

What to Do When You Feel God Has Forsaken You

Isaiah 37:1-38:22 This passage records two prayers of Hezekiah. One prayer asks God for his healing and deliverance from his enemies. The other prayer expresses a vivid word picture of how Hezekiah felt before he knew the Lord would restore him to health and deliver him from his enemies. He says, "Like a crane or a swallow, so I chattered; I mourned like a dove; my eyes fail from looking upward" (Isa. 38:14). He speaks of his age departing from him and how he believed he would not see the Lord in the land of the living.

This descriptive prayer of Hezekiah has great meaning to me because my son who served in China as a teacher of English had the same feelings Hezekiah did. When he shared his testimony about his first few months in China, he included this verse of Scripture because it expressed so well exactly what he was feeling. God heard Hezekiah's cry, and He also heard Ron's cry. What seemed to Ron at the time as a disastrous decision to go to China became a decisive victory for him and for the Lord. Until his departure to China, Ron had experienced relatively little obstacles or trials. Remember, it is trials that develop character in us. More character was developed in Ron during his two years in China than I thought possible. When he returned, he had developed a grateful heart, an appreciation for life, patience and longsuffering, gentleness and kindness, and most of all, love. Ron had always been gracious, but there was a depth of thankfulness in his heart that developed because of God's faithfulness to him through hard times. He appreciated life and people because God turned his thoughts to others rather than to himself. He grew in patience and longsuffering as he stood in line for hours and sometimes almost a day to get train tickets. Just the huge population in China makes travel very difficult. He tells the

story of the time when he just decided to climb over the shoulders of people to get to the front of the line because he had to get on the train. The Chinese laughed and cheered him as he made his valiant effort to get to the front of the line. He learned his lesson, however, when he saw the police waiting for him when he reached the ticket office. His heart was in his throat, especially when he saw the bamboo stick that awaited him. To his surprise the police ushered him to another ticket booth without a word and with the bamboo stick pointed to the sign that said "Foreigners only." He learned gentleness and kindness from the Chinese people who, for the most part, are a gentle people, and he learned love. When he had to say good-bye to his Chinese friends, he wept bitterly because God had placed such a love in his heart for these dear people.

God heard Hezekiah's cry, healed his body and delivered him from his enemies. In the process of these trials, however, Hezekiah, I am sure, grew in character also. We cry out to God when troubles come, but maybe we should thank Him first for allowing such troubles that will develop character within us that could not be accomplished any other way.

**READ: Isaiah 37:1-38:22; Galatians 6:1-18; Psalm 65:1-13;
Proverbs 23:24-25**