

When God Finally Delivers You From Your Fiery Trial

A little girl asked her Sunday School teacher why Jesus first came to His disciples in the Garden and said, "Watch and pray," but the last time He just said, "Sleep on and take your rest" (see Matt. 26:41-45).

The teacher did not immediately respond. Then the child spoke again. "I think I know. It was because Jesus had seen the face of His Father and He didn't need their help anymore."

In Psalm 116, this fourth of the Hallel (praise) psalms—which Jesus most likely sang with His disciples after the Last Supper—fervent thanksgiving is offered to the Lord for a recent deliverance from trial. As Jesus entered His deepest valley of suffering, this testimony of the Psalmist served as an encouragement that all will end well also for Him.

If you believe the Scripture that endurance, character and hope issue from suffering (Rom. 5:3-5) and that God works good in all things (Rom. 8:28), then let this psalm encourage you even if you are in a severe personal trial. The psalm tells how you'll feel when you're on safe ground again.

Desperate Need

You cry when you hurt so badly you don't have words to describe the pain. You never cry alone. God listens to your grief. You will always love best the One who stands with you in your moment of greatest need (vv. 1-2).

Jesus experienced the powerful entangling pull of death into the grave (v. 3). Your trial may be dragging you into a grave of depression and hopelessness. Keep taking the antidote: "Then I called on the name of the Lord: 'O Lord, save me!'" (v. 4).

The Lord may not save you from your dilemma all at once (see Ex. 13:17; 23:29-30). He may untie the knots of entangling cords one at a time. But because He is gracious, righteous and full of compassion, you can count on His help (vv. 5-6).

Wonderful Deliverance

Affliction brings disquiet. When the storm is over, like the psalmist, you may talk to yourself in an atmosphere of peace (v. 7; see also Mark 4:39).

The psalmist looks back upon his harrowing passage. Death stared him in the face. He wept, lost his footing, knew great affliction and didn't trust anyone (vv. 8-11).

Too often we look to human resources for answers to our dilemmas. Today the Lord is calling you to trust Him and Him alone. You know your trial is deep if the Lord is the only One who could pull you out.

Will you imitate the Psalmist by placing the words "I believe" before your lament, "I am greatly afflicted" (v. 10)? Then, look to the face of the Father.

Promises Remembered

How do we thank God after He brings us out of a tough spot (v. 12)?

The psalmist keeps the promises he made to the Lord while he was in trial. Thus, he goes to the temple for presentation of the drink and meat offerings of thanks (vv. 13-19).

As followers of Jesus, we bring a different kind of sacrifice: the continual offering of our life to the Lord, our praise, and doing good to others (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15,16).

One phrase, often lifted from this section for comfort at funerals, is: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (v. 15). The more likely translation is,

“Costly in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” If this is the meaning intended, it’s the psalmist’s way of linking us with the Lord’s purposes by stating that our removal from the human scene is costly to God’s work on earth. It’s a supporting argument for our plea of rescue to God, “Please let me live a while longer because there’s work I have to do for You that won’t get done without me.”

When God delivers us, it is appropriate to consider ourselves as freed from chains that we might be more effectively God’s servants (v. 16). A grateful heart of surrender to the Lord leads to freely flowing praise and thanksgiving (vv. 17-19).

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