

When Facing Hard Times



Psalm 34:17

**The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth,
and delivereth them out of all their
troubles.**

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Forward

Life is full of twists and turns and sometimes we fall upon hard times.

No matter what the circumstance we can rest in the fact that God is always faithful. He will hold us in the hollow of His hand and when we ask, He will help us through the hard times.

If you are struggling today, or you know someone who is in hard times, I hope that the word of God will be a blessing to you.

I was born on a farm in Oklahoma during the “Great Depression”. Clouds of sand filled the air, covered the machines in the fields, It seemed that everyone was saying, “We have fallen on hard times”. The very week I was born, my father died. My mother was left with 3 little children and little income. It was really the same for most families at that time. Some men were working for \$1.00 a day, and glad to have a job.

Today, there are still many people who are facing hard times.

Let the word of God speak to you, and be encouraged. God knows your situation and he loves you and cares what happens to you.

Chapter 1

Cry Out To Jesus

Psalms 3:4

I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill.

God's holy hill was Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, the place where David's son Solomon would build the temple (2 Chron. 3:1). David knew that God could not be confined to any space, but he wrote poetically, expressing confidence that God would hear him when he prayed. God responds to us when we urgently pray to him.

The Lord will deliver the righteous.

Psalm 34:17

When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.

Somehow we think that peace should come to us with no effort. But David explained that we are to seek and pursue peace. Paul echoed this thought in Romans 12:18. A person who wants peace cannot be argumentative and contentious. Because peaceful relationships come from our efforts at peacemaking, work hard at living in peace with others each day.

Our deliverance will glorify God.

Psalms 50:15

...call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

Some people glibly recite God's laws but are filled with deceit and evil. They claim his promises but refuse to obey him. This is sin, and God will judge people for it. We too are hypocrites when we are not what we claim to be. To let this inconsistency remain shows that we are not true followers of God.

God will direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Leaning has the sense of putting your whole weight on something, resting on and trusting in that person or thing. When we have an important decision to make, we sometimes feel that we can't trust anyone—not even God. But God knows what is best for us. He is a better judge of what we want than even we are! We must trust him completely in every choice we make.

We should not omit careful thinking or belittle our God-given ability to reason; but we should not trust our own ideas to the exclusion of all others. We must not be wise in our own eyes. We should always be willing to listen to and be corrected by God's Word and wise counselors. Bring your decisions to God in prayer; use the Bible as your guide; and then follow God's leading. He will make your paths straight by both guiding and protecting you.

To receive God's guidance, said Solomon, we must acknowledge God in all our ways. This means turning every area of life over to him. About a thousand years later, Jesus emphasized this same truth (Matthew 6:33). Look at your values and priorities. What is important to you? In what areas have you not acknowledged him? What is his advice? In many areas of your life you may already acknowledge God, but it is in the areas where you attempt to restrict or ignore his influence that will cause you grief. Make him a vital part of everything you do; then he will guide you because you will be working to accomplish his purposes.

Chapter 2

God is near, call upon him.

Isaiah 55:6

Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.

Food costs money, lasts only a short time, and meets only physical needs. But God offers us *free* nourishment that feeds our soul. How do we get it? We come (Isaiah 55:1), listen (Isaiah 55:2), seek, and call on God (Isaiah 55:6). God's salvation is freely offered, but to nourish our souls we must eagerly receive it. We will starve spiritually without this food as surely as we will starve physically without our daily bread.

God's covenant with David promised a permanent homeland for the Israelites, no threat from pagan nations, and no wars (2 Samuel 7:10-11). But Israel did not fulfill its part of the covenant by obeying God and staying away from idols. Even so, God was ready to renew his covenant again. He is a forgiving God!

Isaiah tells us to call on the Lord while he is near. God is not planning to move away from us, but we often move far from him or erect a barrier between ourselves and him. Don't wait until you have drifted far away from God to seek him. Later in life turning to him may be far more difficult. Or God may come to judge the earth before you decide to turn to him. Seek God now, while you can, before it is too late.

Keep Your Head High and Sing Praises

Psalms 42:5

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

The writer of this psalm was discouraged because he was exiled to a place far from Jerusalem and could not worship in the temple. During these God-given holidays, the nation was to remember all that God had done for them.

Depression is one of the most common emotional ailments. One antidote for depression is to meditate on the record of God's goodness to his people. This will take your mind off the present situation and give hope that it will improve. It will focus your thoughts on God's ability to help you rather than on your inability to help yourself. When you feel depressed, take advantage of this psalm's antidepressant.

God has attended to the voice of my prayer.

Psalms 66:17-20

I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!

Our confession of sin must be on going because we continue to do wrong. But true confession requires us to listen to God and to want to stop doing what is wrong. David confessed his sin and prayed, "Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins" (Psalm 19:12-13). When we *refuse* to repent or when we harbor and cherish certain sins, we place a wall between us and God. We may not be able to remember *every* sin we have ever committed, but our attitude should be one of confession and obedience.

Blessed is he whose hope is in the Lord.

Psalms 146:5-6

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever

Sometimes our burdens seem more than we can bear, and we wonder how we can go on. David stands at this bleak intersection of life's road and points toward the Lord, the great burden-bearer.

God is able to lift us up because:

- (1) his greatness is unfathomable (Psalm 145:3);
- (2) he does mighty acts across many generations (Psalm 145:4);
- (3) he is full of glorious splendor and majesty (Psalm 145:5);
- (4) he does wonderful and awesome works (Psalm 145:5-6);
- (5) he is righteous (Psalm 145:7);
- (6) he is gracious, compassionate, patient, and loving (Psalm 145:8-9);
- (7) he rules over an everlasting kingdom (Psalm 145:13);
- (8) he is our source of all our daily needs (Psalm 145:15-16);
- (9) he is righteous and loving in all his dealings (Psalm 145:17);
- (10) he remains near to those who call on him (Psalm 145:18);
- (11) he hears our cries and saves us (Psalm 145:19-20).

If you are bending under a burden and feel that you are about to fall, turn to God for help. He is ready to lift you up and bear your burden.

Chapter 3

Paul and Silas sing while in prison

Acts 16:25

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them

Paul and Silas were stripped, beaten, and placed in stocks in the inner cell. Despite this dismal situation, they praised God, praying and singing as the other prisoners listened.

No matter what our circumstances, we should praise God. Others may come to Christ because of our example.

Stocks were made of two boards joined with iron clamps, leaving holes just big enough for the ankles. The prisoner's legs were placed across the lower board, and then the upper board was closed over them.

Sometimes both wrists and ankles were placed in stocks. Paul and Silas, who had committed no crime and were peaceful men, were put in stocks designed for holding the most dangerous prisoners in absolute security.

God can do more than we ask or think.

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

This doxology—prayer of praise to God—ends Part One of Ephesians. In the first section, Paul described the timeless role of the church.

In Part Two (Ephes. 4-6), he will explain how church members should live in order to bring about the unity God wants. As in most of his books, Paul first lays a doctrinal foundation and then makes practical applications of the truths he has presented.

Blessings & deliverance is On the Way

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

People may hesitate to give generously to God if they worry about having enough money left over to meet their own needs. Paul assured the Corinthians that God was able to meet their needs.

The person who gives only a little will receive only a little in return. Don't let a lack of faith keep you from giving freely and generously.

Our attitude when we give is more important than the amount we give. We don't have to be embarrassed if we can give only a small gift. God is concerned about *how* we give from the resources we have (see Mark 12:41-44). According to that standard, the giving of the Macedonian churches would be difficult to match (2 Cor. 8:3).

God will deliver us again.

2 Corinthians 1:10

He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

Paul does not give details about their hardships in Asia, although his accounts of all three missionary journeys record many difficult trials he faced (Acts 13:2-14:28; Acts 15:40-21:17).

He does write that they felt that they were going to die, and realized that they could do nothing to help themselves—they simply had to rely on God.

We often depend on our own skills and abilities when life seems easy, but we turn to God when we feel unable to help ourselves. Depending on God is a realization of our own powerlessness without him and our need for his constant touch in our lives.

God is our source of power, and we receive his help by keeping in touch with him. With this attitude of dependence, problems will drive us to God rather than away from him. Learn how to rely on God daily.

We are transferred to the kingdom of God's son

Colossians 1:13

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son

The Colossians feared the unseen forces of darkness, but Paul says that true believers have been transferred from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from guilt to forgiveness, and from the power of Satan to the power of God.

We have been rescued from a rebel kingdom to serve the rightful King. Our conduct should reflect our new allegiance.

Chapter 4

Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.

Hebrews 6:19-20

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

These two unchangeable things are God's nature and his promise. God embodies all truth; therefore, he cannot lie. Because God is truth, you can be secure in his promises; you don't need to wonder if he will change his plans.

Our hope is secure and immovable, anchored in God, just as a ship anchor holds firmly to the seabed. To the true seeker who comes to God in belief, God gives an unconditional promise of acceptance.

When you ask God with openness, honesty, and sincerity to save you from your sins, he will do it. This truth should give you encouragement, assurance, and confidence.

This curtain hung across the entrance from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place, the two innermost rooms of the temple. This curtain prevented anyone from entering, gazing into, or even getting a fleeting glimpse of the interior of the Most Holy Place (see also Hebrews 9:1-8).

The high priest could enter there only once a year to stand before God's presence and atone for the sins of the entire nation. But Christ is in God's presence at all times, not just once a year, as the high priest who can continually intercede for us.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

James 1:12

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

On the Other Side of the Hard Trial

The crown of life is like the victory wreath given to winning athletes (see 1 Cor. 9:25). God's crown of life is not glory and honor here on earth, but the reward of eternal life—living with God forever. The way to be in God's winners' circle is by loving him and staying faithful even under pressure.

Temptation comes from evil desires inside us, not from God. It begins with an evil thought and becomes sin when we dwell on the thought and allow it to become an action. Like a snowball rolling downhill, sin grows more destructive the more we let it have its way.

The best time to stop a temptation is before it is too strong or moving too fast to control.

Testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

James 1:2-4

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James doesn't say if you face trials, but whenever you face them. He assumes that we will have trials and that it is possible to profit from them. The point is not to pretend to be happy when we face pain, but to have a positive outlook ("consider it pure joy") because of what trials can produce in our lives. James tells us to turn our hardships into times of learning. Tough times can teach us perseverance.

For other passages dealing with perseverance (also called patience and steadfastness), see Romans 2:7; Romans 5:3-5; Romans 8:24-25; 2 Cor. 6:3-7; 2 Peter 1:2-9.

We can't really know the depth of our character until we see how we react under pressure. It is easy to be kind to others when everything is going well, but can we still be kind when others are treating us unfairly? God wants to make us mature and complete, not to keep us from all pain. Instead of complaining about our struggles, we should see them as opportunities for growth. Thank God for promising to be with you in rough times. Ask him to help you solve your problems or to give you the strength to endure them. Then be patient. God will not leave you alone with your problems; he will stay close and help you grow.

The Law of the Lord is better than gold and silver.

Psalms 119:71-72

It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

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Chapter 5

Let God's's steadfast love comfort me.

Psalms 119:75-76

I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant.

We can't really know the depth of our character until we see how we react under pressure. It is easy to be kind to others when everything is going well, but can we still be kind when others are treating us unfairly? God wants to make us mature and complete, not to keep us from all pain.

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We have obtained faith in this grace in which we stand.

Romans 5:2-5

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

All things work together for the good for those who love God.

Romans 8:28

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Sources:

God works in “all things”—not just isolated incidents—for our good. This does not mean that all that happens to us is good. Evil is prevalent in our fallen world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our long-range good.

Note that God is not working to make us happy, but to fulfill his purpose. Note also that this promise is not for everybody. It can be claimed only by those who love God and are called according to his purpose. Those who are “called” are those the Holy Spirit convinces and enables to receive Christ. Such people have a new perspective, a new mind-set on life.

They trust in God, not life’s treasures; they look for their security in heaven, not on earth; they learn to accept, not resent, pain and persecution because God is with them.

Matthew 11:28
Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.



To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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