The Lord Is Our Help And Our Deliverer

By Rich Carmicheal

Last fall I had the privilege of speaking for a faith-promise missions' rally for a congregation that I once served as pastor. The church family is currently holding their services in the gym of a local school because earlier last year their church building burned down. On the wall of the gym hangs a banner designed by the pastor as a means of encouragement during this transitional time. On the two ends of the banner are pictures of beautiful stained glass windows from the former building. One is a depiction of Jesus kneeling in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the other is of Jesus as the Good Shepherd with a staff in His left hand, a lamb in His right arm, and a sheep at His side. In the middle of the banner is a Cross, and below it the name of the church and the words "Beauty from ashes."

How comforting and encouraging it is to remember in such a difficult time as the loss of a church building, or whatever hardship we may face, that the Lord is able *"to comfort all that mourn…to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness…"* (Isa. 61:2-3). Because of the Cross and the intercession of Jesus, and because He is our Shepherd, we have every reason to have hope even in the hardest of times.

In Psalm 30, David reminds us of how the Lord helps those who look to Him in trying circumstances. *"I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted me up, and hast not let my enemies rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to Thee for help, and Thou didst heal me. ...Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name. For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning. ...'Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me; O Lord, be Thou my helper.' Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness; that my soul may sing praise to Thee…"* (vv. 1-5, 10-12). The Lord is not only able to keep us and sustain us during trials, He is also able to turn trials into triumph and to cause *"all things to work together for good to those who love God"* (Rom. 8:28). In His great compassion and mighty power He is indeed able to bring beauty from ashes.

Trust God in the Midst of Trouble

We all know from experience that life brings its share of troubles. Sometimes those troubles come from external sources and at other times from within ourselves. As conditions continue to break down in the world, more people are facing increased difficulties such as anxiety, fear, weariness, stress, financial strain, strong temptations, problems with sin, loneliness, insecurity and broken relationships. Perhaps you are even now in the midst of some great burden.

As difficult as our troubles can be, the good news is that *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride"* (Psa. 46:1-3). How reassuring it is to know that God is

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able and faithful to help everyone who looks to Him, no matter how great the trouble. He *"has power to help"* (2 Chr. 25:8) and He *"rides the heavens to your help, and through the skies in His majesty. The eternal God is a refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms…"* (Deut. 33:26-27).

The Scriptures point out over and over again how God is worthy of our utmost confidence. When we trust in Him to help us, we will not be disappointed (Psa. 22:4-5). Take to heart these passages:

"My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. …The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. …The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever" (Psa. 121:2-8).

"…For He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?'" (Heb. 13:5-6).

"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; those who contend with you will be as nothing, and will perish" (Isa. 41:10-11).

"The cords of death encompassed me, and the torrents of ungodliness terrified me. ...In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears. …He sent from on high, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my stay" (Psa. 18:4-6, 16-18).

"How 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; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous" (Psa. 146:5-8).

"…The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in time of trouble. And the Lord helps them, and delivers them…because they take refuge in Him" (Psa. 37:39-40).

The Lord is Gracious and Able to Help

By His very nature, God is a God who helps. He helps those who are under evil attack (Matt. 15:25; Mark 9:22; 2 Tim. 4:17-18). He helps those who are crushed under the weight of their own sin (Psa. 38:1-22; Psa. 51:1-17). He helps those who are under temptation (Heb. 2:14-18; 1 Cor. 10:13). He helps those plagued with anxious thoughts (Psa. 94:17-19; Phil. 4:6-7). He helps those who are older and whose strength fails (Psa. 71:9, 12, 20). He helps those who have lost their former glory and joy (Psa. 42:3-5). He helps the poor and needy (Psa. 40:17). He

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helps those who are in the lowest pit (Lam. 3:55-58). His Spirit helps those who are weak and do not know how to pray as they should (Rom. 8:26-27).

Perhaps your troubles are wearing you down and you wonder if the Lord even cares about you and your circumstances. If so, Isaiah offers this encouragement: *"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. …Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary"* (Isa. 40:28-29, 31). The Lord knows you intimately and cares about you deeply, and He has the power to uphold you in all things.

Seek Him and His Help

So if you are in distress, call out to Him (2 Sam. 22:7; 2 Chr. 14:11) and cry out to Him (2 Chr. 20:9; Psa. 18:6). Seek Him and His help (2 Chr. 20:4; Psa. 27:7-9). As you do, remember that He is a holy and righteous God, and you must come to Him on His terms. Confess any sin in your life and seek His forgiveness and mercy (Psa. 79:8-9; 109:26). Listen to Him and obey His Word (Psa. 119:147, 173, 175).

Pour out your heart to Him in prayer (Psa. 62:8; 5:1-3; Lam. 3:56-57; Phil. 4:6). Draw near with confidence to His throne of grace and receive mercy and find grace to help you in your time of need (Heb. 4:15-16). Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you (Jas. 4:8). Offer praise to Him as your helper (Psa. 124:8; Heb. 13:5-6).

Trust Him as your strength and shield (Psa. 28:7). Take refuge in Him and put your hope in Him (Psa. 37:39-40; 43:5). Wait for Him and let your heart take courage (Psa. 27:14; 33:20). Be still and know that He is God (Psa. 46:10). Humble yourself under His mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time, and cast all your care upon Him because He cares for you! (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

"Blessed be the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplication. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. Therefore my heart exults, and with my song I shall thank Him. The Lord is their strength, and He is a saving defense to His anointed. Save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance; be their shepherd also, and carry them forever" (Psa. 28:6-9).

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