Protecting God,

when we fall, you quietly pick us up;

when we fear, you gently hold on to us;

when the future looks bleak, you nudge us onwards,

until at last we find ourselves

in the place you would have us be.

*Bruce Thompson*

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He’s got the whole world in his hand.

He’s got the whole world in his hand.

He’s got the whole wide world in his hand.

He’s got the whole world in his hand.

*African-American traditional song*

Lord Jesus, may we feel your presence in all we do today,

to be calm when we feel anxious,

to be strong when we feel weak,

to be gracious when tempted to respond inappropriately

and when the day is done may we feel at peace in your presence.

*Robert Mortimer*

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Lord, we praise you for every single act of good that is done, for every ounce of love that is shown, for every kind deed, act of grace and act of mercy. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

*Jamie Prouse*

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Prayers and Readings in Difficult Times

God is our refuge and strength, a very presenthelp in trouble.

*Psalm 46 verse 1*

I need thee every hour,

Most gracious Lord;

No tender voice like thine

Can peace afford:

I need thee, O I need thee,

Every hour I need thee;

O bless me now, my Saviour;

I come to thee.

*Annie Sherwood Hawks (1835 – 1918)*

Heavenly Father, when days are dark and full of pain,

give us the strength to live through what we don’t understand,

the courage to face it, and your comfort and peace in our hearts,

for we are held safe in your loving arms. Amen.

*Jennie Bonner*

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Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff - they comfort me.

*Psalm 23 verse 4*

What a friend we have in Jesus,

All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry

Everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit,

O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry

Everything to God in prayer!

*Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819 – 1886)*

God, your love – gentle, immense, unconditional – arcs a rainbow of grace to shelter us all and creates a space of belonging and healing.

Your love – grounded in reality, accustomed to suffering – welcomes the excluded, tends hidden bruises, binds wounds and remakes lives and community.

God, may the astonishing truth of your love, your wide span of hope, dawn afresh in our hearts and turn us inside out as we act on your call to share your compassion.

Renew our faith and courage that we may live as people transformed by the gospel and inspired by the limitless horizons of your Spirit. Amen.

*Louise Gough*

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As a deer longs for flowing streams,
    so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
    for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
    the face of God?
My tears have been my food
    day and night,
while people say to me continually,
    ‘Where is your God?’ …

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
    and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
    my help and my God.

*Psalm 42 verses 1 to 3 and 11*

God of grace and love, the future seems uncertain and dangerous, so we become distrustful and obdurate. We are willing to believe only those who agree with us, and are fearful of difference. We become angry and defensive, hurting others before they can hurt us, regardless of the consequences.

In responding to the gospel of your love for us in Christ, help us to remember that, although you were announced by angels, you came to us vulnerable as a new-born child. May all that we offer in your name be filled with compassion and kindness. Amen.

*Sheryl Anderson*

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