

The Secret to Your Survival as a Christian in This Present Darkness

God punctuates our lives in this season with crisis moments that test our faith and resilience of varying degrees, designed for our everlasting good. For thousands of years, God's people have known "times of trouble" and in recent days all too well. Our Father never promised that our being His would mean we would not have ours.

The Scriptures describe the faithful not as those who never saw trouble, but as those who cried out to God in the middle of trouble.

The Psalms in particular celebrate God's eagerness to hear and help his people in their "day of distress" and "time of trouble." David testified that God had been to him "a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress" (Ps. 59:16, ESV). See also Psalm 9:9, 37:39 and 41:1. He knew where to turn when crisis came: "In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me" (Ps. 86:7). "He will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble" (Psalm 27:5). And David knew where to point others: "May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble!" (Ps. 20:1a). "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble" (Ps. 9:9).

Almost nine years later, I still remember that crossroads moment—"time of trouble" and survival.

I read every Bible verse and asked God a million times to take away the pain of losing my mom and my maternal grandmother ... and now having cancer myself ... but it didn't work, and the lights were still off in my soul. I kept saying to myself—When will I be that woman again who went through life at 120 miles per hour in the snow and lived life with zest? Why is all this

happening to me? Why did God abandon me? Will I ever reclaim my faith? I felt an indescribable pain, and I didn't know how to walk again.

Perhaps you've experienced something similar—a season in your life that cast the darkest cloud over you. You were numb inside. You questioned your faith.

Whatever it was, it felt like life defeated you, and the pain held you in its tightest grip far longer than you could have imagined.

Why do some people seem to be better able to cope in these troubling times than others? While everyone's season is different, it is true that people with a closer relationship with God and stronger faith tend to have a higher tolerance for the emotional distress generated by very difficult times.

We all go through bad times; we all experience disappointment, loss and change, and we all feel sad, pain and stress at various times in our lives. But maintaining your faith and resilience can help you to maintain a positive outlook, face an uncertain future with less fear and get through even the darkest days.

But fully trusting in God to bring you out is also very hard. It calls us to act in great faith daily. But think about how great life could be if we lived without worry, stress, fear, pain and doubt. We must deliberately focus on God's plans for us and not our own, and sometimes that means setting aside our own plans and expectations.

For me that was very difficult, but I had to remember what my grandmothers told me Jeremiah 29:11 promises: God wants to prosper us and not harm us. His plans for us are greater than anything we can imagine for ourselves. We have to remove doubt from our hearts, replace it with belief and trust Him. My beloved mother never let go of that unyielding faith my praying grandmothers had. In doing so, our faith will grow

stronger as we see Him lead us in the directions we are truly meant to go.

Faith at the speed of light is defined by never knowing what storms are awaiting us. We have to be ready with unyielding faith to be able to walk through the season courageously and optimistically. Read Matthew 17:20, and then believe that faith can move mountains. Read Philippians 4:19 and have faith that God will supply all your needs.

If we want to exercise faith in our lives, we must let God's instructions and commands be our guide. In doing so we will strengthen our faith greatly.

We have to do our best to wake up each day with the intention to be great and do well. Spread light, not darkness. Give generously; don't complain, be kind and never tear people down.

Above all, remember to love God, be kind to yourself and love people.

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