be faithful to take care of you throughout all the years of your life.

II. Trust the LORD to Take Care of You, Instead of Trusting in the “Gods of Gold” (Isa. 46:5-6)

In verses 5-6 the LORD compares and contrasts Himself with the “gods of gold”:

To whom can you liken me, and with whom can you equate me, and with whom can you compare me, and whom do I resemble? ⁶There are those who pour gold out of their money bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god. Then they bow down to it; indeed, they worship it. (Isa. 46:5-6)

The LORD is the incomparable God, He asks, *“To whom can you liken me? ... and with whom can you compare me?”* There is no response to His inquiry, because there is no one with whom He can be compared, He alone is God and there is none other.

As the LORD Himself points out, the gods of the nations are nothing more than idols of gold (vs. 6.) A man donates a lavish amount of gold, with his silver he hires a goldsmith, and the smith fashions for him an idol of gold before which he and his family then bow in worship.

Verse 7 indicates how utterly foolish it is to trust in such “gods.” *“They bear [their idol] upon their shoulder; they carry it and set it in its place, and there it stands—from its place it will not move. One may cry out to it; but it cannot answer, nor can it save him from his troubles.”* The man carries his golden idol home; there he sets it in its appointed place—the place from which it shall not move. In time of need he may cry to this god for help, but it cannot answer and it cannot save. Such would prove to be the gods of Babylon; unable to rescue their Babylonian worshipers in the hour their homeland was invaded by the Medes and Persians. Such are all the gods of gold, all the idols of this world.

Just as the Babylonians foolishly trusted in their “gods of gold,” in a similar way, many other men trust in their gold as their god. Consider Jesus’ parable recorded in Luke 12:16-21,

And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. ¹⁷He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ ¹⁸“Then he said, ‘This is what I will do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’” ²⁰“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ ²¹“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.” (Lk. 12:16-21)

Let us hear what the Word of God says about trusting in the gods of gold for one’s security:

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. ⁵Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. (Prov. 23:4-5)

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. (1 Tim. 6:17-19)

As a Christian, you should confidently trust in the LORD to take care of you, instead of trusting in the “gods of gold.”

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5)

III. Trust the LORD to Take Care of You, Because He Alone is Able to Save (Isa. 46:1-2,7)

It is ironic that the “gods” in whom the Babylonians trusted had to be carried around and set in their appropriate place; those “gods” could not move, nor could they save (vs. 7b.)

As verses 1-2 indicate, far from saving anyone in time of trouble, they themselves had to be saved! *“Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low”*—the chief gods of Babylon are brought to a state of humiliation. Isaiah here envisions the great golden idols of Babylon being taken down by their worshipers to be transferred to safety from the approaching Persian invaders. *“Their idols are borne by beasts of burden”*—the great gods of Babylon must be transported on the backs of beasts of burden; the picture here is reminiscent of a funeral procession. *“The [images] that are carried around are burdensome; [they are] a burden to the weary beasts. ²They stoop low and bow down together”*—just as the weary beasts of burden stagger under the dead weight of these massive idols, so the idols themselves—being compared to dumb beasts—stagger and stumble under the great burden laid upon them, namely, the burden of saving their nation and protecting their people. *“They could not bear the burden”*—indeed, the burden of saving their people proves to be too great for them, they cannot save those who trust in them. Far from saving those who have trusted in them and worshiped them, “They themselves have gone into captivity”—the idols of Babylon prove to be unable to save their people, and there is none to save them.

In contrast to these so-called “gods,” let us consider the LORD our God. He invites us to cast our burdens upon Him, *“Cast all your care upon him because he cares for you”* (1 Pet. 5:7.) He is faithful and able to uphold us: *“Cast your cares on Jehovah and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall”* (Psl. 55:22.) He has taken upon Himself the burden of our sins: *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and Jehovah has laid on him [Jesus the Messiah] the iniquity of us all”* (Isa. 53:6.)

Again, consider the contrast between the “gods” of the nations and the LORD our God. Those so-called “gods” cannot answer when their people call upon them (vs. 7); but the LORD our God stands ready to answer us when we call, and urges us to do so: *“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me”* (Psl. 50:15.) Those “gods” are lifeless (vs. 7b), and behind them is the one who destroys life, the devil himself. As noted in a previous lesson, the Apostle Paul identifies the devil as the spiritual power behind the idols of this world (1 Cor. 10:20.) But the LORD our God is the living God—His very name identifies Him as the One who is the self-existent Possessor and Giver of life, as He testified to Moses, *“I AM that I AM”* (Ex. 3:14.) Furthermore, He desires to give us life; the Lord Jesus declares, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it in abundance”* (Jn. 10:10b.)

As a Christian, confidently place your trust in the LORD to take care of you, because He alone is able to save. A missionary ministering in Japan relates a moving story that well illustrates the contrast between the “gods” of men and the Lord of heaven:

One of Japan’s frequent earthquakes sent tremors through the land. As the rumble of the earthquake shook her house, a Japanese lady observed the idols trembling and clattering on her shelf. In contrast to her trembling idols, this lady noted the calm steadfast heart exhibited by her Christian neighbor. That Christian lady trusted in the LORD, and the LORD was faithful and able to uphold her in the midst of this ordeal.

Conclusion

The LORD exhorts His people, *“remember this”* (vs. 8.) That is to say, we are to ever be mindful of the fact that the LORD is God, and there is none who can be compared to Him (vs. 5-7.) In remembering this, let us place our trust in Him and not depart from Him,

... do not turn away from Jehovah, but serve Jehovah with all your heart. ²¹Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. (1 Sam. 12:20b-21)