



Once a year we celebrate National Tree Day and people are encouraged to plant a tree. I wonder what tree your favourite might be. Many years ago I used to walk in the forest near my home and found an old gnarled tree. It was not a thing of beauty nor did it provide shade but I found in that tree strength, tenacity, and endurance. It encouraged me to keep going and not to give up. We too can show strength, tenacity and can endure whatever comes our way. There are some great Bible verses that remind us that we endure not in our own strength but in God's strength.

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all this through him who gives me **strength**."

Psalm 28:7 "The **Lord** is my **strength** and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him."

I also found a quote by Torie Cooper which reflected my own thoughts: - "I gaze upon them and see myself - bent, broken, and twisted in places. We all are. We sometimes struggle to grow in the harsh sun, fierce wind, and driving rain of life's challenges. To look upon ourselves and see the sweet beauty of our brokenness is to fully accept what is. Like our 'sister' the gnarled old gum tree, we are indeed so very beautiful, and we are loved." "God loves us despite our short-comings and sins, and his love gives meaning to our lives and to the life of the world." Pope Benedict XVI

Gracious God,
as we look at each other,
help us to see the strength,
endurance and beauty in each one.
Help us to remember that we are precious
and that you love us with an unconditional love.
May the love of the Father,
the tenderness of the Son,
and the presence of the Spirit,
gladden your heart
and bring peace to your soul,
this day and all days, Amen.

God Is Our Strength and Refuge,
Our Present Help In Trouble,
And We Therefore Will Not Fear,
Though The Earth Should Change!
Though Mountains Shake And Tremble,
Though Swirling Floods Are Raging,
God The Lord Of Hosts Is With Us Evermore!

There Is A Flowing River
Within God's Holy City;
God Is In The Midst Of Her
She Shall Not Be Moved!
God's Help Is Swiftly Given,
Thrones Vanish At His Presence
God The Lord Of Hosts Is With Us Evermore!

Come, See The Works Of Our Maker,
Learn Of His Deeds All-Powerful:
Wars Will Cease Across The World
When He Shatters The Spear!
Be Still And Know Your Creator,
Uplift Him In The Nations
God The Lord Of Hosts Is With Us Evermore!

In each verse we find a sentence of hope and encouragement..

- 1 God is our strength and refuge
- 2 God's help is swiftly given
- 3 Be still and know your Creator

May we be aware of God's strength in our lives, and know that his help is swiftly given.. then to be still and know our Creator.

I pray that these words will bring hope, encouragement and comfort to you.

Grace, Love and Peace,

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