

101 messages of authentic hope for difficult times

Shelter

FROM THE
STORM

BECKY WHITE

Becky's devotions are much more than words on a page: they are her life. Becky shares the amazing truths from God's Word that provide the grace and truth needed to overcome life's difficulties. These are not untested truths. Becky lives them and they are on full display in her compassionate ministry among the needy of our city.

GREG MERRIN
Better Way Volunteer Staff

Becky is the "Real Deal". She's walked the broken road and managed to keep her eyes on Jesus. Her devotionals come from true life, day to day experiences. She is not a perfect wife, mom, sister, daughter, or friend...but a genuine follower of Christ using all her life experience to encourage others to never give up but keep looking to Jesus, for He is our true hope. Becky's book will give you hope for a brighter tomorrow!

LINDA ICE
Wife, mother and former worship leader of The Garden Church

Becky clearly has an intimate relationship with Jesus. She skillfully shares her own life experience in light of the Word to bring practical truths for daily living. You will be inspired, encouraged, and most of all reminded that you are loved by the Living God.

TODD R. MARRAH
Executive Pastor Rock City Church

This book will simply and clearly lead you to encounter God's kindness, presence and strength in the midst of your difficult moments in which you may feel like God is distant. Becky's thoughtful, simple and clear devotionals reflect the depth of her own experience of God in the difficult times of life and point you toward cultivating your own depth of experience through encountering the Holy Spirit in Scripture, meditation and prayer.

ROSS ADELMANN
Senior Pastor, Quest, A Vineyard Church, Westerville, OH

Life can be harsh and cruel. It often collides with our hopes and dreams on a daily basis. I cannot think of a better companion than Becky White to walk through the debris of broken dreams. She holds our hands in her devotional with comfort and strong truth. Her

devotionals provide countless opportunities to surrender such sharp and jagged edges of brokenness to The Father; our Father who then makes His mosaics of beauty with the grout of our surrender.

LYNN JACKSON
Churches in Missions

I've had the pleasure of sitting at Becky's kitchen with a cup of coffee, talking about life and the goodness of God, and can say that this book reflects who Becky is - child of God, a fellow friend who is broken, a trophy of the grace and mercy of our all-loving, ever-faithful God. With gentleness and humility, Becky shares the treasures of the Word and the fruit of her journey with God. Each page is as comfortable as that spot at her table, and yet challenges the reader to find the "more" of God that gives life abundantly in all circumstances.

BARB ALBERT
Pastor and author

Becky White has been through many difficult days, perhaps as you have, and has had good reason to feel fearful, worried, and anxious in this life. But she clung hard along the way to God's word, seeing real workaday meaning and comfort there and more, even the strength to continue. God has blessed her with the ability to transmit that meaning, comfort, and strength in short, real-to-life devotionals that are as deep as their source. May you be as blessed by her ministry as I have been!

DAVE LUSIGNOLO
First United Methodist Church of Mont Belvieu, Texas

This book will be an oasis in the midst of the storm. Bringing comfort and peace to the weary and battle-scarred sojourner in Christ Jesus. This is a book to keep next to your Bible.

LU PARRY
Christian Counselor, The Garden Church

Reading Becky's devotionals feels like listening to a fellow traveler who lets us experience her questions and laments as well as our own but always signs off with the reality of a choice to live a life of trust in the God who always hears and empowers us. This book of devotions is full of unique insight and support. "The Robe" is one of my favorites. While dealing with a difficult spiritual discipline; it

offers practical and creative ways to “partner” with God while waiting on Him. Anyone who reads these devotionals will find a kindred soul on their journey.

RUTH ANN MILLER

Adult Bible Life Teacher, Northwest Church of the Nazarene

No one is better qualified to write about life, and the trials that inevitably come, than Becky White. She has not only seen the good, bad and ugly, but the Lord has given her a marvelous gift of writing. This book should be on your bookshelf and within easy reach.

BOB PARRY

Associate Pastor The Garden Church

NO fluff, no easy fixes... addressing that “Life is Hard at it easiest”, Becky embraces the reality of life’s struggles and lifts you to the hand of the Savior. No “pat” Christian answers. Just real life being refocused on the real Jesus. Knowing Becky’s story helps solidify the authenticity of her words! She lives this out in her own life every day! This is a must read for everyone! Becky leads us to “the well”, Jesus, who is adequate to meet us in our journey each day!

SCOTT L. JACKSON

Pastor, missionary, friend, VP of Churches In Missions

These devotional thoughts are genuine, and convicting. Through Christ's grace, Becky has experienced what it means to be strengthened solely by the joy of the Lord. Her heartfelt words are Spirit-filled and remind me of life's only need: Jesus.

JACOB MARRAH

Children's Director, Columbus Dream Center

Shelter From the Storm speaks directly to our heart when we are in need because these devotions were written at the moment of crisis, not on a sunny day at the beach house. The lovely part is that there is hope. Becky is a victorious woman whose hardship has driven her to her knees and made her rely solely on God. She is a treasure chest of hope and comfort and this shines forth in her book. I highly recommend it!

VICKIE HOWE

Shepherd's Retreat

101 messages of authentic hope for difficult times

Shepherd

FROM THE

STORM

BECKY WHITE

Shelter From the Storm – 101 messages of authentic hope for difficult times by Becky White

Shelter from the Storm will remind readers that they are not alone and that there is hope. Authentic hope. Not by ignoring the reality of pain but by viewing it through the lens of God's great faithfulness.

It has been said that if you want to know whether a person needs to be encouraged, just check for a pulse! Difficulties range from financial struggles to the death of a child to an unfaithful spouse or the inner dread of "what-if?" This I know, pain is pain when you're the one in the middle of it. Becky White calls the reader to look their circumstance full in the face and then bow to the Father in honest brokenness as He provides for their deepest needs. He is aware and more than able to move in lives *today*.

Becky White gently encourages those struggling to trust God to recognize His hand at work in our lives in spite of what our eyes see. Drawing us to trust in spite of circumstances – right there in the middle of all that appears wrong. Reminding us it's one thing to trust for a particular outcome – and quite another to simply, *trust*.

You are not alone. There is hope. And that hope is found in a person, Jesus Christ

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Shelfer

FROM THE
STORM

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to The One who faithfully walked me through my own seasons of great trial and difficulty, Jesus Christ. O Lord, may I never forget that apart from You, I have no story. *You are my story!* Through this book, may I be the glove to Your mighty hand, the pen to Your words of comfort and the reflection of Your divine glory. I stand amazed at Your great faithfulness to one such as I. *Look what You did! Thank You!*

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APPRECIATION AND THANKS

With love and deepest thankfulness for my husband, Stu White, for all he does that enables me to live out our Savior's call on my life. Your humility and selflessness never cease to stretch me beyond myself. You are His great gift to me. I love you, babe!

With great appreciation to my sister in the faith and fellow sufferer, Barb Albert. You, sister have inspired me more than you'll ever know. Thank you for walking along-side me through storms of hurricane proportions and being my friend along the way.

A special thank you to Linda Ice for proofreading my manuscript. Your genuine love for Jesus and unique ability to speak truth wrapped in love has been priceless to me.

Embedded within every trial we hear God asking,

“Child, will you trust Me?”

FOREWORD

When I need help I look for someone who is qualified to

help. Whether my area of need is for an auto mechanic, doctor, plumber, facing difficult life experiences, or my ailing tennis game I look for someone qualified to assist in my area of need.

How do I quantify the qualified?

Expertise: Do they possess in depth knowledge regarding my area of need?

Experience: I'm not looking for someone with unproven theories. I am looking for someone with proven solutions. And lots of practice. Trustworthy Reputation: Are they honest? Do they deliver what they promise? Will they give me their best advice? Relationship: Are they caring? Do they listen? Will they hear what I say? Will they be there for me in the long haul?

The book you are holding in your hand, and the author Becky White, get high marks on all counts. You may feel like no one really understands your struggles. Be assured Becky White understands. Very few will have a life struggle she has not personally experienced, prayed her way through, and come out stronger on the other side.

Becky's caring compassion fills the pages of this book. At the same time she will always tell you the truth. Let's call it God Truth. Time-tested, scripturally based, spiritually sound truth. Truth for life's difficult experiences. Truth that will lead you to a better place.

Shelter From the Storm may not help you find an auto mechanic, plumber, or fix your tennis game. But it will provide you with Godly wisdom, and encouragement, for facing difficult life experiences.

STEVE CAMPBELL

Founder Columbus Dream Center.

Formerly, Better Way Ministries

INTRODUCTION

*The Scriptures give us hope and encouragement
as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.*

ROMANS 15:4B NLT

Dear Friend,

The book you're holding in your hands was birthed through my own season of brokenness and difficulties as I cried out to God for relief, "I can't take this anymore!" It was a time of desperation as I endured the death of two of my children, faced personal betrayal, coped with rebellious teenagers, acknowledged my own addictions as well as those of others, dealt with childhood trauma, and endured domestic violence, financial reversal, and the often daunting challenges everyday life.

Oh how I wish we could sit together at my kitchen table and talk. I'd offer you a cup of coffee, listen to your story and tell you how sorry I am for your pain. Offering you a tissue as I assure you it's okay to cry. Though careful not to offer plastic truth, I would surely read you a Psalm or two – the very place where I have found such authentic comfort myself.

Opening my journal and putting pen to paper, I wrote what can be best described as modern-day psalms of lament, but always coming back to the great faithfulness of our God, acknowledging the reality of the pain of the moment and the greater reality of His presence and ability to sustain and strengthen. Through it all, I found, by experience that He is indeed a shelter from the storm. Though He didn't always stop the rain from falling He was utterly faithful to be my shelter in the midst of my storms.

Be assured, these devotions were not written while reclining on a sundrenched beach or sitting on a country hillside but in the crisis of the moment. Often they were written through tears. Since these devotions are a result of struggling through storms, I hope you will feel that they were written by someone who understands your pain. But

even more importantly, I hope they help you know that God understands.

Come, take my hand, and join me under the shelter of the Most High. As we do, I encourage you to jot down any thoughts on your heart, even if those thoughts are your own version of “I can’t take this anymore!”

Allow me the honor of taking your hand and talking to the Father with you...

My Lord, Please encourage my friend today. Your Word declares that You are the God of all comfort... please comfort them, Lord! Envelop them in Your Peace that passes all understanding. Grant them strength for the journey. Show them Your great faithfulness and enlarge their capacity to trust You in the midst of all they face. Show Yourself strong on their behalf, Father. Replace fear and hopelessness with Your peace and the assurance that no matter what things look like... You are mighty and able to bring good from this situation. Thank You, Father. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

May He encourage you through the pages that follow.

BECKY WHITE

“I am not a theologian or a scholar, but I am very aware of the fact that pain is necessary to all of us. In my own life, I think I can honestly say that out of the deepest pain has come the strongest conviction of the presence of God and the love of God.”

ELISABETH ELLIOT

1. *Shelter from the Storm*

*For You have been a Stronghold...and a Shelter from the storm.
When you pass through the waters (of difficulty) I will be with
you.*

ISAIAH 25:4A ISAIAH 43:2A AMP

I wish it wasn't so. But it's true. Storms of life are inevitable. While the depth and breadth and severity may differ from one person to another, we can all count on them showing up at our door. That's just real life, isn't it? Beloved, I promise not to slap a plastic "Praise the Lord" bumper sticker phrase across the pain of your heart, even as I gently prod you to step back, exhale a moment and seek to discover His hand, His very presence with you in your storm.

I have found that though God has seldom prevented storms from whipping up all around me, sometimes with waves crashing so hard that I literally gasp for breath, He has never failed to shelter me with the umbrella of His Presence. With the umbrella of His Peace. With the umbrella of His Comfort. And with the strong umbrella of His sovereign control over all that grazes my life, while promising my good and His glory as the ultimate outcome. He promises the same shelter *for you*.

Whatever our storm – Divorce or Death. Addiction or Abuse. Discouragement or Disease. Hopelessness or Hostility. Our God is mighty and able to shelter us while these storms pass by. [[Psalm 57:1 AMP]]. Oh, dear one, will you take His hand as He not only shelters from the storm, but walks you through it?

Father,

Sometimes the wind and waves of this storm cause me to feel overwhelmed, and I hate to admit it, angry at You. Forgive me. I release myself and my difficulties into Your hands. Please envelop me in Your peace and renewed hope. Grant me Your perspective in this storm. I choose to trust You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Lean hard on Me my child and I will be your peace. Storms shall not disquiet the trusting heart.

FRANCIS J. ROBERTS

2 *Through Faith and Patience...*

I went through fiery trials and through difficulties that nearly drowned me, but you brought me out to a place of abundance. Come and hear all you who reverently and worshipfully fear God, and I will declare what He has done for me!

PSALM 66:12 Becky's paraphrase, PSALM 66:16 AMP

Over the years, I have walked through the minefield of some of life's most challenging difficulties: the death of two of my children, betrayal by those closest to me, loss of home and belongings, along with many other sorrows. Perhaps worst of all, in the midst of such great difficulty, I experienced seasons of seeming silence from our Father God.

But... O how I love to share this...God has brought me out into a place of abundance! He has set my feet in a large place! He has turned my mourning into dancing! He has given me beauty for ashes! He has refined me as silver! He has restored my soul! Such victory wasn't accomplished by God removing me from my challenges, but rather by Him faithfully walking me through them to the other side. My joy has been made all the sweeter because of past sorrow.

Are you experiencing a time of sorrow or difficulty that could one day be used to shout, "I went through fiery trials and through difficulties that nearly drowned me, but God brought me out to a place of abundance!"? Let me encourage you today; every trial has a beginning and an ending. Through faith and patience you will inherit the promises Hebrews 6:12 KJV.. Hang in there dear child of the Most High God; He has not forgotten you!

My faithful Lord,

I bow before You in humble reverence, acknowledging Your mighty hand of blessing on my life and declaring Your faithfulness to the people. Though I walked through great trials, You have faithfully brought great joy from them. I love You beyond words! In Jesus' name, Amen

I pray God may open your eyes and let you see what hidden treasures He bestows on us in the trials from which the world thinks only to flee. JOHN AVILA

3 *As Soon As*

The steps of a [good] man are directed and established by the Lord

PSALM 37:23a AMP

“There is no ideal place to serve God -- except where He’s put you.” Charles Swindoll

Be honest, have you ever secretly thought, “I could really serve the Lord if He would put me over here, or move me over there, or take this person out of my life or bring this circumstance to an end...I could be such a “good ” Christian if...”? I must admit I have!

Do any of these ring true for you?

As soon as I get this anger/lust/eating/forgiveness problem under control...

As soon as the crisis is over...

When I get married...

When I get my health back...

When college is over...

When I’m older...

When I’m through grieving...

If I didn’t have toddlers under foot...

If I didn’t have a spouse...

Once I’m financially secure...

Once the kids are raised...

If only I were younger...

If only I lived in...

If only I had...

If only I could...

If only _____ then I could be used by God!

Precious follower of Christ, you are, where you are, when you are because Your Father chose you for such a time as this. He chose you for such a place as this, in such a circumstance as this. Your steps are ordered by Him [[Psalm 37:23 KJV]]. The Almighty has chosen you to be right where you are so you may serve Him. Serve Him right where you are, in the place you are, in the circumstance you are. Be

faithful where He has placed you, He will honor your heartfelt obedience.

Father,

*Help me to see **where** You've placed me...**when** You've placed me... from Your perspective. Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

There never has been great saintliness of soul which did not
pass through great suffering.

FENELON

4 *Strong Enemies*

*He sent from above, 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 strong for me.*
PSALM 18:16-17 MEV

What enemy has engulfed you like a mighty river? Are you drowning in a river of –

What might have been
Hopelessness
Temptation
Addiction
Loneliness
Monotony
Confusion
Bitterness
Busy-ness
What was
Betrayal
Jealousy
Guilt
Fear
Illness
Grief
Doubt
Debt
Sin

Hear our Father's Word to you. He will deliver you from your strong enemy. He is your Deliverer. Cry out as the Psalmist did, "Out of my distress I called upon the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free and put me in a large place. The Lord is on my side and takes my part, He is among those who help me...O give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for His mercy and loving kindness endure forever." [[PSALM 118:4,7,29 AMP]]. Whatever enemy threatens to surround

and engulf you today, remember to call on your Father through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Reach from on high, Father. Take me - draw me out of the many waters that threaten to overwhelm me. I know You will deliver me from my strong enemy and from those that hate and abhor me, for they are too strong for me. You are on my side, you take up my cause. I give thanks to You, for You are good! In the precious name of Jesus, Amen

There's something more important than getting out from under your suffering and that is bringing glory to God in the midst of your suffering.

BECKY WHITE

5 *The Poison of Bitterness*

*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, outbursts, and blasphemies,
with all malice, be taken away from you.*

*See to it ... that no root of bitterness springing up causes
trouble, and by it many be defiled ...*

EPHESIANS 4:31 MEV HEBREWS 12:15 NASB

“Bitterness has consumed and contaminated me.” After some let-me-be-real-with-You-Lord soul searching, that was my gut-wrenching confession to God. It happened so subtly. A little irritation here and there, some large, “This isn’t fair!” frustrations, sprinkled with rationalizations for why I had a right to hold a grudge (not that I called it that mind you, I’m much too ‘spiritual’ for that!) and before long I found myself knee-deep in the mire of bitterness. Yuck!

After I confessed to God that I did indeed feel bitterness growing within me, I also admitted to Him that though I was willing to change I didn’t know how, nor did I feel capable of changing myself. Then I did a word study on bitterness which in the Greek literally means acidity (especially poison).

I read many scriptures on the subject, but the one that spoke to my spirit was from the 12th chapter of Hebrews. Just think of Him Who endured from sinners such grievous opposition and bitter hostility against Himself [reckon up and consider it all in comparison with your trials], so that you may not grow weary or exhausted, losing heart and relaxing and fainting in your minds. [[HEBREWS 12:2-3 AMP]] Our Heavenly Father has no problem shedding The Light on our heart. Never to condemn, but to conform and transform.

Never forget, bitterness is a tool of Satan to sow poison in our spirit which then poisons our thought-life and all the relationships that flow from it. Spouses, children, employers, co-workers, pastors, teachers, the guy in front of you in traffic. And even our relationship with God Himself. The Lord Jesus suffered grievous opposition and bitter hostility, how does that compare to my struggles? Or to yours? We’re told to keep that comparison in mind so we won’t grow weary or become exhausted. And perhaps fall prey to bitterness? I think so.

Holy Father, Please... pull up the deep, entangled root of bitterness that I have allowed to grow and poison my thought-life. Forgive me for wallowing in emotional pain rather than focusing on how You might possibly use this trial to conform and transform me into Your likeness. I am so grateful for Your loving-kindness toward me. In Jesus' name, Amen

Meekness is born in situations that humble you.

KAY ARTHUR

6 Do Not Fear

Do not fear, Becky, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Becky, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

ISAIAH 41:10 Becky's paraphrase

Okay, you got me. The original Hebrew didn't really say "Becky", that's true. However, without twisting the original meaning and intent of the Holy Spirit, this verse (along with most scriptures) can be personally applied to a follower of Jesus Christ.

Try it. Replace my name with your own. Go ahead, do it right now. For maximum impact, read it out loud. Now -- what storm of anxious thoughts is the Lord calming as you speak His Word to your spirit? What's causing sleepless nights? What situation is consuming your thoughts? Which of your life's circumstances appears to be beyond the ability of Almighty God? Why are you so fearful when your Creator and Rock, your High Tower and Deliverer has promised, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you"? (HEBREWS 13:5 NASB)

Thus says the Lord who made you, Becky, and formed you from the womb, who will help you. "Do not fear, O Becky, My servant; whom I have chosen." (ISAIAH 44:2 NASB)

He promises to help you, hold you and never to leave you. He is your God, beloved ... your God. Not a celestial crutch or positive thinking-induced, comfy aura. He's God. Learn His Word first hand and begin to trust Him. Lean on Him. Come what may.

Father God, No wonder You call Yourself "the God of all comfort"(2 Corinthians 1:3 NIV)...Your words are as a pillow to my soul. Yet they're also solid as Rock, enabling me to lean on them through the inevitable storms of life. O, how I bask in Your faithfulness to me! In Jesus' name, Amen

"What do you want with me?" I want you, not to be a convert to my opinions, but to be a member of Christ, a child of God, and an heir of his kingdom.

JOHN WESLEY

7 "Squeezed" by Life

God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

GENESIS 41:52b MEV

Remember the original “juicers?” The kind where you placed the fruit on a pointed, mote-encircled, grooved dish that forced the sweet liquid out by squashing, turning and twisting it to smithereens and thus extracting the precious juice. By the time you squeezed out the last precious drop, the fruit itself looked totally annihilated. Empty and deformed. Ah, but you had your juice to enjoy! The real McCoy -- no imitation, watered-down, fake stuff. Sweet, pure juice.

Like the fruit that has been twisted and churned until only the misshapen rind is left, the twisting, turning and pressure and trials of this life will reveal what we’re made of. When we’re squeezed by difficult circumstances what comes out of us reveals our heart.

What is extracted from us while going through life’s struggles is of precious to our God. What flows from us might be compassion, a calm trust in God in spite of hardships, deeper understanding of His faithfulness, genuine empathy, forgiveness, patience, humility and unselfishness. Or, what spills out might more closely resemble a spoiled piece of fruit! Foul language, doubt, anger, pride, unfaithfulness, rebellion, self-centeredness or resentfulness and jealousy.

Often, the only way for us to know what’s in our heart is for God to squeeze it with circumstances. He already knows what is inside; it’s we who need to made aware. He doesn’t reveal the content of our heart to condemn us but to give us the opportunity to humbly ask for His help and to recognize our dependence upon Him.

Lord, sometimes, I feel like that misshapen and battered piece of fruit. Help me to keep my focus on You in the midst of all that is pressing in on me. As You gently reveal the contents of my heart, enable the sweetness of Your Spirit to flow through me. In Jesus name, Amen

You shrink from the suffering. But God sees the tender compassion for other sufferers which is finding birth in your soul.

J.M. MCC. *STEAMS IN THE DESERT*

8 *Stop, Drop and Worship*

Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshipped. He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked will I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

JOB 1:20-21 MEV DANIEL 6:23 NASB

Job lost it all in one fell swoop. His fortune and family, his health and his home. Gone. Job's response? He literally fell to the ground and worshipped God. In pain mind you - but he worshipped as an act of obedience.

Daniel was thrown to the lions for his obedience to God and spared because of his unshakable trust in God. Not an I'll-trust-You-as-long-as kind of thing. No. Daniel trusted in God's faithfulness regardless of his outward condition. His confidence in God didn't keep him from being thrown to the lions but did keep him from being eaten by the lions!

Worship and simple trust. That's what the Lord Jesus wants from us, not the most polished or eloquent prayer. Not our promises to do this if He'll do that. Right in the midst of whatever trouble we're facing – He asks us to trust and worship Him. God has promised to carry His people through whatever difficulties they may face, not necessarily around or out of.

Do you have your own version of a lion's den or a Job type experience? Has the Lord allowed you to be "thrown to the lions" or maybe you jumped right in due to your own bad choices? How are you handling it? May I encourage you to lift your hands and drop to your knees in surrendered worship? Your Father God will make a way where there seems to be no way, count on it. He is worthy of your absolute trust, beloved.

My Father, I lay my burdens at Your feet, I surrender this “lion’s den” experience to You and choose to trust You through it. I choose to worship You in the midst of it. Where there was once turmoil and confusion, cause Your peace to fill me. I love You, Lord. In Jesus’ name, Amen

The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances.

ELISABETH ELLIOT

9 *Circumstantial Peace?*

*Hear my cry, O God, attend to my prayer. From the end of the
earth I will cry to You;
when my heart faints, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*

My soul finds rest in God alone.

PSALM 61:1-2 MEV PSALM 62:1a NIV

“Father, Who but You would know or ever really understand the aloneness I feel? Nothing out of the ordinary has happened to cause this surge in emotional pain, yet the sting of it is literally piercing my heart. I hurt, Lord.”

Perhaps my prayer journal entry seems like mushy nonsense to you, or maybe you’ve felt the same heaviness that threatened to engulf me that day. If the latter is you (or someone you know), allow me to share how the precious Holy Spirit lifted me from the miry pit of emotional pain -- not by removing my difficulty mind you -- but by using it to teach me to lean only on Him.

As is my habit when I’m feeling this heaviness, I opened up the book of Psalms (not because I’m so spiritual but because I am aware of my own tendency toward self-pity) and began devouring the sweet presence of God through His Word. My eyes fell on an underlined, highlighted and dated (four times!) passage from Psalm 62. “Find rest, O my soul in God alone; my hope comes from Him...trust in Him at all times.” Turning back a page I read, “Hear my cry, O God. I call on You as my heart grows faint.” The Lord reminded me that I am to find rest and soul peace in Him alone. Not in pleasant circumstances or in “happy” feelings, but in Him. Alone. I am not to rely on circumstantial peace, but rather, a peace that transcends all circumstances and understanding and based solely on Him and His presence.

Let’s be honest, sometimes life’s darn hard. Whether your pain is caused by a difficult marriage or menopause...a job loss or jealousy...emotional heartache or a literal physical ache...Call out to Him, read His Word and confess this Truth today, My soul finds rest in God alone, my hope comes from Him.

Lord Jesus,

Thank You for never leaving me, for never forsaking me -- even when I linger a bit too long in my own pain rather than immediately running to You. I confess today that in You alone my soul finds rest and soul peace. Amen

He doesn't exult in your pain but He delights in your tighter embrace.

DAVID JEREMIAH

10 *Fight or Flight... or Fixate?*

Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus...

We have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.

PROVERBS 4:25 HEBREWS 12:2A 2 CHRON. 20:12 NKJV

That, fight or flight, “I have to do something right now!” feeling that nearly engulfs us during a crisis situation. Whether the crisis is emotional, physical, financial or relational this fight or flight feeling can cause us to become panic-stricken to the point of irrational or rash behavior.

Recently, I experienced just such an overwhelming feeling -- the sensation was so intense that I had to physically stop what I was doing and restrain myself. Hands to my head in frustration, I cried out, “Oh, God, I don’t know how to handle this. Help me, Lord! I don’t want to react out of fear and panic.”

I actually forced myself to focus on the Lord Jesus, allowing His promise to be “an ever present help in my time of need,” to calm my fear-filled heart. (PSALM 46 NASB) Peeling my gaze away from all that appeared wrong... oh so slowly...my focus shifted from the problem that seemed completely insurmountable, to our omnipotent God who is sovereign over all. Purposefully choosing to fix my eyes on Him rather than the problem (or my feelings about the problem). Though nothing changed in my outward circumstances, I literally felt release from the burden of it.

Of course, a simple change of focus won’t eliminate an unfaithful spouse, a pink slip from the boss or a diagnosis of cancer...but what it will do is enable us to earnestly remember that “our times are in His hands” (PSALM 15 NASB). Regardless of what it may look like or feel like, we are not at the mercy of our circumstances.

Fix your eyes on Him, Beloved, He’ll never let you down.

My Father and my God,

You are worthy of my praise! Thank You for providing all I need to walk through my valleys of emotional trauma, fear, or the unknown. As I obey and trust in You, You're faithful to meet my every need. Cause me to remember and walk in the reality that Your sovereignty rules over all. In Jesus' name, Amen

He (God) lets you hurt as others hurt, knowing that the way in which you handle this hurt will be an undeniable testimony that there's something awesomely different about you.

KAY ARTHUR

11 *Deliverance in the Eye of the Storm*

*When you go through deep waters, I will be with you.
When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown.
When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be
burned up; the flames will not consume you.*

Even though I walk through the valley...
ISAIAH 43:2 NLT PSALM 23:4 MEV

Sometimes God does deliver us “out of” our trials as in the story of Lot. God removed him from the city entirely, so He could carry out His judgment. Total change in circumstances. Picked up by the scruff of his neck and moved. That’s my kind of deliverance!

Other times, maybe even more often, God delivers us in our trial rather than out of, as He did with Noah. Noah went through the flood. Sure, he had a big ark, but he still had to go through the 40 days and 40 nights. He endured the torrential downpour along with the eerie blackness of an “instant” ocean with zero land for even the possibility of a safe-spot. Noah went safely through the flood.

Is the LORD delivering you right there in the midst of the storm rather than removing you from it? Has He provided His supernatural strength and grace to cope with an impossible circumstance rather than altering your circumstance? Is He offering you His peace and divine protection enabling you to walk through the fire?

O Beloved, trust Him! Hold onto Him! Receive the deliverance He’s giving you. He will not fail you or forsake you. He will make a roadway in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. [[Isaiah 43:19 NASB]] His deliverance may very well be in the eye of your storm.

Father God, Open my eyes to Your deliverance. I know You are faithful regardless of what I see with my eyes or feel with these crazy emotions. This storm is not more than I can bear, through Your grace and power. Your grace is sufficient, your strength is perfect. In Jesus’ mighty name, Amen

If God sends us out on stony paths, He will provide us with strong shoes.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

12 *Lord, Please Hurry!*

So when He heard that he was sick, He remained where He was two more days.

As for God, His way is blameless...

The Lord illumines my darkness.

JOHN 11:6 MEV PSALM 18:30, 29 NASB

Even a quick reading of the account of Lazarus reveals a deep well of truth about the Lord we serve and His perspective on temporal trials. After getting the bad news of his good friend being gravely ill, Jesus replies, “This sickness will not end in death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified.” He then proceeded to wait two more days!

When Jesus didn’t run to Lazarus the disciples might have assumed, “Well, Jesus must know that Lazarus is going to be okay, surely He wouldn’t have waited two days and allowed crucial time to pass if He could have prevented a tragedy...surely.”

Even in their obvious pain, He didn’t budge. He had something bigger in mind than simply healing Lazarus. Jesus was after eternal benefits while they had their crushing, though temporal, pain blocking their view. He knew what He was doing in allowing this “storm” to spin out of control, and He knows what He’s doing in allowing your storm to spin out of control as well. Are you wondering why He hasn’t come bursting in preventing whatever tragedy has befallen you?

He gave His life for you, will He not also freely give you all that you need? Hear His whisper...Trust Me, child. I am for you...[[Romans 8:31 KJV]] I will not fail you.

Father,

Please hurry, Lord! I feel forgotten. I feel like “death” is sure if You don’t move in my situation. Grant me Your eternal perspective and an unshakable trust in You. And fill me with Your peace as I wait for Your timing. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

He uses our problems for His miracles.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

13 *Supernatural Gymnastics*

Fully satisfied and assured that God was able and mighty to keep His word and to do what He had promised.

I the Lord have spoken it; it shall come to pass and I will act.

ROMANS 4:21 AMP EZEKIEL 24:14A MEV

“Fully assured that God was able to keep His word.” That’s where our faith lies. Not in our ability to believe, but in God’s faithfulness and ability. He has the ability to do what He said He will do. If He has spoken, He will bring it to pass, not because of our ability to garner up enough faith or our ability to ignore the reality of our circumstances -- No. That would be faith in faith. Our faith rests in the Lord Jesus Christ and His faithfulness.

We dare not be guilty of thinking anything can be accomplished by “mustering up” enough faith and thereby demanding God act. Demanding that He perform supernatural gymnastics for us.

So how do we do this praying-in-faith-thing properly? Go to His Word, ask Him to give you eyes and ears to see and hear what He’s saying to you. Lay out your needs before Him. Large or small - rent money or help with exams, a rebellious child or a lonely night, a marriage healed or a child’s scraped knee. Unemployment or insomnia. Pour out your heart (PSALM 62:8 NASB) and ask your heavenly Father to act on your behalf.

Then rest, beloved, *rest*.

Heavenly Father,

Enable me to rest in You and trust in Your matchless character and power rather than my shallow attempts to believe enough...Enlarge my capacity to see how awesomely powerful You really are. May I rely on your faithfulness toward me. Reveal to me any areas of compromise that might hinder Your work in my life. Thank You! In Jesus’ name, Amen

“Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One Who is leading. It is a life of Faith, not of intellect and reason, but a life of knowing Who makes us "go." The root of faith is the knowledge of a Person. The life of faith is not a life of mounting up with wings, but a life of walking and not fainting.”

OSWALD CHAMBERS

14 *Is God Holding Out on You?*

No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, How blessed is the man who trusts in You!

What then shall we say to [all] this? If God is for us, who [can be] against us? [Who can be our foe, if God is on our side?] He who did not withhold or spare [even] His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also with Him freely and graciously give us all [other] things?

PSALM 84:11B-12 NIV ROMANS 8:31-32 AMP

No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. Nada. Nothing. None. No good thing.

Under what grave conditions, and for whom, would you literally give an arm or willingly suffer or even die? Maybe, just maybe you would offer such sacrifice in an extreme scenario for someone you love dearly.

Chapter eight in the book of Romans assures us that, “He who did not withhold or spare [even] His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also with Him freely and graciously give us all [other] things If our God is willing to give His own Son for us, is there any good He would withhold? No there isn’t.

Is there an area of your life where you feel like God is holding out on you or perhaps even an area where you feel He’s let you down?

No, I don’t have all the answers as to why you have to go through _____ or why you don’t have _____ or why you aren’t _____. But this I know, no good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. No good thing.

Father God,

I admit there have been times when I felt like You were holding out on me or didn't notice my pain. Forgive me! If You were willing to give Your Son, Jesus Christ, for me, I know there's nothing You wouldn't do. If my heart is broken by trial or tragedy, enable me to remember this simple truth...no good thing will You withhold from those who walk uprightly...no good thing.

In the precious name of Jesus, Amen

There is no circumstance, no trouble, no testing, that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose.

ALAN REDPATH

15 *Needles*

*The just shall live by faith...
For we walk by faith not by sight.
Cast the whole of your care on Him, for He cares for you...*

HABAKKUK 2:4b MEV 2 CORINTHIANS 5:7 MEV 1 PETER 5:7 AMP

I'm a big chicken when it comes to needles. I'll donate blood or have an IV inserted with little trauma as long as I keep my eyes fixed in the opposite direction! I know the needle is there, I realize the pain is coming , but I dare not watch or I lose all resolve. Gone, just by watching.

As followers of Christ, we are told to “fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith. Who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross despising the shame.” (Hebrews 12:2) Oftentimes, our trials cause us to “watch” what’s happening rather than fixing our gaze on the Lord. We “watch the needle go in” and shrink back in fear and panic, causing us to be overwhelmed by anxiety and doubt.

I’ve been guilty of this very thing in my own trials. Little by little, my focus shifts from the Lord and His Word, to my circumstances and the impossibility of what I see with my eyes. I have “watched the needle go in” as sure as I did in the Blood Mobile. And just like there, I want to give up and quit. At such times I can almost hear God speak to my heart. “You’ve lost your focus, child. Look at Me. I’ll carry you through. Stop staring at what’s causing you pain and look to Me.”

And what about you dear one? Are you staring at the “needle” of your trial, wincing in anticipation of what’s to come? Beloved, we serve an omnipotent God who is in sovereign control of all things (ISAIAH 46:10 NASB) ...including your circumstance. Nothing, is beyond Him.

My Father and my God,

I confess I’ve stared at my trial so long that it has nearly caused me to lose hope. I know You are completely faithful. Your promises are true. I realize that You are all-powerful. Enable me to fix my gaze on You and Your Word so that I can ‘walk through the fire and not be burned’... And gently remind me when my focus strays. Thank You! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Things get out of proportion when we are suffering, and it takes a vision of something bigger than ourselves to get life's dimensions adjusted again.

WARREN W. WIERSBE

16 Complaint Department

Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD; and when the LORD heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.

Beloved, do not be amazed and bewildered at the fiery ordeal which is taking place to test your quality, as though something strange (unusual and alien to you and your position) were befalling you. Therefore, those who are ill-treated and suffer in accordance with God's will must do right and commit their souls [in charge as a deposit] to the One Who created [them] and will never fail [them].

NUMBERS 11:1 NASB 1 PETER 4:12,19 AMP

All those with idyllic, problem-free lives raise your hand. ...cue the chirping crickets... I thought so. Regardless of outward appearances (wouldn't want anyone to think we don't have it all together, right?) each of us have some "thing" in our life that drives us to our literal knees. Truth is, God has a character development program for each of His children that includes some type of adversity or challenge. An ongoing physical problem. Relationship challenges. Financial difficulties. Emotional issues. Family struggles. Challenging ministry. You get the idea. Though not necessary caused by Him, surely used by Him!

Being a follower of Jesus Christ doesn't exclude us from difficulty, in fact it assures us of difficulty! The Apostle Peter reminds us that we shouldn't be surprised when faced with fiery challenges, these have been sent to test our quality. Do our own personal fires of testing cause us to fall on our face and cry out, "Lord, I trust You! I don't know why this is happening or how best to handle it. But I look to You for strength and I choose to trust You!"

Yes, life can be downright hard at times, no question about it. However, the Almighty Omniscient One has promised to be with us, in us, and guide us with His eye upon us (PSALM 32:8 NIV). If He is for us who, or what, can be against us? (ROMANS 8:31 KJV)

Father God,

I confess that I have been guilty of grumbling and complaining about my circumstances. Please forgive me and enable me to walk in thankful awareness of all Your blessings rather than all my difficulties. They are nothing in comparison to what You endured on my behalf. I choose to trust You more than what I see or feel. In Jesus' name, Amen

God, who foresaw your tribulation, has specially armed you to go through it, not without pain but without stain.

C.S. Lewis

17 *Nothing and Everything*

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And (because you just obeyed that Holy Spirit directive) the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 NASB

Nothing. As in, be anxious for nothing. That's what God's Word tells us. In fact, according to the original language, this meant: not even one, none, not at all. On the flip side, He told us to pray about everything. In the original Greek that meant: all, any, every, thoroughly, whatsoever, whole, whosoever. In short -- everything.

Pray about everything. As in, broken down cars, missing house keys or a cancer diagnosis. Everything. Pray about rebellious teens, hormones gone haywire, grocery money or a roof over our head. Everything. Bring before the Lord decisions about who to marry, when to ask for a raise or how to parent. Everything.

Be anxious for nothing. God isn't saying that we'll never feel the emotion of anxiety. We all do, problems arise when we feed the emotion with our barrage of 'what-ifs' and fear inducing thoughts, rather than praying. Can I be transparent with you? Recently, I recognized the flood level of anxiety rising in my spirit, but this time, rather than mull over the what-could-happens, I immediately spoke to my spirit, "Becky, stop it! Be anxious for nothing! Pray about it." Though my circumstance didn't change, the Holy Spirit enabled me to walk through it without the added burden of an anxiety-filled spirit.

Father God,

Please forgive me for allowing anxiety to fester in my heart. Your Word tells me to bring all my anxious thoughts to You and then thank You for meeting my needs. So -- here they are Lord (name them) . I reject the enemy's seeds of anxiety. I choose to lay my burdens in Your arms, confident that You have everything under control. Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

18 *Absolutely Nothing...*

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people ... will it also be too difficult in My sight?' declares the LORD of hosts.

"Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Ah Lord God! Truly, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm, and there is nothing too hard for You.

"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?"

ZECHARIAH 8:6 NASB GENESIS 18:14 NASB JEREMIAH 32:17 MEV
JEREMIAH 32:27 NASB

I know, I know, God gave Abraham and Sarah the physical ability to have a child though they were eligible for Medicare and sure, creating the entire cosmos, and all it contains, in a matter of six days is a pretty big deal. I realize Jesus opened blind eyes, fed thousands with a sack lunch, walked on water and even raised the dead! But still you say, "My situation, my circumstance seems beyond God's ability. You just don't know what I'm facing." God, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, poses the same question. "If it is too difficult in the sight of the people, will it be too difficult in My sight as well?"

Get this truth, beloved, just because it looks impossible to you doesn't mean it's impossible to God. Believing the lie that your particular circumstance is hopeless or beyond God's ability does not make it so! Nothing, nothing is beyond His ability. You and your situation are not the one exception! Look again at the above verses. Not one circumstance you will ever face is beyond God -- not one. Not your financial problem, not your marriage problem, not your addiction or your emotional problems or your wayward children. Nothing. Do not limit the Holy One.

Our Lord's word to you today is, "Trust Me, Child. I have it all under control."

Father God,

Forgive me for limiting You. You are the all-powerful, almighty God of creation. How could I think for one moment that my circumstance is the one exception? The one problem that is beyond You. As I meditate on the truth of Your word, cause faith to rise within me, Lord. Thank You for Your faithfulness to me. In Jesus' name, Amen

God can do what He says He can do.

BETH MOORE

19 *Bumper Sticker “Comfort”*

Miserable comforters are you all!

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

JOB 16:2 MEV ROMANS 12:15 MEV

Just Trust God.
Praise the Lord.
Give thanks in all things!
Don't forget Roman 8:28.
Count it all joy...
Ugh! Truth, yes. But timing is everything.

Put yourself in their shoes. Sit down. Be still. Listen. Enter into a friend's pain with simple, silent recognition that what's happening just plain stinks. It hurts. Allow God's presence in you to bring comfort. No cookie-cutter answers to very real pain. No bumper-sticker quotes. Weep with them. Save the theological lessons for another time. The moment may come when you can share an insight the Lord has given for their particular struggle -- but don't allow that to be your first response to such pain.

Whatever struggle our friends encounter, let's offer God's comfort. Weep with them that weep, encourage the emotionally or physically exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. Leave room for the Lord Jesus to reveal the weighty life lessons that will be learned in and through their deep waters of affliction.

Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, "Take courage, fear not".

ISAIAH 35:3, 4 NASB

Heavenly Father,

You are the God of all comfort, the One who comforts us in all our affliction so we will know how to comfort others. Show us, Lord, how to comfort rather than teach. To comfort rather than preach. To comfort rather than explain away pain. If there's a lesson to be learned, cause us to fully trust You to teach it. May we offer Your arms of comfort to a hurting world. We love You. In Jesus' name, Amen

“...Our scars may be our greatest ministry.”

ADRIAN ROGERS

20 Gethsemane

And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow.

He went away a second time and prayed, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."

LUKE 22:44-45 NIV MATTHEW 26:42 MEV

Gethsemane. In the Greek it literally means oil press. One rendering even applies the word perfume. The olives were crushed and pressed to extract the precious and life sustaining olive oil. Only extreme and repeated pressure could cause the olive to surrender its treasure. I find it ironically poignant that the Lord Jesus prayed His blood-seeping-through-the-pores prayer in this garden called "Gethsemane". Scripture tells us that Jesus suffered such agony, being crushed by the pressure and torment of His circumstances, that He literally sweat great drops of blood. Sacrificial obedience, worship filled prayers and self-denial were the costly liquids extracted from our Lord that night, in His garden of Gethsemane. Though admitting He wanted a way out if it were possible, He confessed that above all, He wanted His Father's will.

So too, each of His followers will encounter their own version of Gethsemane. Their own time of testing, of crushing and seemingly unendurable moments of pressure. What's your Gethsemane? A lingering illness. Emotional emptiness. Single parenthood that was thrust upon you. A spouse's pornography addiction. Disappointment. Depression. A troubled marriage. Rebellious teens... We all have one.

If we ask and seek Him, the Holy Spirit will empower us, and even grant us a willing heart if needed. And when we do, we'll walk out of our Gethsemane experience exuding the very fragrance of Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:15 NASB)

Father God,

Every detail in the life of Christ is there for a reason -- even the naming of the garden He prayed in the night He gave His life for me. Gethsemane, O Gethsemane. Help me. Lord, to handle my own Gethsemane. Empower me to not succumb to fear and hopelessness, but to rise up with trusting confidence in Your faithfulness. In Jesus' name, Amen

Thou divine Love, whose human path has been perfected
through sufferings, teach me the glory of my cross and the value of
my thorn.

GEORGE MATHESON

21 Patmos Experience

I, John ... was on the island called Patmos, [exiled there] because of ...the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Now the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

*When he fled from Saul in the cave. **(David then prayed)** Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by.*

So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped him of his tunic...and they took him and threw him into a pit. Now the pit was empty and without any water.

REVELATION 1:9 AMP A,C JONAH 1:17 MEV PSALM 57:1A NASB
GENESIS 37:23 NIV

In all the above scripture references, each person was faced with their own Patmos experience.

At first glance, the Apostle John's situation seems like a raw deal, a terrible mistake. Exiled because of his obedience to God. With the exception of a few visitors he was alone, utterly alone. Removed from all things familiar and comforting, John is forced into a season devoid of deadlines and distractions. No family or work responsibilities to drain his energy, God is his only companion. It was in that lonely place ...in that lonely season that the Holy Spirit imparted to him the book of Revelation.

Are you walking through a "Patmos experience"? Put on the shelf of life? Laid up? Laid off? Deserted? On the side-lines? Retired. Empty nest? Over-flowing nest? Loneliness? Are you laying in a hospital bed or sitting beside one? Are you surrounded with little ones all day, relegated to your own form of Patmos? Do you feel isolated in any way? Hang on! This will end. Don't allow your pain to be wasted, instead, ask your Father what He wants to accomplish in you and through you.

Has your Patmos been allowed as a time of growing ...a time of listening...a time of waiting...a time of blooming or a much needed time of refreshing? Ask Him!

Father God,

Though I wouldn't have signed up for it - thank You for granting me this Patmos experience, thank You for trusting me with it. Use this season to accomplish Your will in my life and to bring glory to Your holy name. In Jesus' precious name, Amen

You may never know that JESUS is all you need, until JESUS
is all you have.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

22 Soap Operas

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.

PROVERBS 3:5-6 MEV

Soap operas. Someone accidentally overhears half of a conversation which causes a major misunderstanding. Or a cruel competitor in love or occupation purposely tells a half-truth. In either case, the listener begins to act on the misinformation -- often making decisions that are life altering because of what was over-heard. Though the TV audience may want to scream at the television, “NO! You heard wrong, you really are the father!” ... “The job was given to you first, but your wife said you didn’t want it.” ... “You don’t actually have cancer, the tests were wrong”. One can clearly see the wrong choices being made because of misinformation, and then acting on it. No amount of arm-chair warnings will make a difference.

What about us, as God’s children? He shuts a door we think should stay open and what do we often do? Believing He’s made a mistake, (though we would never articulate that!) we react by “fixing” God’s error. All the while, through His Holy Spirit within us, our Father is saying to us, “No! Trust Me! I know what I’m doing, I closed that door for a reason. I know what’s beyond it, you don’t. Trust Me, child.”

Open doors, closed doors, lost jobs, bumpy relationships, difficult days, peace-filled lazy afternoons...whatever scene you’re walking through at this moment, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding”. He sees the end from the beginning, Beloved. (ISAIAH 46:10 KJV) He will direct your path.

Father God,

Forgive me for the times I have had the audacity to fix Your “errors”. Enable me to place my trust in You and You alone. You Who stand outside of time, declaring the end from the beginning...why would I not trust Your judgment? Thank You for Your faithfulness in spite of me. I love You! In Jesus’ name, Amen

In perplexities—when we cannot tell what to do, when we cannot understand what is going on around us, let us be calmed and steadied and made patient by the thought that what is hidden from us is not hidden from Him

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL

"For You are my lamp, O LORD; And the LORD illumines my darkness. "For by You I can run upon a troop; By my God I can leap over a wall. "As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tested; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. "For who is God, besides the LORD? And who is a rock, besides our God?"

2 SAMUEL 22:29-32 NASB

By my God I can leap over a wall... I have to laugh at God's sense of humor! Doesn't that sound just like the opening line of a Superman movie? That's exactly what I thought as I recalled this verse while preparing for something that I knew I had no natural ability to do.

In addition to wall-leaping abilities, we are granted night vision as well! "You are my lamp, O LORD, You illumine my darkness." God illumines my darkness. The darkness of my inadequacy, the darkness of my hopeless situation, the darkness of my impossible circumstance. He illumines my darkness. Don't miss that personal pronoun. My darkness. Though applicable to all who follow Christ, He's talking to you. Your situation. Right now.

Has the Lord called you to...

Walk through the valley of physical or emotional pain

Show kindness to those who are oppressing you

Withstand a silent form of suffering

Work in an oppressive environment

Endure an unjust circumstance

Endure a season of loneliness

Train young children

Forgive deep hurts

Resist self-pity?

He infuses us with supernatural ability to leap over walls of difficulty and see with eyes of faith.

Father,

I know that You are faithful to provide all I need to accomplish Your will for my life and in my particular circumstance. Enable me to leap over this wall of impossibility that is threatening to engulf my life. Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen

It is a great mistake to be looking at obstacles, when we have
such a God to look at.

D.L. MOODY

24 *Surprise!*

I am God, and there is no one like Me. Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all My good pleasure. Truly I have spoken, truly I will bring it to pass, I have planned it, surely I will do it.

ISAIAH 46:9B-10,11B NASB

Nothing. Absolutely nothing catches God by surprise. Not your financial crisis, not your child's rebellion, not our spouse's addiction or infidelity, not even your fill in the blank. Nothing...nothing... causes Almighty God to stagger in amazement, wringing anxiety-filled hands, wondering what to do with the unexpected turn of events in your life. Though we may be lost in the mire of our trials, our LORD can see through the fog, leading us by the right hand... we must not lose hope.

Let's be real, the storm does exist, it's not your imagination. Yet, in the midst of that reality, He's asking you to trust. Your Father has it all under control. He may call you to act in a way that at first blush seems downright crazy, like marching around a wall seven times to gain a military victory, washing eyes with spit and mud to receive sight, praying for those who hurt you, serving those who are unkind and even indifferent to your sacrifice. We can react this way during trials because we know -- unquestionably -- that our heavenly Father is in complete control of our crisis. Not us. Not other people. Our Father sits as King over all. (PSALM 47:7 KJV)

We may not always understand why He's allowed a particular trial, but of this we can be sure, if He has allowed it, He has promised to bring good out of it. (ROMANS 8:28 KJV) Bank on it.

Father,

It's so easy to be blinded by my trials, to believe there is no purpose or plan to it all and in the end, feel hopeless. Help me Lord. What a comfort it is to know You can see around the corner of my circumstances and have already made provision for me. Thank you! In Jesus' name, Amen

Occasionally God rips aside the veil, and you begin to see this very fact: All things happen for you. All things. Everything is knit together.

TIMOTHY KELLER

25 *The Dust Bunnies of Life*

As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

JAMES 5:11 NIV

While I'm in the midst of a house-cleaning project, my home looks like a chaotic mess as I pull out furniture and dig through closets. To the "untrained" eye it would appear that I've made the whole situation worse than before! Yet, in the end, I have what I planned for all along, a clean home. No dust bunnies lurking under the couch or closets bursting at the seams!

James reminds us of a similar truth in a much more profound way than my dust bunnies. He tells us, "You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about". Though the middle of Job's crisis appeared to be an out of control situation -- it was not. Ol' Job's life and circumstances seemed to be a huge mess, yet what the Lord finally brought about was mind-blowingly awesome (JOB 42:12 NASB). In fact, Job's life was blessed beyond what it was when the trial started. God was in the process of allowing circumstances to play out for His servant's ultimate good, circumstances that seemed unfair and without purpose.

Is there a circumstance in your life that outwardly appears to have exploded into a chaotic mess? A trial that screams "out of control" or pointless? Remember ol' Job and what the Lord "finally brought about" in his life. Our Father God is not a respecter of persons (Romans 2:11 KJV), if He'll do it for Job He'll do it for you, Beloved. Our Lord is full of compassion and mercy toward His children. Trust Him with the final outcome. Allow Him to build perseverance in you as He did in Job.

Father God,

Grant me eyes to see what You see -- beyond the mess of my everyday life and struggle. Looking past the chaos. Help me visualize what You might possibly bring about in my life, remembering that You cause all things to work together for the good for those who love You. In Jesus' name, Amen

The storms in my life have become workshops where I can
practice my faith in God's sovereignty.

JILL BRISCOE

26 *The Scenic Route*

Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt."

EXODUS 13:17 NASB

I'm a type A, just-show-me-what-needs-done-and-let-me-do-it kind. Point A to point B. As the crow flies.

Our God isn't like that. He heads, in what appears to be, the opposite direction. In the above verse, the just-freed Israelites had a place to go -- the Promised Land. They also had some growing up to do and God knew it, even if they didn't. So He led them the long way around. Provided them with some much needed time to mature and prepare for the battles awaiting them in the land flowing with milk and honey and enemies.

In our own lives, why does God take the scenic route when what we need is a short cut? Why the delay when quick action is required? Why? Oh, Beloved, because He knows what the long way around will accomplish for us and in us. And because He knows what awaits us in our Promise Land.

I still prefer non-stop flights and point A to point B kind of living, but I am learning to appreciate our God's oh so perfect wisdom. I'm learning to appreciate His impeccable timing. And above all -- His desire to sometimes take the scenic route to accomplish His purposes in our lives.

Father God,

Grant me eyes to see Your hand at work, and a heart to trust Your ways. Even as I long for quick action and a short cut through my trials -- cause faith to rise within me to recognize Your scenic route is for my best and Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Delays can actually be part of God's purpose; seemingly unanswered prayer can be as much a part of God's will as answered prayer.

R.T. KENDALL

27 *The Pizza Man*

*Before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking
I will hear.*

ISAIAH 65:24 MEV

My children love the pizza man, I love the pizza man...well not the man, but the pizza he brings! As young children, they'd wait in great anticipation for "the knock". Impatiently pulling the curtains back, watching every car go by and salivating for the anticipated pepperoni pizza that was sure to arrive. The squeals began the instant they spotted the car pulling into the driveway. Their treasure arrived just as they knew it would. No doubt about it -- you call and they deliver! Curious how we can show such faith in "the pizza man" but not in God. Finding ourselves anticipating a hot pizza showing up at our door more than God answering our prayers.

When the rubber meets the road - do we trust Him? Are we expecting Him to do something?

May I be real for a moment? Sometimes I talk to God about a problem, yet in my heart I'm in overdrive trying to come up with a plan to make my request come to pass. So much for deep and profound faith! Have you ever been there?

God reminds us through the prophet Isaiah, that He hears us even before we call and answers us even as we speak. The Psalmist repeats the admonition to "expectantly look and wait" for God. You call and He responds (JEREMIAH 33:3 NASB). His answer may be yes, no or not yet...but He does answer! Allow me to encourage you dear one, the pizza man has nothing on our God, the ever Faithful One!

Lord Jesus,

Would You enable me to wait well? To call and know that You are at work simply because you said so? My faith is often shallow and skin-deep, Lord. Increase it, please! I love You. In Your precious name, Amen.

Faith is a quiet certainty that God keeps His promises.

MARY SOUTHERLAND

28 *The Water Brooks*

*As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for
Thee, O God.*

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

PSALM 42:1-2A NASB

Father, I was sure I had learned this lesson, my need to reach out for You....to require You as a vital necessity...no matter the circumstance. But oftentimes I need difficulties to bring me back to this truth: I NEED YOU! More than life, more than air, more than food or comfort or the myriad other things I feel I require.

I seldom learn the easy way. Always needing You to bring me to my literal knees for me to cry out to You in complete abandon. Why is that? Is this simply the human condition, or am I simply stubborn and filled with self-sufficiency (pride in disguise)? Why can't I recognize my utter dependence upon You ALL the time? I believe this truth has been kneaded into my heart...and yet I find I need another trip "around the mountain" of testing.

Have you noticed this same pattern in your life as well? Do you have little time [or desire] to pray until tragedy strikes...until temptations have overwhelmed you...until life is racked with pain?

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy word.

PSALM 119:67 KJV

Cease striving and know that I Am God...

*The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our
stronghold.*

PSALM 46:10A-11 NASB

Forgive us Father, for recognizing our desperation for You only through struggles. Refine as You see fit. Peel off the outer layer of religiosity. Enable us to view our trials in the shadow Your sovereignty and goodness.

Enable us to find comfort, not in pleasant circumstances or through lack of difficulties, but in the awareness of Your presence.

Cause us to pant for You as the deer pants for the water brooks. When we are distressed, feeling alone and overwhelmed, lead us back to You, our Rock and Strong Tower. You are our refuge, You are a very present help in time of trouble. You hear our cry and see our tears. In Jesus' name, Amen

There is nothing in the world you need more desperately than
Christ.

R.C. SPROUL

29 *Look to the Hills*

*I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from where does my help
come?*

My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

PSALM 121:1-2 MEV

With the pain of life beating down on us, we look up from the tattered remnants of our lives and cry out, “Where is my help!? Where will it come from?” Eyes welling with tears as we gaze at the vast expanse of the turmoil in our lives (or perhaps in the life of a friend), we nearly faint with the recognition of our impossible-to-meet needs and no help in sight. The threat of hopelessness and depression abound.

Just a few of impossibilities that attempt to cause our knees to buckle and our strength to fail -

Bankruptcy...

Infidelity...

Aloneness...

Death...

Slander...

Addiction...

Depression...

Infertility....

Physical pain...

Abandonment...

Rejection...

Understand this Beloved, your help comes from the Lord... He can take an impossible situation and fill it overflowing with hope. Not hope only for a particular outcome -- but genuine hope simply because He holds the outcome in His hands. With Him in control, we have nothing to fear. Nothing.

Whatever help you require at this moment of your life - look unto the hills and cry out, “My help comes from the Lord, the One who made heaven and earth! There is nothing too difficult for Him. He will not allow my foot to slip.” Mind blowing.

Lord God, Maker of heaven and earth --

I bow before You in awe. As I cry out for help, sometimes groping in the dark of uncertainty, may I be ever aware of this remarkable Truth: You are the One on whom I rely. The ever-faithful, ever-near, all-powerful God of creation, hears me when I call and is my help in time of need. Utterly astounding. Thank You, Lord! In Jesus' name, Amen

“I Myself will help you,” declares the Lord. O my soul, is not this enough? Dost thou need more strength than the omnipotence of the United Trinity?

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

The sum of Your Word is Truth.

*You are near, O Lord [nearer to me than my foes],
and all Your commandments are Truth.*

PSALM 119:160 PSALM 119:151 AMP

The following question will need brutal honesty and transparency on your part, so let's toss aside "religiosity" for a moment. Have you ever run across a verse of Scripture and thought "That's a nice thought -- very comforting...but it's not real"? Now, you don't have to tell me your answer...it's just between you and the Holy Spirit. No pressure. Allow me to be the first to confess that I have been guilty of inwardly accepting the idea that God would seek to placate His children with tales of comfort or talk of healings that were not rooted in the reality of my day to day experience.

Our God is ever faithful. He will do what He has promised He will do. If there is an error... it is us not Him. In Him there is no falsehood. It is impossible for Him to ever prove false or deceive us. God doesn't promise us things in His Word just to give us the warm fuzzies, like we might tell a friend "it'll be okay" when we honestly think the opposite. No! He is God. Though He seldom removes affliction, He does promise to be with us in the midst of the affliction. If you want an example of this principle look at the lives of Daniel, Joseph, Shadrack, Meshack, Abendgo or God in the flesh, Jesus Christ.

The next time you're tempted to pass over a scripture as being too good to be true, remember, "God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should change His mind. Has He spoken and shall He not bring it to pass. Has He spoken and will He not make it good?" NUMBERS 23:19

Father,

*Teach me to trust You more than what I see with my eyes. In
Jesus' name, Amen*

Don't let your theology be determined by your circumstances;
God's Word trumps our experiences.

BECKY WHITE

31 *What Can You Imagine?*

Now to Him Who, by the power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]—

EPHESIANS 3:20 AMP

Envision the best case scenario for your current struggle. Get a mental picture of your wildest hopes and dreams coming to fruition. God promises us in His word to do “superabundantly above our all we dare ask or think”. If you can imagine it -- if you can contemplate it, God can top it. Wow. Double wow.

There is nothing He cannot accomplish. Nothing beyond Him and His ability. Wrap your mind around that truth, Beloved. “For with God, all things are possible”.

I believe we have dumbled God down to size with our puny petitions and low, human-reasoned expectations. How many people have we written off as hopeless, beyond even God’s hand of grace? How many times have we asked for “A” rather than “B” only because we see how petition “A” could be accomplished (having already figured it out)? On the other hand -- because we are unable to see how God might possibly work out request “B”, we never ask? He is Almighty God.

Jump in and ask your Father! He may say “No” or “wait”, but He will never say, “It cannot be done, My child.”

“...Infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams...” EPHESIANS 3:20 AMP

He is able.

Father,

You are beyond me. Your power and ability are beyond my finite mind. I cannot grasp Your sovereign control over all things or how You do what You do. Thankfully, I don't have to. I simply trust in You. In Your faithfulness. In Your ability to accomplish what's needed for my life, in my particular circumstance. Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen

God doesn't owe us anything-yet in His grace, He still gives us good things.

BILLY GRAHAM

32 *What If...*

*In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust
is your strength.*

Find rest, O my soul in God alone.

ISAIAH 30:15A PSALMS 62:5a NIV

Help me Lord! Your Word promises that You will ‘lead me and guide me in the way I should go’. That I will hear a word behind me saying this is the way, walk in it when you turn to the right and when you turn to the left.’ You said to ‘fear not because You are always with me’. Enable me to do that. You promised to supply me with wisdom if I will ask in faith. You said that ‘You will cause my thoughts to become agreeable to your will’.

When I trust in my own intellect, in my own far-from-perfect wisdom, I become engulfed in fear. A tidal wave of thoughts scream fear-filled possibilities. I fear making a costly mistake. I fear I’ll miss what You’re telling me. I fear being deceived. I fear becoming too cynical.

Then I stop. I remember. “God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind.” God beckons me to find my strength and rest through quiet trust in Him. Taking Him at His word and refusing the “what if” tactics of the enemy.

It has been said that the opposite of faith is fear. Join with me and refuse to fear. Let’s choose to rest in our faithful God.

Is there an area of your life that causes fear to rise within you?

Refuse it, Beloved, refuse it. Cry out, scream if you have to, but refuse fear and cling to the Truth of God’s Word. In quietness and trust is your strength.

Father God,

Help me! Keep fear far from me, cause fear-filled thoughts to be replaced with faith-filled thoughts. Enable me to guard my inner thought life, trusting in You and Your Word rather than what I see or feel. I choose, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live by faith -- not fear. In Jesus’ mighty name I pray, Amen.

Leave it all in the Hands that were wounded for you.

ELISABETH ELLIOT

33 *What is Your Request?*

*Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer
and petition*

with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

*And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Cast your burden on the Lord [releasing the weight of it] and
He will sustain you;*

*He will never allow the [consistently] righteous to be moved
(made to slip, fall, or fail).*

*Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your
worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares
for you affectionately
and cares about you watchfully.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 HCSB PSALM 55:22 1 PETER 5:7 AMP

What burdens your heart *this day*? Is there a pain that engulfs you or someone you love? Present your request before your Father with the assurance that He will act on your behalf -- either by changing your circumstances or by changing you. He takes note of you and is concerned for you.

He will answer us -- but we must remember that His ways are not our ways. What we may view as a non-answer may be “Wait” or “I have something better” or “Just trust Me.” He knows what He’s doing, even in allowing our trials.

What might appear to us as a wonderful idea (saving an adult child from difficulty or absorbing another’s consequences for bad choices) might be keeping them (and us) from an opportunity for spiritual growth -- an opportunity that the Lord Himself has orchestrated. The trouble is, we don’t know what the Lord is up to, so we must simply lay the request before Him and trust our Father to do what is right. He will never fail us!

Last of all, let’s remember to give thanks as we make our requests, not because of the hoped-for outcome, but simply because He’s worthy!

Here are my needs, Lord. I lay them at Your feet. Walking away unburdened and yet assured that You have it all under control. Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

JIM ELLIOT

"Beloved, do not be amazed and bewildered at the fiery ordeal which is taking place to test your quality, as though something strange [unusual and alien to you and your position] were befalling you. But in so far as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, rejoice."

1 Peter 4:12,13a AMP

"Why should the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" replied Lewis....."They're the only ones who can handle it." -C.S. LEWIS

Why am I having such a hard day...

Why did I get a flat tire today of all days...

Why are my children in rebellion...

Why is my child sick...

Why is my boss so unfair...

Why am I broke...

Why did I get fired...

Why can't we pay the mortgage ...

Why was my spouse unfaithful...

Why?

Some trials are easily explained. We made a bad choice and have suffered the consequences of that decision, sometimes lasting consequences. Other times, there is no reason that can explain away the hurt or offer any light concerning the "why" of our trial. There is no reasoning that will suffice. So we ask -- Why me, Lord?

My question is this, Why not you? Why not me? The Word of God tells us Jesus learned obedience through the things He suffered - a servant is never greater than his Master. So I ask, why not you...why not me? Are we suggesting that others deserve to go through difficulties and we don't? Are we implying that because we've given our lives to Jesus Christ that we should walk on rose petals while others drag themselves across glass-splintered streets?

Suffering happens to all of us. No one is exempt. Though suffering itself is not good, what God can do in us and through us by means of suffering is remarkable. Light shines best in the darkness. If He has allowed some difficulty to arise in your life, trust that He has a plan and purpose for it all. Your pain will not be wasted.

Father,

I don't understand the "why" of it all - yet through tears and clinched teeth, I am willing to trust You. You know my pain, You are aware. Help me, Father. I offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving even in the midst of my present difficulty -- You are worthy of my trust and worship. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Strength is born in the deep silence of long suffering hearts;
not amid joy.

FELICIA HEMANS

35 *Why the Delay?*

*As for me, I said in my haste and alarm, I am cut off from
before Your eyes. But You heard the voice of my supplications when
I cried to You for aid.*

*'Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will show you great
and mighty things,
which you do not know.'*

PSALM 31:22 AMP JEREMIAH 33:3 MEV

If we could “hear” a conversation between our heavenly Father and a discouraged child of God, I believe it would sound something like this:

“Help! In the midst of my pain, I feel cut off from Your presence. Father, have You forgotten about me? Are my cries for help even reaching Your ears?”

“Oh ... My child. You are never...never out of My presence. I hear your cries and see your tears. Don’t allow this present difficulty to cloud what you know to be true about Me. You call and I will answer.”

How many of us can relate to the Psalmist, crying out in the heat of an enduring trial, “I am cut off from God’s eyes!”? Erroneously believing that because we don’t see an immediate cessation to the pain or tragedy or difficult circumstance that maybe God forgot us? Maybe He isn’t even listening? In Daniel 10 we read about an angelic visitor appearing before Daniel to inform him that his prayers were heard and the answer sent as soon as he began to pray. Even though there was no outward indication that anything had transpired -- the answer was already set in motion.

Beloved, let me encourage you today, God is moving in your circumstances because you asked Him to. It’s that simple. He promises that if we call -- He will answer. It’s been said that delays don’t mean denials. Trust your Father more than your circumstances. Stand on the infallible Word of God, talk with God and then rest in God.

Father,

How can I thank You for such faithfulness? I hand You my cares and burdens today. I trust that You are actively working on my behalf, even when everything I see is contrary to that...I choose to have faith in You and Your solid Rock promises. I love You! In Jesus' name I pray Amen.

My heart was saying, "Lord, take away this longing, or give me that for which I long." The Lord was answering, "I must teach you to long for something better.

ELISABETH ELLIOT

36 Christmas Lights

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption by which we cry, "Abba! Father!"

For freedom Christ freed us. Stand fast therefore and do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

IN [this] freedom Christ has made us free [and completely liberated us]; stand fast then, and do not be hampered and held ensnared and submit again to a yoke of slavery [which you have once put off].

ROMANS 8:15 NASB GALATIANS 5:1 MEV GALATIANS 5:1 AMP

Long before pre-lit Christmas trees serenely glowed in our living-rooms, there existed the yearly Christmas light wrestling match. If you're laughing now, it's because you're old enough to recall the annual tugging, pulling and next-to-impossible detangling necessary to get the beautiful colored lights separated into one long strand so they could be laced around the family tree. The "festivities" usually required penciling in an entire afternoon.

Though I've never been entangled in a heap of Christmas lights, I HAVE been entangled by life -- trying desperately to untangle messes that were either created by me or were hurled upon me. The truth is, even as followers of Christ, we can find ourselves entangled in fear, failure, doubt, depression, greed, gluttony, pride, self-pity, lust or laziness. Yuck. What a mess. It's at those times that I simply hand the ball of tangled knots to my Lord and say, "Here, Father. I can't even begin to fix this, in fact, the longer I try to tighten the knots."

To walk out the reality of casting all our cares on Him we start by acknowledging the "tangled mess" and then handing it to Him. He's an expert of untangling the knots of our lives!

Father God,

Please, forgive me for the times I've traded my blood-bought freedom for the chains of slavery. Your mercy and grace are beyond my comprehension. In Jesus' name, Amen.

O blows that smite! O blows that pierce this shrinking heart of mine! What are you but the Master's tools forming a work divine?

L.B. COWMAN

37 *Resisting Depression*

*to give to them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning,
the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be
called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might
be glorified.*

ISAIAH 61:3 MEV

Seasonal depression. Winter blues. The big after-Christmas-let-down so many experience. Perhaps even down right horrific circumstances. There are many possible scenarios that scheme together causing us to encounter the dreaded possibility of depression. Heaviness. Hopelessness. Enemies of our soul. Resist them we must!

Our feelings will follow our actions, not the other way around. We can't afford to wait until praise wells within us to offer it. Depression is a slippery slope that once down is very difficult to climb. We must make the deliberate choice to put on "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness". Feelings aside. Given enough time, they'll follow behind our actions.

Many times in the Psalms (42, 43, and 46 are examples) we see the pattern for handling such sorrow. Remembering what God has already done for. Purposefully, stir the hope within you, rather than wallowing in the despair that may, in some strange way, feel comfortable. Even normal. Resist, resist, resist!

O Beloved, our Father desires to give you beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning. As you make the choice to put on the garment of praise, the spirit of heaviness will flee away. He will make you a tree of righteousness, bringing glory to His name through your life!

Father,

There are times when heaviness threatens to envelop me. It's so tempting to succumb to the temptation to feel sorry for myself or to linger in the land of sadness. Bring to my mind Your Greatness. Your Faithfulness. Your Provision. The Hope I have in You. I love You! In Jesus' name I ask these things, Amen.

There is no high hill but beside some deep valley. There is no birth without a pang.

DAN CRAWFORD

38 Instruments of Refinement

And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'

ZECHARIAH 13:9 NASB

We all have one (or two) don't we? Things in our life that try us, test us and drive us to our literal knees. It might be an unfair employer, an unfaithful spouse, loneliness, an empty bank account, illness or just simply another day of the same old thing. God uses everything that grazes our lives as instruments to drive us to dependence on Him. *If we allow Him. If we surrender our selves and our circumstances to Him and to His will.* He'll use anything and everything that causes us pain (whether mild or agonizing) to refine and purge away all that is not of Him. Until, at last we resemble our Lord Jesus, molded into the very image of Christ [[Romans 8:29 NASB]].

Suffering in and of itself is not good and none of us long for pain. Yet, in our Lord's hands, suffering can be a valuable tool of refinement. I know with certainty that I wouldn't have the relationship with Jesus that I do, if I had not endured suffering. Don't misunderstand, I wouldn't have signed up for this class if God were taking volunteers, but I am ever so thankful (and amazed) for the results of it has produced.

Whatever your instrument of refinement might be, allow your Father God to use it to refine you into His image so that your life will be a reflection of His glory.

Father,

I am drawn to my knees – literally – as this trial swirls around me. I yield myself to You, trusting that You will use this situation to make me more like Jesus. I love You! In The mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

God has a program of character development for each of us.
He wants others to look at our lives and say, “He walks with God,
for he lives like Christ.”

ERWIN W. LUTZER

39 *God - My Deliverer*

He (God) spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah...And He rescued righteous Lot... Now if [all these things are true, then be sure] the Lord knows how to rescue the godly out of temptations and trials

2 PETER 2:5, 7, 9 AMP

A world-wide flood looming, yet one man and his family are spared by God with an ark. In judgment, fire is about to rain down from heaven, destroying an entire city, yet God delivered one lowly man and his family by sending angels to warn them of the impending doom. All of humanity consigned to an eternity in Hell, but God sent His Son, His One and only Son as payment for our sin debt. One thing's certain, God knows how to deliver His people.

Beloved, God knows how to rescue His people. Whether your crisis is a health problem or a job problem... an addiction problem or a relationship problem... a broken heart or a broken car in need of a repair. God knows how to deliver His people. He knows how to deliver you. And what's even more amazing, He doesn't require our advice or assistance figuring a way out of our dilemma. Though His timing is not always to our human liking or even understanding, He has promised through His infallible Word to deliver the godly. Bank on it.

Present your need to Him, and rest assured He has it all under control. Your deliverance is as sure as the setting sun. It may not be in the form or way you anticipated, but it will be exactly what's needed.

Father God,

Enable me to take You at Your word. If You could deliver Noah and Lot, surely You can, and will, deliver me. I give up trying to figure it all out, trying to pray the perfect prayer or come up with just the "right" request. I trust that You have already figured out exactly what's needed to bring about my deliverance. Thank You! In Jesus' precious name, Amen

When you go through a trial, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head.

CHARLES SPURGEON

40 Blu-rays or VCRs?

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord.

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep (died).

And who knows if you may have attained royal position for such a time as this?"

JEREMIAH 29:11 NIV ACTS 13:36 ESV ESTHER 4:14 MEV

Whether you were born in the All-American generations of the 40's and 50's or the techy 90's and 00's -- your life, and just as important, your life's circumstance, is no mere happenstance. God has you right where He wants you, or He's in the process of moving you where He wants you. That cranky boss of yours? That's no accident or bad fortune, it may very well be your chance to display Christ. You know that spouse or roommate who gets on your last nerve? Yep -- there's your calling. Display Christ with gusto.

And what's more, God has you *when* He wants you. You weren't born in the wrong generation. You were born exactly when God wanted you to be born, in the generation He wanted to use you in. Did you catch that? In the generation He wanted to use you in. Just like He used King David or Queen Esther those centuries ago -- He has you here, now -- for a purpose.

Has He given you the gift of gab or the gift of a compassionate and listening ear? Are you overflowing with mathematical abilities and organizational skills, or are you endowed with musical and artistic talents? Use them for His glory and give Him the glory! Live in such a way that others will look at your life and see the Lord Jesus displayed.

Your very lives are a letter that anyone can read by just looking at you. Christ himself wrote it—not with ink, but with God's living Spirit; not chiseled into stone, but carved into human lives—and we publish it. 2 CORINTHIANS 3:2 THE MESSAGE PARAPHRASE

May it be said of us, that we served the purpose of God in our own generation...Ask Him what that purpose is and then go for it!

Father God,

Reveal Your specific purpose for my life. Open my eyes to what you're up to in my generation and use me for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen

You are *where* you are, *when* you are for a purpose.
God's purpose.

BECKY WHITE

41 *Heat*

No wound? No scar?
Yet, as the Master shall thy servant be,
And, pierced are the feet that follow Me;
But thine are whole: can he have followed far
Who has no wound, no scar?
Amy Carmichael [[*Abandoned to God*, p.182]]

*Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tried and chosen you in the furnace of affliction.*

ISAIAH 48:10 AMP

Gas stove, electric stove. Sulfur matches, butane lighter. Gas grill, charcoal grill. Differing methods to achieve it, but in each case the result is the same. Heat.

Every Believer has something, some *thing* that is being used by the Lord to burn away the un-Christ-like qualities within us, something that forces the impurities to rise to the surface. As with differing physical heat-producing instruments, our God uses differing circumstances in each of our lives to accomplish this refining process. For some, it's a financial meltdown, for others it's a family crisis. One person may endure a lasting physical challenge while another faces persecution on a daily basis. The instrument isn't as important as what the instrument is meant to produce. Maturity. Christlikeness. Pliability. Full surrender.

Question: Has God recently turned up the heat in your life? If so, does it feel like the blast of a blowtorch or the crackling embers of a campfire? Do you feel abandoned at your darkest hour? ... You are not. He knows the way you take. In fact, He's not just with you, beloved, He's in you, experiencing the heat right along with you. The Lord Jesus is using the heat to refine you, not to destroy you.

Father God,

The heat hurt;, there's no way around that truth. It really hurts. Yet I am not an unwilling participant in this refining process; I long to be used as an object that reflects Your glory, if this is what it takes – have free reign Lord. Have free reign. As the impurities rise, provide me with the grace and humility needed to allow them to be purged away. I worship You in the beauty of Your holiness. In Jesus name, Amen

Brokenness, God's requirement for maximum usefulness.

CHARLES STANLEY

42 *Authentic Desperation*

*For my eyes are toward You, O GOD, the Lord;
In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.*

*I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice I made my
supplication unto the Lord. I poured out my complaint before Him;
I declared to Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed
within me, then You knew my path.*

*It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed;
His compassions do not fail. They are new every morning;
great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my
soul, "therefore I will hope in Him."*

PSALM 141:8 NASB PSALM 142:1-3A MEV LAMENTATIONS 3:22-24 MEV

"Help!"- Some of the most profound prayers are one or two word cries uttered in authentic desperation for our Lord. Of course, such prayers usually mean we've crash landed into a challenge or trial that's brought us to that point. I don't like difficulty any more than the next guy, yet I am aware of my own tendency to be self-reliant or falling into pious- sounding "religious prayers" rather than simply crying out to my Father God.

Are you encountering trials that have brought you to your literal knees? *O dear one*, I am so sorry for your pain – yet in the midst of it, may I encourage you to allow this trial to birth in you an authentic cry of desperation... mingled with the certainty of His great faithfulness?

You are where you are, at THIS time, for a purpose...one of which just may be a deeper intimacy with your Father. Go ahead, cry out and then bask in His faithfulness toward you. How He loves you dear one!

My Father God,

Your Word declares that when my spirit is overwhelmed within me that You know my path...You understand. I take such comfort in that truth. I trust in Your great faithfulness. I love You O God! In Jesus' name, Amen

Our intimacy with God—His highest priority for our lives—
determines the impact of our lives.

CHARLES STANLEY

43 *Confidence*

This is the confidence we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us. And if He hears us, we have as our present possession, those things we've asked of Him.

You have need of endurance that after you have done the will of God, you may receive what has been promised.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul.

1 JOHN 5:14-15 NASB & AMP HEBREWS 10:36 HEBREWS 11:1
AMP HEBREWS 6:19A NASB

Standing at my kitchen sink and admiring the view of our backyard I notice that the lawn will soon need mowed. As quickly as the thought enters my mind it leaves, because I know my husband. "He'll take care of that", I remind myself as I pick up the next dish and run the soapy sponge across it. Even if days go by and the grass gets longer than usual, I am confident that it hasn't escaped his notice. He'll do it. Assured that it's not something I have to be concerned about - I don't give it a second thought.

The following morning, as I sat alone with the Lord and read His word, it occurred to me that I was feeling anxious (okay – worried!) about something that I had already prayed about. Already handed over to my Lord, already cast into my Father's hands...already placed into His care. "Oh, Father. I know You are aware of my need and are at work...I trust You Father. Even when I can't see how or understand the why or it seems to be talking longer than I had hoped. Enable me to remember, just like my husband and the lawn... Each time this need comes to my mind to remind my spirit, "It's alright, my Father is taking care of it."

Dear one, I realize I am making this sound so very simple and your needs may be so very complicated and dare I say, impossible – yet this I know – we serve a God who delights in doing the impossible for His children; who watches over His Word to perform and who acts on behalf of those whose hearts are completely His. Look at your

difficulty in all its facets and then speak to your spirit, “It’s alright, my Father has it all under control.”

My Lord,

Enable us to present our needs, laying down our heavy burdens and then rest in You. Cause us to remember that You haven’t forgotten us even if the days turn into months...You are working out Your perfect will. Cause us to rest in You. Thank You Father! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

We sometimes fear to bring our troubles to God, because they must seem small to Him who sitteth on the circle of the earth. But if they are large enough to vex and endanger our welfare, they are large enough to touch His heart of love.

BEECHER

44 *Solid Rock*

My soul waits in silence for God only...He only is my rock
and my salvation; my stronghold; I shall not be greatly
shaken.

—PSALM 62:1A-2 NAS

How could she be gone? Jeanne, my mentor, my spiritual mom as I fondly called her, gone. Called home to be with the Father. I knew I should be happy for her to be out of pain, to see Jesus face-to-face and be reunited with her husband of decades. But all I could think of was, “How will I make it without her?” I’ve never had to live through difficulties without Jeanne being a phone call away and now she was gone. As C.S. Lewis said after the death of his wife, “I never knew grief felt so much like fear.”

Her children graciously included me in her memorial arrangements, even giving me the honor of speaking during the service. In the few days that hung thick between her death and her funeral, I wrestled in emotional pain and indeed, fear. During those raw emotional moments I was led back to the Rock of my salvation, Jesus Christ. I leaned hard on Him, cried out to Him, admitted the fear and pain and grief and even feelings of abandonment. And I found by experience once again that He is my Rock, my Hightower, and my Refuge in times of distress. Not through academic study but through real-life grief. He is the solid Rock. My Rock.

Stepping up to the podium and looking out at the gathered family and friends and all those impacted by Jeanne’s life I began with these words... “My soul waits in silence for God only. He only is my Rock and salvation, I shall not be greatly shaken.”

We have a solid rock of security to anchor us and offer us a firm place to stand.

God, our immovable, solid rock, is a firm foundation, and a safe place to stand. Stand on Him, knowing that the Lord knows those who are His.

My Lord, I admit that I would rather not endure such deep times of grief or emotional trauma, yet I readily acknowledge that only through them do I find that by experience that You alone are a Rock and Fortress that I can lean on. In times of quiet peace I may speak that

You are my Rock, but in times of distress I KNOW You are my Rock. Thank You for being my Father. I love You, In Jesus's name, amen.

Our great need is to discover that Jesus is all we need.
ADRIAN ROGERS

45 Entirely Faithful

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God.

When you're in rough waters, you will not go down.

PSALM 69:1-3 NIV ISAIAH 43:2 MSG paraphrase

I admit it...at just (barely!) past fifty, I still don't know how to swim. I like water to my waist and a bottom I can reach without effort. Safe. Secure. No surprises. With that in mind, the Psalmist's imagery of flood waters lapping at my neck or of vainly searching for a foothold causes an immediate knowing in my spirit. His trials felt more like impending drowning than a leisurely swim. And if I must have them, I like my trials the same way. Doable. Manageable. Safe. No surprises. But that's not the way they usually come is it? No...life's difficulties often feel like flood waters brimming and lapping around our neck until we are convinced that the riptide of difficulties will pull us under.

I have learned by experience that although my Lord allows the flood of adversity to practically graze my nostrils, He will not allow them to overwhelm me. He is ENTIRELY FAITHFUL.

As for my swimming abilities, my husband has promised to teach me to swim, until he does, I'll stick close to the shore ☺ Our Father God is teaching me how to trust and be at peace even as the waters creep up and splash at my neck. He is ENTIRELY FAITHFUL.

Father,

There are times when I feel as if I'm drowning in difficulties, practically engulfed in pain. Enable me to simply trust and then rest in Your great faithfulness; granting me Your perspective on all I face. Oh how I love You! In Jesus name, Amen

As sure as ever God puts His children in the furnace, He will be in the furnace with them.

C.H. SPURGEON

Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

DANIEL 3:15-18 NASB

Daniel and his friends looked the worst-case scenario right in the eye, acknowledged the possibility of it and then gave their answer to the man who seemingly held their very lives in his hands. "No way will we worship your "god." Our God is well able to deliver us, but even if He doesn't we still refuse to bow before you, O king."

Prepared to face death? Yes they were. Live in fear of that possibility? No way. I realize that most of us will never be confronted with a literal fiery furnace, but we are each faced with our own version, our own moment of truth where we must either bow to the enemy or confess, "even if..."

What of you, beloved? Have you found yourself in the fearful land of what-if, where the prospect of what may happen weighs heavy on your soul? Or, like the three Hebrew children of long ago, are you at peace as you prepare to look the worst-case scenario in the eye and declare your trust in the Sovereign One – whatever the outcome?

I assure you these thoughts don't come to you from some lofty spiritual giant, no, they come to you from one who has bumped up against her own fiery furnaces and crazed kings. And from one who has needed the reminder to trust God while offering thanks right there in the midst of ... being prepared for a worst-case scenario while refusing to live in fear of it. God be praised even if...

My Father,

You are the Sovereign One, my life rests in Your hands. I am beyond thankful for the assurance that You cause all things to work together for my good and Your glory. Even if... You are worthy of praise! How I love You!

There is a chasm of difference between trusting God for a particular outcome – and simply trusting Him, whatever the outcome.

BECKY WHITE

47 *God is For You*

In the day when I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God whose word I praise, in God I have trusted; I will not fear. What can mere flesh do to me?

You have taken account of my wanderings; Put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book? This I know, God is for me.

PSALM 56:3-4 MEV PSALM 56: 8-9 NASB

“This I know, God is FOR me. He loves me and He has a good plan for my life.” At the encouragement of a friend, I spoke that phrase out loud several times a day for months. Lest I sound super spiritual, please know it would be more accurate to say I mumbled, cried and choked out the words rather than speaking out in some grand spiritually-minded faith proclamation. During that season of near overwhelming difficulty, though I saw no outward evidence that He was for me, I knew...

I knew. I knew because I knew my Father. I knew because I knew His Word and His complete faithfulness to honor His Word. God was for me. Admittedly I didn't know much else. I would have been unable to articulate how He was going to move on my behalf or why I had to walk through such seasons of testing and trials...but this I knew...God was for me. No matter what it looked like, I clung to the proverbial ankles of this simple truth, “If God be for me who or what can be against me?” [[Romans 8:31 AMP]]

I have since come to realize that whether I'm walking through a dark valley or handling the frustrations of everyday life, I must call that truth to mind daily. And what of you dear one? Perhaps you're in a season that requires you to nearly choke out the words, “This I know, God is for me”...or maybe you're handling the everyday frustrations of life like an unfair boss or a challenging ministry. Whatever the season, whatever the trial, I encourage you to speak out the truth as well. This I know, God is for me.

My Lord Jesus,

How completely comforting it is to be assured that you are for me. Simply astounding and wholly undeserved. YOU are for ME. Your peace flows through my inner man and fills me with an abiding calm as that truth is kneaded into my spirit. Thank You, Father, thank You. How I love You! In Your Name I pray, Amen.

God evermore gives power answerable to what He requires of us.

BISHOP THOMAS WILSON c.1700

48 *He Longs to be Gracious to You*

Therefore, the Lord longs to be gracious to you, and therefore, He waits on high to have mercy on you; for the Lord is a God of justice; how blessed are all who long for Him.

ISAIAH 30:18 MEV

One of my children (who shall remain nameless 😊) required much discipline and correction. There were days, rather than offering one more lecture or taking away yet another privilege, I desperately sought positive things to offer. As I prayed about the matter, I told God how I longed to stop the “parenting” ...that I really wanted to bless this challenging child of mine rather than give another lecture. Yet I knew, for their own good, I could not back off. I could not choose to be “liked” over being truly loving. Aware that real love does the right, best thing for the object of its devotion, rather than the easiest or that which will garner artificial “praise.”

As my heart grew heavy with the weight of the challenge before me and the longing to bless swelled, the Lord whispered His word to me, “I long to be gracious to My children, to have compassion on them.” As He reminded me of His Word, I could almost feel His deep longing to bless His children. Such longing that is mingled with His omniscient wisdom that calls for choosing the eternal over the temporal and the love-soaked restraint often needed to demonstrate genuine love. Now, when tempted to settle for being “liked” rather than being genuinely loving, I am reminded of our Father’s tender restraint with eternal purposes in view and am encouraged to continue on another day.

Whatever you may be facing this day, be encouraged that He longs to be gracious and bless you, His child.

My Father,

Yet again I am reminded that there is no problem so small for which You are not needed and no problem so big for which You are not entirely adequate. Please envelop me with Your wisdom, Your perspective and Your will. Thank You my Lord Jesus, thank You! In Your Name I pray, Amen.

Only to those who have been in prison does freedom have
such great meaning.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

49 *He is Able*

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think...

Now to Him Who, according to the power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]—

He (Abraham) did not weaken in faith when he considered the [utter] impotence of his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or [when he considered] the barrenness of Sarah's [deadened] womb. Fully satisfied and assured that God was able and mighty to keep His word and to do what He had promised.

EPHESIANS 3:20 NASB & AMP ROMANS 4:19,21 AMP

To Him who is able... The words leapt off the page, I reread them again, this time slowly and out loud. To Him who is able, "Oh Father, You are able. *Able*. Able to do what I cannot. Able to deliver where I am powerless. Able to heal where I am helpless. Able to change hearts where I have no ability. You are able."

O dear one, let that truth seep deep into your being as well. The One to whom we call is able. He is mighty and able to fulfill all that He has promised, able to do above and beyond all that we can dare ask for or imagine. Think of it... He is able... To perfect that which concerns you, to heal the brokenhearted, to comfort you when you mourn, to supply all your needs, to set the captive free, to break every enslaving yoke. He is able.

What need is He bringing to your mind as you read these words, Beloved? Forget trying to figure out how He could possibly bring it about, He is able... Truth I have read in Scripture and born by experience. He is able...

Father, You are able. I rest in that. Leaning myself upon You, my soul finds rest in You alone. I trust that You will either change my circumstances or You will equip me to walk through whatever comes my way. I am face to the floor in awe of Your power and goodness toward me. I love You! In Jesus' mighty name I pray...Amen

Many men owe the grandeur of their lives to their tremendous difficulties.

CHARLES SPURGEON

50 *He is Aware*

But He knows the way that I take [He has concern for it, appreciates, and pays attention to it]. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as refined gold [pure and luminous].

The eyes of the LORD are in every place.

For You, O God, have proved us; You have refined us, as silver is refined.

You are all around me—in front of me and behind me. I feel your hand on my shoulder.

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

JOB 23:10 AMP PROVERBS 15:3A MEV PSALM 66:10 MEV PSALM 139:5 ERV PETER 1:7 KJV

Sitting at my computer I asked the LORD to “fill my pen” with words of life that might encourage and bring renewed hope to those who are feeling hopeless. As I typed and then hit the backspace button more times than I can count, I poured another cup of coffee and talked to the Holy Spirit for a while. Try as I might to write a neatly packaged devotion, what I “hear” the Lord saying is: “Remind them I love them and am aware of what they’re going through. Though trials abound I am no less aware and in control. My plans for them have not changed.”

Some of you are facing trials that have gone on for decades, others of you are walking through “minor” day to day struggles that have drained you of all joy while still others are facing the assault of temptations like you’ve never known. I say again, “Remind them I love them and am aware of what they’re going through. Though trials abound I am no less aware and in control. My plans for them have not changed.”

My Father God,

Thank You for the reminder that you are aware of all I face. You are truly the God of all comfort whose compassion fails not. I fall face to the floor in worship of You! In Jesus' name, Amen

Every difficult task that comes across your path—every one that you would rather not do, that will take the most effort, cause the most pain, and be the greatest struggle—brings a blessing with it.

L.B. COWMAN

51 *Layers*

And do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; instead, expose them.

But he who practices truth [who does what is right] comes out into the Light; so that his works may be plainly shown to be what they are—wrought with God [divinely prompted, done with God's help, in dependence upon Him].

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.]

EPHESIANS 5:11 MEV JOHN 3:21 AMP MATTHEW 11:28 AMP

My husband and I enjoy putting together our famous seven-layer dip in a clear glass 13x9 dish. The layers of black beans, green onions, sour cream, guacamole, shredded cheese, refried beans, and diced Roma tomatoes are not only a mouthwatering combination, but arranged in the transparent dish, they are visually appealing as well.

But what is beautiful in artfully arranged foods may not be quite as pretty when we risk being transparent with our lives. Our layers of hurt, struggles, and challenges are not very attractive. So we create a façade for others to see that's more acceptable, more palatable. But you know what I've found, beloved? When we allow others to see the layers of fear or struggle or doubt or times we've blown it with our kids or temptations we wrestle with, we give them permission to drop the façade and expose their layers as well. When we cover up and pretend, it causes others to do the same. When we take the risk of injuring our pride and being real, it gives others permission to do the same.

When we cover up and pretend, it causes others to do the same, when we take the risk of injuring our pride and being real, it gives others permission to do the same.

Why is this important? Because the enemy of our soul thrives on secrecy and shame, growing stronger with each layer left hidden. He wants you and I to go on pretending ourselves into depression or divorce or denial or addiction. Yet our Lord has promised that when we acknowledge our need (become transparent!) He will ease and refresh our souls. He whispers to us, "Let Me see, child. Pull back the

bandages, strip away the façade and allow Me to heal you.” [[John 11 my paraphrase]]

Father,

Enable me to be real...to be transparent. Grant me the grace to acknowledge I am still a work in progress, I don't have it all together nor will I ever. Father, may my life, with all its struggles, be an encouragement to others. Use me for Your glory...layers and all! I love You.

Trial call our faith to the witness stand.

TONY EVANS

52 Choose to Trust

I will cry to God Most High, Who performs on my behalf and rewards me [Who brings to pass His purposes for me and surely completes them]!

May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [Holy] Spirit.

Cast your burden on the Lord [releasing the weight of it] and He will sustain you.

Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully.

PSALM 57:2 EPHESIANS 3:16 PSALM 25:22 1 PETER 5:7 AMP

Life happens. Did you ever notice that? The car breaks down, the month lasts longer than the money, teens rebel, the doctor calls with unwanted news, relationships become strained, and on it goes. Life just happens. Yet in the midst of life “happening” we have a choice to make, don’t we?

Are we going to succumb to the weight of the present difficulty? Are we going to live “under our circumstances”? Will we become weary in well doing? Oh dear one, I have been there and bought the t-shirt! I have walked bent over by the very real and crushing weight of ongoing trials and have been nearly engulfed by the emotional tidal wave of life “happening” all around me. Stopped and then lifted only by the whisper of my Lord’s voice, “Trust Me, child, rest in Me. Release your grip, let go of the weight of your difficulty, allowing it to fall into My hands. Please, child...trust Me.”

Right. I know, it’s much easier to say than do, yet I also know from experience and not simply theology that He is entirely faithful. He will move on behalf of His children, accomplishing above and beyond all we could dare ask for or imagine. Trust Him, no matter what life brings and allow Him to infuse you with His strength.

My Father,

I lift cupped hands to You, holding within them the weight of my difficulty, You know, You are aware...Here, Father, I open my hands and release my grip...I can't carry this, yet I can't change it. I hand You my burdens and rest in the absolute assurance that You will bring Your will to pass in my life. Lord Jesus, I love You beyond measure! In the mighty name of Jesus I pray...Amen

God can take your most monstrous failures and turn them into triumphs such as you never could imagine.

TONY EVANS

*Declaring the end from the beginning,
and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying,
“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My good pleasure,”*

*The LORD directs the steps of the godly.
He [God] delights in every detail of their lives.
He sits as King over the flood.*

*And it shall be that before they call I will answer;
and while they are yet speaking I will hear.*

ISAIAH 46:10 MEV PSALM 37:23 NLT ISAIAH 65:24 AMP

Nothing... nothing catches God by surprise. He never furrows His brow in confusion at a difficulty we're facing and mutters, "Wow...I never thought of that! I guess I need to switch to plan B, this sure isn't working."

For us, plan B is what we turn to when the unexpected happens. Just in case the job fails or the marriage is too difficult. Just in case the check doesn't clear or the car doesn't make it, or just in case she/he never changes.... you fill in your own "just in case..." Why do we have plan B's (or C's or D's)? Because we are not omnipresent ...we have no idea what lies around the corner. But oh Beloved...He does.

There are times in our lives that we must simply rest in the knowledge that our Father is in complete control, and whatever difficulties we're facing have not blindsided the omnipresent One. Does this mean that nothing we call "bad" will happen? Of course not, what it does mean is that we have this Rock of security to station us, to offer us a bedrock to stand on. Your situation may have caught you off guard, hastily trying to make provision, but oh dear one, He knew and has already set the table with your specific needs in mind. Rest, beloved, rest. He knew all along and has prepared you for this moment.

Lord God,

You are unmoved. Teach me Father, to be immovable too. Enable me to rejoice in my sufferings and difficulties, while overflowing in hope. Cause me to know fully -- that You are never caught off guard. Understanding there is never a time or a circumstance that causes You to second guess Yourself or force You to plan B. I love You beyond words...In Jesus name, Amen

Sometimes we must simply take God's hand
and walk *through* things.

BECKY WHITE

54 “Pause, Play...Think”

*You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good
in order to bring about this present result.*

*As the deer pants after the water brooks,
so my soul pants after You, O God.*

GENESIS 50:20B NASB PSALM 42:1 MEV

Pause, play. Pause, play. Write...think...pause, play. Write, think...ponder... Surrounded by my Bible, a spiral note book, an exhaustive concordance, pens and highlighters, I continue this process as I listen to a speaker talk about trials. He goes on to say, “It may just be that the trial you’re facing right now was allowed for what it’s accomplishing in you at this very moment.” Pause...stop. My pen comes to an abrupt halt as those words soak into my spirit. “...at this very moment.” Those words hang in the air. I look around at the sight of books, pens, Bibles and “see” what this trial has caused me to do at this exact moment. Cling to my Father and His Word in desperate need. I am once again in awe of Him and His ways, yet a bit sad that it always seems to take difficulties for me to cling to the ankles of my Lord in the felt knowledge of my desperation for Him.

How about you beloved? Is it possible that what you are experiencing today is to bring you to that place as well? Though He may not have caused what you’re walking through, He most assuredly will not waste your pain. He will use it to accomplish great things for His glory and your good...call out to Him in desperation and watch what he will do.

Father, thank You for not allowing me to think I have it all together but instead loving me enough to bring me back to the Truth of my desperate need for You. Even as I lay my burdens down, knowing You will take up my cause and move on my behalf and behalf of those I love. I bow inwardly and outwardly in awe of You my Lord. In the mighty name of Jesus...amen and Amen

Our great need is to discover that Jesus is all we need.

ADRIAN ROGERS

And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself...

ACTS 12:7, 10 NASB

King Herod had James, the brother of John, executed for proclaiming the Name of Jesus, and then seeing how popular that made him with the locals, he decided to arrest and execute Peter as well. Once seized, Peter was guarded by four squads of four soldiers each, Herod didn't want to take any chances on this guy getting away! According to Scripture, "the very night" Herod was to have him executed, Peter lay in a guarded cell, between two soldiers, fastened with chains. All this behind an iron gate. I can't imagine a more there's-no-way-out-of-this scenario in my life. If the 16 soldiers weren't enough, the chains and iron gate would have sealed the deal. "This is without hope." *And that's right where the enemy wants us. Wants you. Without hope.*

I want you to think about Peter's real-life situation for a moment. How utterly impossible it seemed – and compare it to your own *iron-gate circumstance*. Do you have one? A relationship issue, a family problem, a job challenge or a financial melt-down? Depression. Heartache. Divorce. Death. Illness. Betrayal. Loneliness. Let's face it. Life can be tough. Impossible situations occur. But, O beloved, we are never without hope. Never. Trust Him.

Iron gates of difficulty. Impossible situations. Without hope circumstances. These, dear one, can be God's opportunity to show Himself strong on your behalf. Our Father God will open the iron gate and either free you from the circumstance or provide all you need in the midst of the circumstance. I don't know what you're facing at this very moment, *this very night*... But rest assured, beloved, God sees. He is aware. He has no favorites. Cry out to Him. He is the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there anything too difficult for Him?

*Father,
When I look at the “iron gate” in front of me, I gasp at the
impossible-ness of it all. But this I know, You love me, and You are
more than able to open this gate of difficulty on my behalf. I trust You,
Lord Jesus to accomplish Your good pleasure in my life. Bring glory
to Your name through my iron gate circumstance. I love You! In
Jesus’ name, Amen*

We do not fully grasp the nearness of our God.

BECKY WHITE

56 *So that You May Know...*

A man of God came and said to the king of Israel, Thus says the Lord: Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills but He is not God of the valleys, therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hands, and you shall know and recognize by experience that I am the Lord.

1 KINGS 20:28 AMP

I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the LORD. Read that again....go ahead, I'll wait. Did you see it? The LORD God wasn't so concerned about His "reputation" or "proving Himself" with those on the outside, no. He wanted His people to know, to trust completely that He was able to deliver them. "So that you may know." I smile as I type the phrase. He wants us to know, to trust, to relax our death grip on the mountains and hills of our lives and even the "Arameans" that would seek to convince us that our Father is not able to arise on our behalf.

Contemplating this Truth, the words flowed as I wrote in my journal what I "heard" God speak to my heart...

Becky, (Please insert YOUR name here!) My Word is Truth, not your feelings. My Word is Truth, not your circumstances. My Word is Truth, not the clamor of well-meaning friends or not so well-meaning enemies.

Let go of the lie that you have orchestrated the blessings that I have chosen to bestow upon you. Let go of the lie that whispers your past stands as a barrier to My sovereign plan for you. I sit as King – Period.

Let go of the lie that whispers I do not love you - the real you. My child, don't you realize that I know every intimate detail of the real you and still love you beyond measure? Your feelings are not trustworthy on this matter. Rest in My Truth.

Allow me to hold and comfort you – I AM your Father who says to you, "Fear not, I AM with you and will never forsake you. I have called you by name, you are mine."

"...so that you may know..." Dear one, consider yourself reminded.

Oh Father,

Your love overwhelms me. I rest in You and trust that Your Word is truer than anything I think, or feel or see. I drop to my knees in awe of You, my Lord and my God. How I love You! In Jesus' name I pray...Amen!

God can take the good, bad and the bitter and create a
masterpiece called your destiny.

TONY EVANS

57 Soul Deep Rest

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and weary, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.]

For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

MATTHEW 11:28 AMP 2 CHRONICLES 16:9 NASB

“Come to Me all who are weary...” Worn-out and battle-weary. Life has a way of bringing all of us to that place doesn’t it? Whether we face the every-day struggles of family life, school life, ministry and work or the deep valleys of disease, divorce, depression or dashed expectations...we each encounter struggles that can cause us to become weary. Thankfully, rather than berating us for our weary-prone state, Jesus promises that if we come to Him He will “cause us to rest.”

Though I don’t like it any better than you, Jesus does not say He’ll remove our difficulties or somehow change our circumstances. No, beloved that’s not what He promises, rather, He offers an everlasting and unshakable word that has rippled through the ages. “Come to Me all who are weary and I will cause your soul to rest.” Soul deep rest. All He requires is that we come. It is in humbly bending low in recognition of our desperate need for Him that we find the divine ability to stand strong once again. And O dear one, I share this not just as some abstract theological truth but I offer it as one who has walked it out and found our God to be a Man of His Word. As I have fallen on my knees before Him in weariness, He has never ceased to infuse me with His strength and grant rest to my soul.

Dear one, He stands ready to do the same for you.

Oh my Lord Jesus,

Though I know You hold my very life in the palm of Your hand, right now, today, I feel weary and worn-out. As I come before You and confess my weariness, would You grant rest to my soul? Thank You my Father, thank You! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Pain and trials are almost constant companions, but never enemies. They drive me into His sovereign arms.

KAY ARTHUR

58 *This I Know...*

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice, And be gracious to me and answer me. When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."

This I know, for God is for me. In God will I praise His word; in the LORD will I praise His word.

Beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God.

PSALM 27:7-8 NASB PSALM 56:10 NCV JUDE 20,21A NASB

When the heavens appear silent or when the felt presence of my Lord Jesus seems to elude me, I am forced back to the simplicity of recalling what I know to be true. Dropping to my knees and grabbing my Bible, I open it to Psalms (anywhere will do!) and cry out...

This I know, Father, Your Word declares that You will never leave or forsake me, that You beset me behind and before and have laid Your hand upon me. Your Truth trumps my feelings. I can trust You more than my fickle emotions or even the circumstances I see with my eyes. I know You, I know Your character...therefore I will trust and not be afraid. ***This I know*** - You hear me, You see me, and You will perfect that which concerns me. Thank You, Father God. Oh how I love You!

Though such prayer doesn't always change my feelings or circumstances, I am able to stand tall in my spirit, knowing that His Word, His Truth, prevails. As I make the deliberate choice to speak out, "This I know", I am encouraged in my inner man...and I know that I know...

Lord Jesus,

When doubt and confusion assail, grant me the ability to build myself up in the faith. Cause the simple truth of "This I know" to fall from my lips as I speak Your Truth over my spirit. Infuse me with power from on High! Thank You my Father! In Jesus' name, Amen

Has God trusted you with His silence - When you cannot hear God, you will find that He has trusted you in the most intimate way possible— with absolute silence, not a silence of despair, but one of pleasure, because He saw that you could withstand an even bigger revelation.

OSWALD CHAMBERS

59 *Though...*

Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, [though] the product of the olive fails and the fields yield no food, though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the [victorious] God of my salvation! The Lord God is my Strength, my personal bravery, and my invincible army; He makes my feet like hinds' feet and will make me to walk [not to stand still in terror, but to walk] and make [spiritual] progress upon my high places [of trouble, suffering, or responsibility]!

HABAKKUK 3:17-19 AMP

“Though my heart aches with grief, though the doctor said the lump is cancer, though my child is rebellious, though my spouse was unfaithful, though I lost my job, though there is more month than money, though my child died...” We all have a list don’t we? The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk’s list detailed such basics as food and shelter. Some items seem so minor in scope and depth that they barely rate being in the same sentence as others. Yet each demands a decision on our part.

Will the cancer diagnosis cause us to fall to our knees in despair or desperation for our Lord? Will the betrayal by someone we once loved cause bitterness or humility? Will the pink slip cause anxious, fear-laden thoughts or instead, force us to another level of trust in our Father with the acknowledgement that He really is in control? Beloved, I don’t ask these questions of you to be callous and unfeeling. I know full well that “life happens” and circumstances just plain stink at times. I ask because I want you to grapple with the decision that lies before you rather than blindly fall into hopelessness or despair.

By His grace, will you simply be still and know He is God, dear one? Join Habakkuk as he boldly declares, “All this may be true, yet I will rejoice!” Beloved, I testify to you from experience that God is faithful beyond measure and worthy of our trust.

My Father,

My circumstances have caught me off guard (fill in with YOUR trial) and I confess to You that I don't like it. Yet this I know....You are for me. You are my Strength and my Song. You are my very present help in time of trouble. With the strength You provide, I make the deliberate choice to trust You and rejoice in the midst of and in spite of all I see with my eyes. In Jesus name....Amen!

If you'll quit moaning and crying, I'll use the things to make you into someone I can use in the lives of others to show them that no matter where they've been, no matter how deep the hole, no matter how painful the trial, there's hope. There is victory.

KAY ARTHUR

60 *Toothaches*

*He delivers the afflicted in their affliction and opens their ears
[to His voice] in adversity.*

*But God saves those who suffer through their suffering; he
gets them to listen through their pain.*

*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he saves those
whose spirits are crushed.*

JOB 36:15 AMP & NCV PSALM 34:18 CEB

When I have a throbbing toothache, my whole body seems to be one giant tooth! It's all I can think about, it's all I focus on. There's nothing like pain to narrow our focus and get our attention is there?

I wish it were not so, but it is. God often uses pain to get our attention – or more accurately for today's scripture – get our ear. It's when all hell is breaking loose in our life that we are ready and willing to listen to our Father ...or is it just me? When the pain is deep and trauma wide, God has promised to uniquely open our ears. Open to His voice of direction or correction. Open to His voice of encouragement or discipline. In our pain we hear His call to come closer and “Be still and know He is God (PSALM 46:10 NASB).” We hear His tender admonition that says, “Trust Me, child. I sit as King over the flood of your circumstances (PSALM 29:10); I declare the end from the beginning (ISAIAH 46:10 KJV). I will not fail you. I AM the God of all comfort.” (2 CORINTHIANS 1:3 NASB)

Our pain grants us a willingness of heart that pleasures are unable to accomplish. A willingness to stop and listen to our Father, a willingness to spiritually speaking, “go to the dentist” and allow the Lord Jesus to do His work in us. Our pain, in His hands, is an invaluable instrument wielded by the Master Physician. If your circumstances are causing you to writhe in pain, ask the Lord to give you ears to hear His voice and comfort you with the knowledge that He is using your pain...

Oh my Father,

At times the “pain” throbs nearly unbearably intense. My circumstances attempt to overwhelm me. Grant me ears to hear Your voice. Use this pain to open my ears to Your comfort, direction and even correction. I bow in worship to You my Lord and my God. I love You, Father.

In Jesus’ mighty name, Amen

Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

C.S. LEWIS

61 *Training Ground*

Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4 MEV 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-10 NASB

Burdened excessively. Beyond our strength. Despairing even of life. That doesn't sound very encouraging does it? The Apostle Paul penned those words to describe challenges he and others endured during a particular season. He then goes on to say that such difficulty was allowed so that he would learn to not trust in himself but in God Who raises the dead. Paul began this lesson by reminding us that our God is the God of all comfort, Who comforts us so we, in turn, can authentically offer comfort to others.

Has God steered you into a storm that appears beyond your strength? Are you feeling burdened excessively... despairing even of life? May I encourage you dear one, you are being trained to trust in God rather than your own strength and have been granted the privilege of receiving comfort from the Father's hand, so you may offer genuine comfort to others. After all, if we never encounter trials that drive us into God's arms, how will we learn that He really is the God of all comfort? If we are never put in situations that are beyond our strength how will we know of His mighty power?

Paul ends by testifying, "On Jesus Christ I have set my hope, He has and will yet, deliver me." Amen!

My Lord Jesus,

It's humbling to acknowledge that I have no strength and feel challenged beyond my own ability...yet I realize this is exactly where you want me. Break me of self-reliance as You envelop me in Your strong arms of comfort. Use my times of testing for Your glory and my growing. I love You, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen

God has a ministry in your pain.

TONY EVANS

62 *Directions*

Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding.

In all your ways know, recognize, and acknowledge Him, and He will direct and make straight and plain your paths.

PROVERBS 3:5-6 AMP

Trust Me (God). Not what you see, not what you feel, not even your own thinking. Trust *Me*.

Not being all that familiar with the freeway and how to navigate from one part of our city to the other, I asked my husband for directions to get from a friend's home to our church. Hanging up the phone and confident that I had the directions needed, I merged onto the freeway. However, it only took a few moments before my heart began racing as I thought, "This doesn't look right; I think I'm going the wrong way." Quickly trying to recall his exact words, I was confident I heard right, my question now became, did he speak correctly!? I assured myself that if I needed to I could just turn around. Yet knowing that my husband is a walking MapQuest I trusted that although I appeared to be going the wrong direction, he knew what he was talking about. I could trust his directions even when he appeared wrong. Minutes later I could see the outline of familiar buildings and knew I was headed in the right direction.

There will be times in our lives when we must make the same step-out-in-faith choice to trust our Lord and the Truth of His Word even though our senses are screaming otherwise. Beloved, He who declares the end from the beginning is the One who Has promised to lead you and guide you with His eye upon you. Sitting enthroned above all, His perspective is without flaw. I encourage you to trust Him, take Him at His word, and relax in His everlasting arms. He will guide you safely to your destination. You can trust His "directions!"

My Lord Jesus,

Enable me to not only listen for Your still-small-voice-directions but also to trust what I hear! As I read Your Word and listen to Your Spirit, grant me the ability to trust You rather than my fickle feelings or human reasoning. You are worthy of my trust. I love You Lord!

In Jesus' name amen.

God's Word is truer than anything you think, feel or see.

LINDA DILLOW

63 *Before They Call...*

*Before they call , I will answer;
and while they are still speaking, I will hear.*

ISAIAH 65:24 MEV

It could not have been a more challenging day. All of life's stressors seemed to be converging into one moment of time, causing me to physically gasp in emotional pain. "Where are You, Lord? Do You see what's going on?" was my subconscious plea.

Leaning against the kitchen counter, heavy thoughts swirled in my mind, "Will life always be this hard? Where are all these trials taking me?" As if on cue, my head turned and my eyes fell onto a homemade Scripture plaque hanging on the wall that I'd made several months earlier. The words leaped off the hanging, "*I know the thoughts and plans I have for you, Becky, says the Lord. Thoughts and plans for your welfare and for peace, not for evil. To give you hope in your final outcome.*" (JEREMIAH 29:11 AMP)

"Oh, Father, *thank You*. I needed so badly to be reminded of that *today. At this precise moment.* Help me to remember that You have a good plan for my life...even when times are hard."

Dear one, our Father doesn't withhold His answer until we can articulate the "right" prayer - thankfully. His Word comforts us with the truth that *before* we call, He'll answer and *while we are still speaking*, He hears. Face to the floor amazing. I stand in awe of our Lord's great faithfulness and compassion.

My Father,

I love You more than words could ever express. Thank You for meeting my need before I even realized I had one. Enable me to trust in Your perfect timing and sovereign control, as I live out my love for You in obedient service. In Jesus precious name, Amen

You can be defeated by life's unavoidable disappointments, or
you can become stronger because of them.

KAY ARTHUR

64 *Wherever You Go -- There He is*

Have not I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

JOSHUA 1:9 MEV

Even when life is overflowing with pain and anguish...He is there. Though what you feared the most has come upon you...He is there.

Though spouses forsake you...He is there.

Though loved ones abandon you...He is there.

Though your calling requires a life of sacrifice...He is there.

Though employers cast you aside...He is there.

When your heart is broken and trampled...He is there.

Even at death...He is there.

He never leaves you -- never forsakes you. Others may, but our God does not. Will you -- in spite of mounting struggles - trust and refuse to accuse Him of unfaithfulness toward you? Are you willing to entrust your future to Him regardless of what you see? Will you give thanks no matter the circumstance simply as an act of obedience? He is with you now, holding you, carrying you. He has not, and will not abandon you, Beloved. I know it looks impossible -- but with God, there is no such thing.

I don't speak from lofty, theological ideals but rather, from the depths of human experience. He has never failed me, He has never left me. Troubles come and troubles go, but the Lord remains the One constant in our lives. He is ever faithful, ever present, ever merciful...ever there. Truth -- straight from God's Word. Receive it, dear one.

Father, O Father,

Fill me with the surpassing knowledge of Your intimate presence in my life. Wrap my spirit around the Truth that You are with me, not in some far off galaxy -- but with me. Intimately. May I rise up in Your strength O Lord, walking in Your mighty power. Keep fear far from me and enable me to accomplish whatever You've set my hand to do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

True prayer is born out of brokenness.

FRANCES J. ROBERTS

Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your bed and walk." Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?" But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.

My life is an example and a marvel to many, because you have been my strength and protection. That is why I can never stop praising you; I declare your glory all day long.

JOHN 5:8-14 NASB PSALM 71 7-8 NLT/NASB

It's inevitable. Others will take notice. Whether your healing was emotional, physical, spiritual or relational the day will come when someone will pose the question, "Who healed you?"

In my own life, many have asked how the healing process took place or how I found peace in the midst of my "illness". Others have asked how the LORD carried me through decades of difficulty. I could be "super spiritual" and explain how I studied Scripture or prayed diligently and fasted on behalf of those who hurt me. I could tell of the moments spent in agony as I "gave thanks in all things" in spite of the pain. Yet that sounds so "religious" and other-worldly doesn't it? The truth is, though I did those things, and I longed for the freedom that soul-deep healing would bring, I had no idea how to bring it about; often, I didn't even know how or what to pray. I was as "helpless" as the been-sick-for-thirty-eight-years man in our story...

In due season He spoke to my heart, "Daughter, do you want healed?" Then by His power and out of His great love, compassion and faithfulness, Jesus Christ moved mountains on my behalf. Mountains. My life now stands as "an example and marvel" to many, and I gladly declare the praises of Him who called me out of darkness

into His marvelous light. Who healed me? Jesus did. Now beloved, may I ask, what is your story of healing? Won't you share it?

My Lord Jesus,

You have made my life an example and marvel to many.... What a privilege it is to tell others what You have done for me...I give praise to Your name , O Most High, You, who have performed wonders on my behalf. I love You! In Jesus' name, Amen

Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

66 *Without and Within*

For when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, and we were troubled on every side. On the outside were conflicts; on the inside were fears. ⁶ Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us through the coming of Titus

2 CORINTHIANS 7:5-6 MEV

Afflicted on every side, But God. As your eyes land on the phrase, But God, allow your spirit to stop and drink in the comfort of those two words. But God. Keep reading, But God who comforts the depressed...simply astounding isn't it? How tender. He comforts the depressed. He doesn't chastise or lecture – He wraps His arms around to comfort.

How did He do this for the apostle Paul? Read on with me “...comforted us by the coming of Titus.” Though He didn't remove the conflicts without and within, He oh-so-tenderly brought a friend to help! Doesn't the Creator and Sustainer of the universe have more important things to do? Maybe, but if you are worth the life of His Son, surely you are worth His time to comfort and encourage.

Afflicted on every side. Conflicts on the outside and fears on the inside. Often, isn't that an accurate description of life?

Whether it's the affliction of loneliness or illness...

The conflict of war or personal relationships in chaos

The fear of failure and fear of rejection or

The dreaded fear of “what if?”

The battle rages without and within for all of us in one form or another.

Allow me the privilege of being a Titus to you today. Your Father is aware of the conflicts assailing you, whether they are on the outside for all to see, or hidden away in your heart...He is aware. Allow that truth to comfort you this day.

Father,

Thank You...thank You for Your soul-deep comfort. Though words can't adequately articulate my conflicts and fears – You see, You are aware. And You comfort...oh how You comfort! You are my strength and High tower, in You I trust and rely. I love You precious Lord!

In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

I have thanked thee a thousand times for my roses, but not once for my thorn. I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensation for my cross, but I have never thought of my cross as itself a present glory. Thou divine Love, whose human path has been perfected through sufferings, teach me the glory of my cross and the value of my thorn.

GEORGE MATHESON

We felt we had received within ourselves the very sentence of death, but that was to keep us from trusting in ourselves and depending on ourselves instead of on God Who raises the dead.

He has torn so that He may heal us.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:9 HOSEA 6:1B AMP

Torn? Sentence of death? Yuck. I don't even like to read those words let alone find a way for God to apply them to my life! But apply them He does. Consider these scenarios: Endure the sting of a needle to avoid a disease. Undergo surgery to receive healing. Walk through the pain of physical therapy to retrain your body. Talk and pray through traumatic life events, allowing the ooze of emotional "disease" to surface and be removed.

God's word reminds us that "He has torn so He may heal us." Has God allowed a "tearing" into your life, dear one? Do you feel, along with the Apostle Paul, that you've "received the very sentence of death" due to such a ripping away in your circumstances? He is with you! He will not leave you.

Beloved, have you come to know that our Lord's "tearing" and "ripping" leads only to healing? O, how I wish I could sit down with you over a hot cup of coffee and an open Bible, pouring over His Word together. I would remind you we serve such a loving and compassionate Savior and that He allows pain only when it will result in our good. He does not willingly afflict His children. LAMENTATIONS 3:33 NASB

Trust that He only allows pain for our good and ultimately, His glory. Remember, our Lord is after complete healing and wholeness...He will not abandon you in the process...though sorrow may last through the night, joy comes in the morning!

Compassionate Father,

How loving You are to Your children! Though You have allowed pain, I can trust You have a plan and purpose in it all. Would You grant me the wisdom to allow the ripping and tearing, as painful as it may be, so I can be healed and ultimately -- so I may reflect Your glory? I love You, Precious Savior. Amen.

I do not shield you from hardship. I give you victory while in
the throes of adversity.

FRANCIS J. ROBERTS

68 *Bumper Stickers or Truth?*

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide stable and fixed under the shadow of the Almighty whose power no foe can withstand.

I will say of the Lord He is my Refuge and my Fortress, my God; on Him I lean, rely and in Him I confidently trust.

PSALM 91:1-2 AMP

The words sprang up in my spirit as if a deep well had thrust them forth with great pressure as they poured from my lips - *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall remain stable and fixed under the shadow of the Almighty.* I went on - *I will say of the Lord He is my Refuge and my Fortress, my God in whom I trust.* Having been confronted with what I call emotional whiplash and trying desperately to get my emotional equilibrium, I did the only thing I knew to do. Speak truth over my circumstances. Confess what I believed rather than what I was seeing. This all happened as I drove to work, talking with my Father about my deep pain even as He reminded me that He is indeed my Refuge and Fortress.

I could almost hear Him ask, “Daughter, do you trust Me? Am I not the same God you spoke of yesterday?”

“Okay, Father – You are my Fortress. You are my Deliverer. You are in control. I don’t like this situation and I really don’t understand, but I choose to trust You.” (Though my heart still ached!)

It’s when life knocks us to our knees that we come to know what we believe and know by experience the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Either His Word is Truth we can stand on or it’s just a bumper-sticker. Doesn’t He assure us that “I work all things after the counsel of my will”? EPHESIANS 1:11 KJV Hasn’t He promised that if we trust Him and refuse to lean on our own understanding and acknowledge Him in all our ways that He will “direct our path”? PROVERBS 3:5-6 NASB

So I ask– are these just Christian bumper-stickers or are they Truth?

Father God,

Though this difficulty that You've allowed into my life feels more than I can bear - it is not. Though I feel unbalanced from the whiplash of it all, I rest in Your Sovereign control and on the solid Rock of Your faithfulness. I love You beyond words and drop to my knees in worshipful awe of You. I know You will work this out for my good and Your glory. In Jesus' mighty name,

Amen.

There are no 'ifs' in God's Kingdom. His timing is perfect. His will is our hiding place. Lord Jesus, keep me in Your will.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

69 *Faith Walkin'*

Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].

For You are my lamp, O Lord; the Lord illuminates my darkness.

... the just shall live by his faith.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

And without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

HEBREWS 11:1 AMP 2 SAMUEL 22:29 MEV HABAKKUK 2:4B NASB 2
CORINTHIANS 5:7 MEV HEBREWS 11:6 MEV

I enjoy admiring cross-stitch work. My eyes fall on each stitch....noting varying colors and direction of stitching that work together to create beautiful works of art. Some are lovingly stitched to create memorials of a baby's birth or some inspirational message; while many depict flowers or other scenes of nature. I confess that besides admiring the outward beauty, I always peer behind the piece of cloth to take in the back "beauty" as well. Noticing all the frayed threads and knotted jumbles of thread I am reminded of our next basic truth of walking in relationship with Jesus.

He calls us to live and conduct ourselves based on faith - not on what we see. Dear one, I am not referring to the mental gymnastics of denying reality...no. The Lord Jesus doesn't deal in denial. He calls us to look storms square in the eye and then make the deliberate choice to turn our gaze onto Him and His ability...always layered with His great faithfulness. Walking by faith is a call to trust our Father God, a call to refuse to be moved by what we see and instead, trust Him in the darkness. Trust Him when the only things we see are the frayed edges and knotted jumbles of our present difficulties. He is at work creating a masterpiece in and through all that grazes our life.

Each stitch is needful to create the picture of beauty He has in store for us. His plans are for good and not evil, to give us hope in our final outcome! JEREMIAH 29:11 AMP

Oh Father,

I know the reality of this truth...yet walking by faith is so difficult. What I see and hear all around me vies for my attention...please infuse me with the power to fix my eyes on You and Your great faithfulness as I refuse to be moved by what I see. I confess You are worthy of my trust. I love You my Lord! In Jesus mighty name, Amen

Walking by faith isn't natural...it is supernatural.

BECKY WHITE

70 *He Who Formed You Says...*

*But now, O Becky, listen to the LORD who created you.
The one who formed you says,
“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you, Becky.
I have called you by name; you are mine.
Becky, when you go through deep waters,
I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty,
you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of
oppression,
you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.
Becky, I am the LORD, your God,
the Holy One, your Savior... you are precious to me.
You are honored, and I love you.*

ISAIAH 43:1-4 Becky's paraphrase/NLT

Okay, I admit the original Hebrew doesn't read, "Becky," but you have to admit there is something intimately profound to read such a promise as being spoken directly to us. You try it. Read the promise with your name inserted. Go ahead...I'll wait. Did you do it? Did you hear, really hear, His promise to you, beloved? "Don't be afraid. I won't let you drown in this difficulty. Even when the flames of pain or oppression lick at your heels, know with certainty that I won't allow them to burn you. You are Mine! Trust, dear one, trust that you are precious to Me and find rest in the assurance of My great love for you and My continual presence."

Personalizing scripture makes it, well...personal. The Word of God isn't some dry reading of positive thinking mantras or a dead history book. It is the living Word of Almighty God, able to speak to us...to YOU right in this moment, right in the midst of your immediate crisis or even day-to-day difficulties. Receive that dear one. Go back, read that Scripture again. I don't know what crisis you are facing but He does. Allow His Holy Spirit to knead this word of encouragement into your spirit and then arise from the oppression of the enemy. "He who formed you says...."

*O My Lord Jesus,
Cause me to hear, really hear Your spirit speaking to me
through the living Word. Open my ears and eyes. Enable me to receive
the truth and reject the lies. Thank you precious, Lord, thank You! In
Jesus' name, Amen.*

The believing man does not claim to understand.
He falls to his knees and whispers, "God."

A.W. TOZER

71 *A Living Testimony*

*Remember Your word to Your servant, on which You have
caused me to hope.
This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word revives me.*

*May those who fear You see me and be glad, Because I wait
for Your word. I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous,
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.*

PSALM 119:49-50 MEV PSALM 119:74-75 NASB

May I be a living testimony of You...that is my prayer, O God. A living testimony of Your faithfulness to me and in honoring Your Word above all. I stand in awe of You, O Most High.

You are a God who hears and answers prayer [[Psalm 65:2 AMP]], who moves on behalf of those whose heart is completely Yours. Promising in Your Word that Your eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Yourself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are blameless toward You. [[Isaiah 64:4 KJV]] I testify this day of the truth of Your Word, not as a matter of mere theology but by experience.

Though You allow seasons of great difficulty, You are never far away, never leaving us to fend for ourselves. Accomplishing the impossible on our behalf and in such a way that brings glory to the name above all names, Jesus Christ. We stand in wonder at the work of Your hands.

You give us Your Word to cling to, Your faithfulness to rest upon and Your righteousness to trust in. You open Your hand and satisfy our deepest longings and secret petitions...You are Jehovah Jireh, our Provider. My Provider.

My Father, grant me all I need to accomplish Your will as I wait for the fulfillment of Your word in my life this day. Cause me to be a living testimony of Your faithfulness so that as others look at what You have accomplished, they will "see and be glad." Amen. So be it.

God never uses anyone greatly until He tests them deeply.

A.W. TOZER

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool which in Hebrew is called Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great crowd of invalids, blind, lame and paralyzed... A certain man was there who had an illness for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had been in that condition now a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be healed?"

The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred. But while I am coming, another steps down before me."

Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

JOHN 5:2-3, 5-8 MEV

When Jesus presents the option of healing to this been-sick-for-thirty-eight-years-man, the man answers by explaining why he's been in that condition for so long. "Jesus, really, it's not my fault. If I could have done something about my situation, I would have. There was no way I could help myself and no one else was willing."

Wait a minute...did the Lord ask him why he allowed himself to be in that state for so long? Was Jesus laying blame on him for being ill? No way. Yet it seems that this man had developed a pattern of thinking that led him there...right past the healing Jesus was offering him. Often in our "sickness" we develop unhealthy patterns of thinking, lies planted by the enemy that become our twisted reality. Jesus gave the lies no place, but rather spoke Truth with power and authority, "Get up and walk."

Have you grown accustomed to blaming yourself or swung to the opposite extreme and lay the blame on another? Have you, like this man, lost hope and can't even fathom the possibility of healing? Dear one, I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to expose untruths in your thinking that have developed over time. He will never lay blame...never. O Beloved, He will loving but with firm authority, speak Truth and healing over your life..."Get up and walk." Yes...healing is possible. "I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." PSALM 27:13 NASB

My Father,

You don't blame me for my illness! I don't have to explain the "why" to You. O thank You! Please reveal where I have developed a sick-person mentality, the lies planted in my thinking, and teach me how to replace them with the Truth of Your Word. I resist the ready excuses of the enemy and by faith receive the healing You have to offer. In the mighty name of Jesus I pray....Amen

Let your cares drive you to God. I shall not mind if you have many of them if each one leads you to prayer. If every fret makes you lean more on the Beloved, it will be a benefit.

CHARLES SPURGEON

73 *What Season is it?*

But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out]. For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name.

*Let us not lose heart in doing good,
for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.*

HEBREWS 11:6 AMP HEBREWS 6:10 NASB GALATIANS 6:9 NASB

Because I love You ... You who have lavished grace and mercy on me...shall I offer any less to others? Yet, sometimes Father, I admit I wonder if You see my pain, if You take note of obedience? When will I catch even a glimpse of the fruit of my labors? When, Lord?

Beloved, I cried this prayer of questioning and brokenness for decades. All the while obeying, serving and living in faith by His great power. It was a season of sowing. As with real-life farming, life has seasons: Sowing, growing and finally, harvest. One cannot occur without the other. Have you sown but have yet to see a harvest?

Come near, listen closely...harvest time always comes. Always.

I am thrilled beyond description to testify of our Lord's faithfulness of having brought me through the seasons of sowing and growing into a season of unparalleled harvest. He is a God of His Word; He will not be mocked. Whatever we sow we will reap [[Galatians 6:7 KJV]]. I know I'll walk through more sowing/growing seasons before the Lord takes me home, but I will rest in His sovereign control and faithfulness, knowing that harvest time is as sure as the setting sun.

What season are *you* in?

Magnificent Lord,

I stand amazed at what You've accomplished. Completely amazed. All the days, weeks, months, and even years of sowing obedience didn't go unnoticed by You! You planned this glorious harvest all along! Oh, how I love You, my Savior and my God! In Jesus' name Amen.

God's will may be delayed - but it will never be denied.

BECKY WHITE

74 *The Giver*

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone, my help comes from Him; He alone is my Rock and my Fortress. My salvation and my honor depend on God ; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

PSALM 62:5-8 NIV

Often, my devotions are ripped from the pages of my prayer journal - some are as fresh as this morning's quiet time, while others are from decades past. Though today's journal entry is years old, its message is one I needed reminded of, perhaps you do as well.

Father, when I am in distress and feeling overwhelmed, lead me back to You. My Rock and Strong tower. Grant me the ability to pour out my heart to You, earnestly remembering that my hope and salvation are in You alone.

I am not to find comfort in people or pleasant circumstances, but in You. You are my refuge. You are my very present help in time of trouble, Your timing and Your ways are flawless...providing just what I need at the moment I need it...enable me to rest in that Truth.

Whether from joy or sadness... pain or growth, You hear my cry and see my tears...envelop me in Your sovereign care, O Lord, my Rock and Strong tower. I arise, filled with courage as I confidently lean on You. I love You Father.

Dear child of the Most High God, your help comes from Him alone. Look to no other for your life's stability. Though He graciously gives us "good and perfect gifts from above" [[James 1:17 KJV]] those gifts are not meant to be our source of peace or strength. God alone holds that place in our lives. Hold tightly to the Giver, not the gift.

Father God,

You are my Source and Sufficiency, though You have graciously given me many good and perfect gifts, teach me how to find rest in You alone - not in the gifts, but rather in You – the Giver of those gifts. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances.

ELISABETH ELLIOT

75 *Rest in Him*

Listen to my words, O Lord, give heed to my sighing and groaning. Hear the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to You do I pray. I am weary with groaning, all night I soak my pillow with tears...

My eyes grow dim because of grief... The Lord has heard my supplication, the Lord receives my prayer.

PSALM 5:1 AMP PSALM 6:6A,7A, 9 AMP

My heart hurts, Father. My eyes are wet with tears and my spirit sighs with pain. Though I know it is not, this feels like more than I can bear. The stinging pain is great, searing my inner man. Hold me Father! Be Thou my comforter and sustainer. Cause strength to rise within me as I learn to rest in You and not pleasant, pain-free circumstances. You have torn, and You will heal. Though You slay me yet will I trust and praise You. I give thanks to You in the midst of the pain, knowing You have a good plan for my life...trusting You are aware and You hear my cry. I love You, my Lord.

Dear one, whether your tears flow from the pain of an illness or the pain of disappointment, the death of a loved one or the death of a marriage, Your Father hears...He sees. He is aware. [[Psalm 142:3 NASB]] Rest in Him. Allow Him to envelop you in His peace and comfort. Let me assure you, this has not caught Him by surprise. Cease striving and know He is God.

He is worthy of our trust. He will not fail you. Rest, dear one, rest. Even as the tears flow, know He has it all under control.

Father, I need You! My pain is so great. Give me the ability to simply rest in You.

Many men owe the grandeur of their lives to their tremendous difficulties.

C.H. SPURGEON

76 *In the Day of Famine*

They will not be ashamed in the time of evil; And in the days of famine they will have abundance.

PSALM 37:19 NASB

Starving children, swelled bellies, ragged clothes, and as if to add insult to injury -- swarming flies. For many of us, that's the imagery evoked by the word famine. Yet, most will never experience firsthand what that's like. So how do these Scriptures about famine apply to our lives?

Lack. That's really what a famine is. Lack of the most basic of necessities of life. Have you ever walked through a season of lack?

Lack of hope... Lack of peace...

Lack of a home... Lack of wisdom...

Lack of strength... Lack of emotional support...

Lack of material possessions...

Our Father has promised, has bound Himself to His Word (JEREMIAH 1:12 AMP), to abundantly provide for His people in the day of famine. In the midst of famine He will arise as our Provider, not necessarily stopping the famine but supplying our needs in the midst of it. As the omnipotent God He is, He could lift us by the scruff of our neck from the famine of our circumstances and place us in a garden of ease. Yet that would not demonstrate His mighty power like providing for us square *in the middle* of the famine. What honor we are given to be used as reflections of His glory!

O my Father,

Though lack swarms around me as real as the flies of a physical famine, You have, and will continue to, abundantly provide for me in the midst of... What a privilege it is to testify of Your faithfulness on my behalf! As always, You cause Your Word to be real in my life, not simply theology but rubber-meets-the-road-reality. I adore You. In the mighty name of my Lord Jesus, Amen.

The sight of any trouble strikes terror into the heart of those who do not have faith, but those who trust Him say, "Here comes my food!"

WATCHMAN NEE

77 Great is Thy Faithfulness

You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result.

We are assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to and for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose.

GENESIS 50:20 NASB ROMANS 8:28 AMP

Lord God, Your sovereign control over all that has grazed my life draws me to my knees in awe-filled worship. Great is Your faithfulness, O Lord and matchless is Your power. You sit as King over the flood of my circumstances [[Psalm 29:10 KJV]], directing the wind and waves; they stop at Your command. I bow in recognition of Your limitless power, of Your patient endurance and Your great love for me.

My Father, I stand speechless at Your ability to take the most vile of circumstances and transform it into something that is for my good and brings You glory [[Romans 8:28 NASB]]. As the thing I feared the most exploded into my life, flinging emotional shrapnel of soul-deep anguish, You actually used it as the very catalyst to fulfill the deepest longings of my heart. Such power, such control, such goodness. You are beyond me!

I will praise You in the sanctuary, I will praise You in my home, I will praise You at all times and in all places! You are worthy O God to receive glory and honor and praise. I bask in Your faithfulness to me, O Lord.

Be assured, whatever has, or is, touching your life, He is aware and in control. He will bring about His desired result.

Faithful Father, Precious Lord,

I cannot always see the good You have in store for me, the clouds of difficulty obscure my view -- yet I will trust in Your unfailing love and faithfulness, O God. I know You have a good plan for my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Because he is God, He is able to weave together every single aspect and event in your life and produce something good.

ELIZABETH GEORGE

But He knows the way that I take [He has concern for it, appreciates, and pays attention to it]. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as refined gold [pure and luminous].

JOB 23:10 AMP

Adversity can drive us to our knees in despair and depression or it can drive us to our knees in humble recognition of our dependence on the Father. It's our choice. Recently I was faced with the choice and felt nearly compelled to put pen to paper as I struggled with the weight of it all.

Something that is bittersweet is both bitter and sweet; it brings both joy and sorrow. How strange it is, Lord, that I require the bittersweet force of adversity – in all its various forms – to fully ripen me in my walk with You.

What about you, dear one? Have you found that as you endure adversity and I-can't-take-this-another-moment difficulties, that He is drawing you close to His side into soul-deep intimacy? Such bittersweet days are priceless gifts from our Father wrapped in the garb of struggle. Last of all, Father, grant me the wisdom and grace to “count it all joy” (James 1:2 NASB) when I am enveloped in tests and trials of any sort, knowing that they are producing in me the Christ-like qualities of patient endurance and a rock solid faith. (2 CORINTHIANS 4:17 NASB)

Thank You... for Your gift of adversity.

The devil sometimes goes too far. He drives us straight into the Lord's arms.

RUTH BELL GRAHAM

79 *All Things...*

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

ROMANS 8:28 NASB

Did you catch that? God causes. He does it. He causes all things to work together for our good. That means we don't have to manipulate our circumstances to make God look good. We don't have to worry about His reputation. He'll take care of honoring His word, you can bank on it. We don't have to wonder if or how God will bring good out of the darkness allowed into our lives. We know He will because He promises He will.

Is there a dark storm looming on the horizon of your life? Have you just walked through a storm and are left to survey the damage? Is there a storm from your past that haunts you even now? Is your pain so great that the word "good" doesn't even find its way into your vocabulary anymore?

Has the enemy of your soul taunted you with lies of your heavenly Father's unfaithfulness or His inability to turn your particular situation into good? Has the enemy told you that if God really cared He would have stopped your storm? Don't believe it! God's Word boldly declares that He will cause all things to work together for our good. He provides but one stipulation ... we must be counted as one who loves Him and one who lives for His purposes.

God will cause all things to work together for your good and His glory. All things. Receive that today, dear one.

Precious Lord,

You sit as King over the flood of my circumstances, You open doors of favor that no man can shut; You command the blessing that no man can stop; You cause even the vilest circumstance to produce good on my behalf. I fall at Your feet in awe. Thank You, Lord Jesus, thank You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Providence of God means that God oversees me,
and my life is not a bundle of accidents.

R. PAUL STEVENS

80 *Giving Birth*

Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert.

ISAIAH 43:18-19 NASB

Just as the I-can't-take-it-anymore labor pains bring a mom to the point of giving up ...the baby is born. A precious new life enters the world. New life brought forth in pain. Trials in our lives are much like that, often following the same painful process. [[Isaiah 66:7-8 AMP]] How many times have you and I been on the brink of despair due to an agonizing trial, perhaps even questioning why it had been allowed to cross the threshold into our lives? For some, the answer is never. For others, you may have lost count. I say to you -- Don't give up! You will reap if you faint not. [[Galatians 6:9 KJV]]

If our Lord has allowed this I-can't-take-it-anymore trial to filter into your life, you can be sure a new beginning...a new thing... is about to spring forth. New life is always brought forth via pain. Ask any mom...ask the Father who gave His Son's life. Jesus put it this way, "I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains [just one grain; it never becomes more lives] by itself alone. But if it dies, it produces many others and yields a rich harvest." [[John 12:24 AMP]]

Whatever has brought you to the brink of despair...job loss, unfaithful spouse, succumbing to temptation, wayward children, loss of your home, addiction, illness or loneliness, God's Word to you today is this: Behold the former things have come to pass and new things I now declare, before they spring forth I tell you of them... [[Isaiah 42:9 AMP]] Your time of pain will bring a harvest of new life.

Father,

My pain is great – almost more than I can bear. Would You give me eyes to see that this pain will produce – give birth to – a new season? I need Your hope to fill me. Thank You Lord!

There is no detour to holiness. Jesus came to the resurrection through the cross, not around it.

LEIGHTON FORD

81 *Rock Bottom*

*If you seek Him [inquiring for and of Him, craving Him as your soul's first necessity], He will be found by you...
When they in their trouble turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and [in desperation earnestly] sought Him, He was found by them.*

2 CHRONICLES 15:2,4 AMP

Rock bottom. Gutter level. The end of ourselves. Most times, those are the places and times we most freely and authentically cry out to God in face-to-the-floor desperation. It is there, He has promised to meet us. I stand in awe of our Lord's love-induced patience with us. Simply amazing.

In allowing us to come to the end of our own strength, our own wisdom and our own meager recourses, the Lord Jesus offers us the gift of desperation. If we'll use it as a means to acknowledge our weakness, He promises to make us strong, providing all we need to rise above the mire of our circumstances and granting us the ability to be still and know He is God [[Psalm 46:10 NASB]] in the midst of any difficulty.

Yet, so often we strut around oblivious to the fact that we are in a state of total dependence on our Father, foolishly behaving as if we know better than He or only calling out to Him for the "big stuff".

May He grant us the bitter-sweet gift of desperation, may it cause us to bend our will as well as the knee in awe-struck worship as we seek after our soul's first necessity... intimate relationship with our Father God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

*My Father and my God,
Though I would never have signed up for this time of
desperation, I am so thankful for how it has brought me closer to You
with a deeper recognition of my desperate need for You. I love You,
Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Our trials are great opportunities.

A. B. SIMPSON

Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:8 THE MSG A PARAPHRASE (For context, see 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10)

This is beyond me, Father. I feel like I can't take it anymore! These tests, trials and temptations just keep rolling over me in waves of intensity; when will it stop?

"My grace is sufficient for you. Becky, My power is made perfect in your weakness. When you are weak, you are most strong – in Me [[2 Corinthians 12:9 NASB]]. Don't allow yourself to succumb to despair. Put your hope in Me, I will strengthen you in your inner man through My Spirit who lives in you. Trust Me to walk you through this"

My Father, I acknowledge apart from You I can do nothing [John 15:5 NASB], but through You I can do all things [Philippians 4:13 KJV]. I know I am more than a conqueror through Christ Who loves me and gave His life for me [Romans 8:37 NASB]. Cause me to walk out these truths – not simply mouth them to others but, in the furnace of my life, to actually walk them out.

The above is a "conversation" the Lord and I recently had. This prayer didn't cause my testings to melt into oblivion but as the verse in 2 Corinthians testifies, what the enemy would use to destroy me, has actually been used by God to drive me to my knees in total dependence on my Father and complete abandon to His will.

Whatever form your test, trial or temptation may take, may our Lord Jesus Christ assure you of His presence as it draws you to your knees.

My Father God,

In complete reliance on Your power and Your strength, equip me to walk this narrow road to which You call all Your people. Thank You! I love You so much. In Jesus' name, Amen.

True prayer is born out of present trials and present needs.

E.M. BOUNDS

83 *My Times, O, Lord*

*But I trusted in You, O Lord; I said, "You are my God."
My times are in Your hand.*

PSALM 31:14-15A MEV

How in the world are You going to fix this, Lord? Do You see what's happening, Father!? I am able to rest in Your comfort during some crises while others create sheer panic. Help! Enable me to lay my fears at Your feet, knowing You have it all under control.

Ever been there? Are you able to trust God for your finances but not your children's future? Able to trust Him for your eternal life but not for your next paycheck? Finding it easy to trust God for an income but not a mate? Have you felt His sovereign care extends to the doctor's office but not the surgeon's table?

Recently, when confronted with a particular crisis, I felt anxiety rather than faith. Fear rather than trust. Searching the Scriptures for help, my eyes fell on this underlined and highlighted verse of scripture - "But as for me, I will trust in Thee. O Lord, I say, 'Thou art my God,' My times are in Thy hand." Realizing the need to boldly declare my trust in the Lord rather than declare my fear of the proverbial, "what-if," I spoke out loud the truth of this scripture.

My life. My times and all it contains ...are in His hands...*and so are yours*. Whatever we face, whatever causes the "what-if" question to rear its ugly head, has not caught our Father by surprise. He's aware and He's in control. Trust Him. Stand amazed at what He does on your behalf.

My Father,

Forgive me for acting as if You aren't big enough for my problems or that You're too busy to notice the details of my life. I choose to rest in Your care, knowing You are holding my right hand as I walk through this time of my life. My times really are in Your strong hands. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The chief reason we doubt is that we don't appreciate the God we're dealing with.

JERRY DUNN

84 *Somebody Knows*

You know when I sit down and when I get up; You understand my thought from far off. You search my path and my lying down and are aware of all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it fully.

PSALM 139:2-4 MEV

At the count of three, everybody sing with me now: “Nooooobody knows the trouble I’ve seen.” Not exactly encouraging is it? Besides depression-inducing and dripping with self-pity, it’s a lie from the enemy of your soul.

God’s Word tells us that He knows exactly how we feel. In fact, the original Hebrew word used for understand includes the word feel. So we could read the above verse, “You feel my thoughts.” Digest that for a moment, beloved. He feels your thoughts.

The enemy would have us wallow in the emotional pain of loneliness and isolation as he whispers the vicious lie, “No one understands or knows how you feel. You are all alone in this.” Don’t you believe it! You are not alone. Someone does know how you feel. Someone is feeling the pain right along with you. None other than Almighty God knows us fully.

Do you appear all put together on the outside but inwardly you’re crumbling? Did your outcome turn out as you hoped it wouldn’t? Are you reeling from an emotional one-two punch? Do you carry a load of regret? He knows your path. He knows your unspoken pain. You are not alone. Speak the truth of God’s Word. He inscribed you on the palm of His hand, and He loves you. Sing that!

Father, Sometimes I feel like no one understands. Help me remember what a lie that is. You know exactly how I feel, even when I can’t articulate my thoughts, You feel them with me. Thank you, precious Lord! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

No soul can be really at rest until it has given up all dependence on everything else and has been forced to depend on the Lord alone.

HANNAH WHITALL SMITH

85 *Our Trail-Blazer God*

The Lord, He goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you. Do not fear, nor be dismayed."

The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

DEUTERONOMY 31:8 MEV ISAIAH 52:12 AMP

Peering down a dark and trash-strewn alley-way, the less-than-courageous youngsters argue...

"You go first."

"No way, you go first."

"I'm not going first."

Finally, the big brother of the pack bravely steps forward with a nerve-calming assurance and offers to take the first step into the darkness. Alone. Only then do the younger boys venture out from behind one another. Someone has offered to go before them, blazing a trail of safety into the unknown.

Are you facing a dark, foreboding "alley-way" of your own? Have you peered into the darkness of your circumstance and longed for someone to say, "Wait here, I'll go ahead of you"? At one time or another in one way or another, each of us has faced our own version of this scenario.

The shadowy alleys of life come to all of us. As followers of Christ, we haven't been handed a pass on the difficulties of life... what we have been given is the assurance that Almighty God goes before us. He will be with us. He will not leave or forsake us as we venture into our alleyways of...

Broken relationships

The death of a loved one

Betrayal

Financial meltdowns

Rebellious teens

Physical challenges

Depression

Everyday stress that threatens to engulf...

Blaze the trail before me, O God. Level the mountains and make the crooked places straight. I confess that You are my God of all comfort, the Almighty God, the Everlasting God. I have nothing to fear when You are the One going before me. I love You. In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

He, who counts the very hairs of our heads and suffers not a sparrow to fall without him, takes note of the minutest matters that can affect the lives of his children, and regulates them all according to his perfect will, let their origin be what they may.

HANNAH WHITALL SMITH

86 *The Before and After...*

*Come and hear all who fear God, and I will tell you what He
has done for my soul.*

*He has given heed to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, Who
has not turned away my prayer, nor His lovingkindness from me.*

PSALM 66:16,19-20 NASB

We've all seen them. Those "before" and "after" photos of someone who lost 100 pounds or perhaps a home remodel project. One can't really appreciate the "after" photo without having also seen the "before" image. You can almost hear the collective ooohs and aaahs as the after image is revealed.

Such is also the case when Almighty God causes His hand of blessing to fall and the gates of favor to swing wide. When He arises as Deliverer, declaring, "Enough!" the after image is breathtaking in scope and depth and breadth. Those who are privileged to witness such an event stand in awe and in worshipful praise crying out, "Who, but the hand of God, could accomplish such things?"

Many who see God's hand of blessing and favor on my life today had the opportunity to see the "before" snapshot as well. Eyeing firsthand the faithfulness of God on my behalf and declaring with me, "Look what He has done! Great is Thy faithfulness O God! We fall before You in awe... face-to-the-floor awe."

Allow me to remind you that Almighty God is no respecter of persons (ROMANS 2:11 KJV), He shows no favoritism to His children, what He will do for one he'll do for another. We serve an awesome God!

My Father,

What a privilege You've given me to declare Your mighty acts on my behalf! To all who will listen I say, "Come, let me tell you what He has done for my soul!" You are worthy O God to receive honor and glory and praise! You have faithfully arisen on my behalf. Father, let me never forget the "before" snapshot of my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Things which sound like platitudes become vital, living and powerful when you have to learn them in dark tunnels.

ELISABETH ELLIOT

In You, O Lord, I have taken refuge. You have seen my affliction;

You have known the troubles of my soul. As for me, I trust in You, O LORD, I say, "You are my God." My times are in Your hands.

For You will cause my lamp to shine; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

PSALM 31:1, 7, 14, 15 PSALM 18:28 MEV

Father, as I pour over Your word, I can't help but notice a pattern. Most often, You don't prevent the seasons of darkness from coming into our lives (in whatever form it takes). I find that darkness touches each of us in some way. But what I do see over and over is that You illumine our darkness. You overpower what would cause us to stumble. You open rivers in our desert experiences, and roadways in the wildernesses of our lives. In each instance the obstacles aren't removed. Rather You carve out a miracle in the midst of our impossible situations.

The Pain of being misunderstood.

The Death of our dreams.

The Darkness of divorce.

The Wilderness of betrayal.

The Desert of loneliness.

The River of illness.

You enable us to walk through the parted sea on dry ground. To stand in the midst of the fiery furnace without even a hint of smoke. You enable us to enjoy a good night's sleep in a den of hungry lions. You even caused the once-dead to walk out of a tomb. You specialize in walking us through... Not removing.

Beloved, ponder that reality...and then say with me, "Alright then...I choose to trust that You will do the same for me. In my life. In my particular struggle. I confess that You are my God. My times are in Your hands."

Father,

Would You open my eyes to the provision You are faithfully providing in the middle of my difficulty? Help me not to accuse You of neglect - but to instead cling to You in child-like trusting dependence as I rest in You. It is enough to know You are my constant Companion and indeed, the One who is leading me through the minefield of this present difficulty. I will hide myself in the shadow of Your wings - until these calamities have passed by knowing - You will cause this situation to work out for my good and Your glory. In the only name that grants me access to You...Jesus Christ. Amen

We must understand that for God to give “songs in the night,”
He must first make it night.

NATHANIEL WILLIAM TAYLOR

A man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel and said, "Thus says the Lord: Because the Arameans have said, 'The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,' I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you will know that I am the Lord."

Every word of God is tried and purified; He is a shield to those who trust and take refuge in Him.

1 KINGS 20:28 MEV PROVERBS 30:5 AMP

As my husband and I prepared for an upcoming ministry opportunity, I asked the Lord to give me a scripture to lean into, a NOW word, as I've heard it described. As I went about my regular routine, I "heard" a scripture in my spirit - a familiar word I had relied on in the past as I walked through great difficulties. From Psalm 139 I would "act out" the verses "Thou hast best me behind and before and laid Thine hand upon me," (I memorized in KJV!) placing my hand on the back, then front and then on top of my head. This was a tangible way to remind my spirit that God was with me. I went on to speak more of this Truth over myself. "Where could I go from Your presence? ...If I dwell in the uttermost part of the sea even there Your hand will lead me."

No matter what it felt like, no matter how painful the crisis – He was behind, before and His mighty hand was upon me. Years later, as I searched for a NOW word from His Spirit I was brought back again to those crisis-filled moments of clinging to that soul-comforting truth of His ever-presentness. Again, I "heard" the Lord speak to my heart, "Becky, that promise was not just for deep valleys of the past - it is for right now, in this moment of real everyday life."

In an instant I was reminded of His great faithfulness mingled with the supreme comfort of knowing that He is always with me, not just in the valleys of life, but mountain top experiences and everything in between and that those promises I stood on then are just as important now.

Dear one, have you asked the Lord for a word or promise to lean into but only "old" words come to mind? Could it be that He is

saying the same to you as well? Receive this as a NOW word from your Father!

My Lord,

You are a God of hills and valleys... not one or the other. The God of great crises and great blessings and even simple, ordinary life. Open my eyes to the truth that the promises I stood on while walking through agonizing valleys are still needed just as much today. This day. Now. I love You, Jesus. You are my Lord and my God! In Jesus' name, Amen

Affliction is the opener of understanding.

ELISABETH ELLIOT

89 *A Great Multitude*

After that, the Moabites and the Ammonites, together with some Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. And some came and declared this to Jehoshaphat, “A large multitude is coming against you from across the Dead Sea from Edom; and observe, they are in Hazezon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi). Then Jehoshaphat was fearful and set himself to seek the Lord, and he called for a fast throughout all Judah.

2 CHRONICLES 20:1-3 MEV

Have you ever been in the king’s shoes? Sitting there, minding your own business when you get a report that “A large multitude is coming against you”? Maybe you’ve felt the multitude through challenges with children, relationships crumbling around you or a cancer diagnosis. “The multitude” has many faces.

It’s interesting to note that, even though he was king, Jehoshaphat unreservedly acknowledged his fear to God and then turned his attention “to seek the Lord.” As he sought the Lord, he remembered to Whom he turned. And as if to remind God, Himself, he spoke out, “Lord aren’t You the God of our fathers and are You not God in the heavens and are You not ruler over all the kings of the nations of the earth? Do not power and might belong to You?” He acknowledged the reality of “the multitude” against the backdrop of the God He served. Power and might are in His hands and none can stand against Him.

Yes, we all have times when armies of difficulty come against us, don’t we? While those times have the capacity to create great fear, those difficulties are also a catalyst to remind us to seek our Father and turn our attention to Him. In fact, I dare say that may be the very reason why the army showed up in the first place.

Father,

When I see the multitudes approaching, I’m tempted to cower in fear rather than turn to You with my fear in hand. Cause me to remember that You are my mighty fortress and strong tower in the midst of these battles. Thank You Lord! In Jesus name.

It is not my ability, but my response to God’s ability, that counts.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

90 *Run to the Father*

In the day when I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God whose word I praise, in God I have trusted; I will not fear. What can mere flesh do to me?

PSALM 56:3-4 MEV

When I am afraid. Not if – when. Oh how I would love to tell you that if we are followers of Christ we will never have occasion to feel fear. But you and I know better than that, don't we?

Life happens. The midnight phone call. The “We need to talk” conversation with a spouse. The doctor's report that utters “cancer.” Or perhaps the thought of another day that was just like the day before, that was just like the day before and we fear life will always be this way. Other times it is the what-if's of life that create fear in us.

Not if, but when.

Oh dear one, let me assure you that fear strikes all of us in some capacity. It is not “unchristian” to feel the very real emotion of fear, it is what we do when fear strikes that makes all the difference.

Run. Run like a toddler running to their daddy. Right into your Father's arms by making the deliberate and perhaps a bit uncomfortable choice to trust Him rather than what you see or feel in the pain of the moment. He has promised to never leave or forsake you and He is intimately aware of all that grazes your life. King David demonstrated this when while literally running for his life he “ran to the Father” by declaring, “For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by.”

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind. 2 TIMOTHY 1:7 NKJV

Father, help me! Sometimes fear feels like a rising river threatening to overflow and overwhelm me. I can almost feel it rising right up to my chin. I choose to trust in You Lord in the midst of all the fear-inducing circumstances that surround me. If You are for me, who can be against me? In Jesus' name I pray...Amen

He uses our problems for His miracles.

This was my first lesson in learning to trust Him completely...

CORRIE TEN BOOM

91 *In Spite of this...*

God, You are my refuge and strength – mighty and impenetrable to temptation, a very present and well-proved help in trouble... Therefore, I will not fear...though the earth should change and the mountains slip into the heart of the sea...

Though an army should encamp against me, my heart will not fear; though war should rise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident.

PSALM 46:1,2A AMP PSALM 27:3 MEV/NASB

Mighty. Impenetrable. Very present and well-proved help in times of trouble. That's our God!

Has a trial moved the very foundations of "earth" in your life? Is an invading army "warring" against you? These show up in the seemingly small pebbles of everyday life like loneliness, monotony or depression that threatens to engulf. While others burst into our lives with such force that they nearly knock us to the floor gasping for the next breath. Rejection by a spouse, death of a loved-one, betrayal, financial ruin...

Your heavenly Father wants you to know HE can be relied upon when all that's comfortable and familiar is replaced with all that is foreign and uncomfortable. In spite of all that's swirling around you – He is your Fortress and Refuge. Run to Him and be at rest in spite of...

May I encourage you dear one, your Father is a very present help for you. Not just me or the guy down the street. You. "In spite of _____, I shall be confident." Let this be your prayer.

Oh, Father! I need to know that this trial doesn't get the last word. That You are walking this path with me and that You sit as King over the flood of difficulties that surround me. Though the challenges before me appear overwhelming, I know with certainty that I have no reason to fear. You, Lord, are my Stronghold and Hightower. My heart can find rest in You even in the midst of all I face. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The sovereignty of God is the pillow on which I lay my head.

SPURGEON

92 *I Qualify!*

*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who
are crushed in spirit.*

He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.

PSALM 51:17 MEV PSALM 34:18 NASB PSALM 147:3 MEV

In elementary school, as team captains picked players for a game of dodgeball (or any other “ball!”), I was always the last one chosen. I knew I had little athletic skill and my peers confirmed that week after week in gym class. I never seemed to qualify for anything. Even as an adult I auditioned for the church choir but my voice betrayed me! “I’m sorry, you just don’t qualify!” could easily have been my tagline.

Thankfully that’s not how our God works. Notice the qualifications for His promise of help. Broken. Crushed. Contrite. That I can do!

I’ve been crushed by the death of two of my children. Broken by betrayal. Contrite over my own sinfulness. And on the list goes. Have you ever been there? Maybe you’re like me and never seem qualified for anything before, or perhaps you’ve always been able to make your own way and this new season of suffering has nearly crushed you. However you came to this place, be encouraged, beloved. He is near you in the midst of your pain. Relax in His care as He “binds up your wounds and heals your broken heart.” You qualify.

Father,

*You are near me. Amazing. My brokenness qualifies me for
Your comfort and felt nearness! Enable me to be still as You bind up
my wounds of heartache and pain and cause me to rest in Your care
until these calamities have passed by. In Jesus’ name, Amen*

There is just one basic dealing which can enable man to be
useful before God: brokenness.

WATCHMAN NEE

The angel of the Lord appeared and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.” Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, then why has all this happened to us? Where are all His miracles that our fathers told us about? They said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us out of Egypt?’

How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and You will not hear?

JUDGES 6:12-13A MEV HABAKKUK 1:2A NASB

God ... why? If You are with me and for me, then why? Are You listening? When will You do something?

Have you ever been there? If so, you are in good company. Two Old Testament prophets posed the same questions. It makes perfect sense, right? If God’s Word is true – and it is – then why does it feel like we’ve been forgotten and forsaken? Why is He taking so long to act on our behalf?

While admittedly, I don’t have the answer for your particular struggle, I do know this; God is trustworthy. He is faithful. His Word is true. If He has allowed a particular difficulty to spill over into your life or to linger on, He has a plan. He has a reason. I look no further than the death of our Savior on the Cross. The confusion and disappointment would have been palatable to the disciples who were trusting in this Man to save them. The Man they banked their future on, hung nailed to, and dying on, a Cross. But God had a plan - answering their deepest needs by what appeared to be refusing their present requests.

And that same God is listening as you call – preparing to blow your mind by meeting your deepest needs. By all means, tell Him how you feel. Admit your confusion. Then, beloved, rest in His sovereign care. Oh, how He loves you!

Father,

I don't understand why this trial has gone on for so long, or why it was allowed in the first place. But I rest in Your goodness and faithfulness. I trust that You are at work because You have promised to act on my behalf. Thank You, Lord! You are worthy of my trust. In Jesus' name, Amen

The trust we put in God honors Him much, and draws down great graces.

BROTHER LAWRENCE

You were wearied by the length of your road; yet you did not say, "There is no hope." You have found renewed strength; therefore, you did not faint.

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; His compassions do not fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him."

ISAIAH 57:10 MEV LAMENTATIONS 3:21-24 MEV

Life is a marathon, not a sprint. We've all heard it - many of us have said it. Others have lived out its truth. Pace yourself, this is going to be awhile...

Some difficulties are manageable simply because we can glimpse the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. We grit our teeth and bear our way through, knowing this season is going to be over soon enough. But what happens when there is no end in sight? Or worse, when, barring a miracle, this thing is going to go on indefinitely? After all, most of us can handle just about anything as long as it's short in duration.

Jeremiah, the prophet, was broken by his circumstances. Near despair and complete hopelessness. Have you been there? What changed in Jeremiah's life was his perspective. In spite of all that surrounded him, he purposefully recalled the character of our God. His lovingkindness, compassion and great faithfulness. And found hope. Not "hope" that circumstances were about to turn a corner, but rather hope in God Himself. In spite of...

Has the length of your road brought you to a point of weariness? Stop, get a cup of coffee, sit down with your Bible and ask the Lord to fill you with renewed hope and strength for the journey. Remind yourself of who He is. In His great faithfulness, He will show Himself strong on your behalf.

Father,

This trial seems to have no end in sight. This isn't what I expected, Lord. Because it's gone on for so long, I've lost perspective. Help me to see this situation with Your great faithfulness and compassion as the backdrop rather than the heaviness and hopelessness that is trying to engulf me. This I know, You are good and You are faithful. In Jesus' name. Amen

We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us - we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be.

C.S. LEWIS

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Indeed, I will rain bread (manna) from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain amount every day.

My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness...

For when I am weak, then I am strong.

EXODUS 16:4A MEV 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10A MEV

As I stared out my kitchen window, I could think of nothing else. An upcoming event loomed large in my mind to the point that I couldn't focus on anything else. As I talked it over with the Lord my eyes landed on a Scripture card in the window, that read, “I have learned the secret of being content in all circumstances...” As my mind read and reread the verse I could “hear” the Lord speak to me. “I will provide what you need, when you need it. When the day arrives, my grace will be sufficient for you.”

He reminded me of the ancient Israelites that He so faithfully fed daily. In fact, they were told to only gather enough manna for one day, and if they took more it would simply rot. This was to be a lesson in their obedience and God's faithfulness. He would provide. Daily. Families woke up knowing their honey-flavored wafer breakfast was there for the taking. Each day. New manna.

Isn't it our habit to look ahead, anticipate our needs and then (if you're anything like me) anxiously wonder how we'll make it through the challenges before us? God is reminding us that He will provide what we need, when we need it. Daily. He doesn't provide a weekly dose. Daily. Moment by moment. His grace is sufficient. His strength perfect.

Whatever your need, trust Him to supply your manna. O how He loves you!

Father,

It's so easy to jump ahead and worry about the future. What might happen or how I will handle this or that. Teach me how to rest in You as You faithfully provide my daily ration of manna! In Jesus' name, Amen.

I take comfort and press on as I remember that God does not hold me responsible for success, but for faithfulness. Jesus said, 'Well done you faithful servant' not 'Well done you successful servant.'

CORRIE TEN BOOM

96 *Speak Lord...*

In my distress I cried to the Lord.

*I found trouble and sorrow,
then I called upon the name of the Lord.*

Speak, for Your servant is listening.

PSALM 120:1A MEV PSALM 116:3B-4A MEV 1 SAMUEL 3:10B NASB

What does it take to get your attention? What bends your knee in prayer? Is it a clean bill of health or the “Can you come in right away?” phone call? Is it the bonus check or the pink slip? The attentive spouse or the absent one? What does it take for you? Let me rephrase the question...What has it taken?

Over the decades of my life I hate to admit that it has taken great brokenness to cause me to recognize what was oh-so-apparent to my Lord. I need Him desperately. Without Him I am a broken heap or a prideful brat. You see, when the bills are paid and the health is humming along and the marriage is a great joy...oh so subtly I forget. I actually forget how desperate I really am. How desperate I always am. It's only through difficulty that I am – once again - made profoundly aware of my need. It's always present; it's just that difficulties have a way of pulling back the façade and revealing the truth.

Have you found that to be true for you as well? Have you been presented with some challenge that has revealed your already-present desperation for Him? I encourage you to cling tightly to your Father as He envelops you in His soul-deep Comfort. Oh dear one, He loves you so...

Or perhaps you're walking on the bright side of life only to have forgotten your great need for Him?

May I encourage you to pray, “Speak, Lord, I'm listening”? Whether words of comfort or conviction, of direction or simple affirmation that He is aware of your pain. Whatever He has to say, whatever reason He wants your attention...stand ready to listen.

My Father,

I fall into Your arms, profoundly aware of my brokenness. Infuse me with strength Father; cause me to clearly hear Your voice above all others. I don't want to waste this moment of difficulty. Use it for Your glory and my good. Help me Lord to live in an awareness of my great need for You. Oh how I love You!

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience,
but shouts in our pains.

C.S. LEWIS

*Jesus passed by and noticed a man blind from birth.
And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; but it happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*

JOHN 9:1-4 MEV

Due to an illness, I found myself alone on Thanksgiving Day (except for the low hum of *It's a Wonderful Life* playing in the background). While my husband and son were off serving meals to the less fortunate at our church, I lay teary-eyed and alone. Admittedly, self-pity reared its head momentarily as I lamented the fact that I was sick and alone on Thanksgiving Day. It wasn't long before the Lord reminded me of two friends walking through difficulty, and so texting them and receiving specifics, I got to work lifting their needs to the Father. It was then I "heard" Him speak to my Spirit, "This is how I wanted you to serve Me today."

Have you found yourself "serving" by walking through the challenge of a long-term illness or the devastation of a divorce? Have you been granted the privilege of displaying His glory by choosing forgiveness over bitter resentment from some past abuse or by walking out the gut-level reality of adversity in a way that honors the Lord God rather than allowing self-pity or self-focus to engulf you?

"...So that the works of God may be displayed in him". In today's verse we see that a man was actually born blind in order that he might display the works and glory of God. Let me remind and encourage you today that although things may not have turned out the way you planned, He is total control and is using you right where you are to serve and honor Him. Simply, stunningly amazing! Trust Him dear one.

Lord God -- My Precious Father,

Whatever it takes, in whatever form You choose, bring glory to Your name in, and through, my life. Thank You for the awesome privilege of being a display case for Your glory! Grant me eyes to view my life's circumstances through the lens of eternity. Have Your way, Father, have Your way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

We will stand amazed to see the topside of the tapestry and how God beautifully embroidered each circumstance into a pattern for our good and His glory.

JONI EARECKSON TADA

98 *To Know Him*

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for
good for those who love God*

*For those who are called according to His purposes...
If God is for us who or what can be against us?*

He is intimate with the upright.

ROMANS 8:28,31B AMP PROVERBS 3:32B NASB

Mary and Martha cried out to Jesus when they didn't understand the "why" of Jesus waiting. Waiting until their brother was dead. Waiting until there was no hope. Waiting.

What are you waiting on God for, even while He appears silent to your cries? A financial problem or a marriage problem? A child in rebellion or a dead-end job? Maybe it really is your health – physically or emotionally. Whatever it is, this I know, Jesus is more concerned with drawing us closer to Himself than He is in removing the very instrument that is bringing us face to face in recognition of our need for Him and in KNOWING Him.

You know what I've found to be true in the pages of Scripture as well as my own life? God will allow into our lives anything it takes to draw us to Himself in dependence and in learning to trust He is who He says He is.

How will I ever KNOW Him as my Provider if my bank account is always brimming?

How will I ever KNOW Him as the God of all comfort if I am never in a position to need comforted?

How will I ever KNOW Him as my Rock and Mighty Fortress if I am never standing on shifting sands of adversity?

How will I ever KNOW He is completely Faithful and Trustworthy if I have never been put in a position where He is all I have? How will you?

This I know, dear one, once we have walked out the truths of scripture by experience, we will say with settled assurance – God causes all things to work together for my good because I love Him and am called according to His purposes. If God be for me, who or what can be against me?

Father,

Please cause this time of testing to draw me closer to You. To learn once again, that You are who You say You are. My Healer. My Provider. My Comforter. My Rock and Mighty Fortress. Though I would much rather learn some other way – yet even in that, I trust You and rest in You. I worship at Your feet my Lord and my God!

Heartache forces us to embrace God out of desperate, urgent need. God is never closer than when your heart is aching.

JONI EARECKSON TADA

99 *In My Distress...*

In my distress [when seemingly closed in] I called upon the Lord and cried to my God; He heard my voice out of His temple (heavenly dwelling place), and my cry came before Him, into His [very] ears. I love You fervently and devotedly, O Lord, my Strength.

PSALM 18:6, 1 AMP

I felt emotionally spent; the day had not gone as planned. Too many challenges and not enough time or strength to accomplish all that laid before me. Crying out to my Father God for encouragement and an infusion of His strength, I knelt at the bed where my Bible lay open from the morning's quick reading. I glanced down to pick where I'd left off and spotted a piece of notebook paper tucked under my Bible. Picking it up, I read the handwritten note from my teenage son. It began, "I just wanted to take the time to tell you how of much a blessing you are to me..." The tears flowed as I continued reading his heartfelt words of encouragement.

Face-to-the-floor amazing. Not simply the note, though that is surely a blessing, but our Lord's absolute faithfulness and as always perfect timing. He heard my cry. My voice came into His very ears. He answered before I spoke, providing the needed encouragement before I was even aware of the need. I am completely and totally in awe of His power and yet tender, Fatherly care... for me.

He is no respecter of persons, Beloved. He shows no partiality. If you call, He will hear...He will listen...He will act on your behalf. Cry out to Him in your distress and expect to see the hand of your Father God move. He is your strength and your song, a very present help in time of trouble. Fear not, He is with you!

My Father God, I stand in awe of You! You who spoke the Eagle Nebula and the vast expanse of space into existence actually take time to listen to me cry? Wow. Such love! Such compassion! I bow in reverence to You O most High who performs on my behalf. I love You beyond measure. In the matchless name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.

You need not cry very loud: He is nearer to us than we think.

BROTHER LAWRENCE

100 *Make a Robe*

Samuel was ministering before the Lord, as a boy ... His mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

1 SAMUEL 2:18-19 NASB

Nearly one year ago, our youngest son walked through an intensely difficult season of life. A season in which I prayed, fasted, gave “motivational speeches” and even (I hate to admit) yelled a time or two. In the end, our Lord answered my deepest cries for help by – of all things – requiring me to let go completely. Entirely. Step back. Let go. Hands off. Trust Him with the provision He had so miraculously provided. (The Lord provided the Christ-centered program, *Outreach for Youth* and with our son’s permission, I have shared the merest glimpse of his story).

It was during that deeply difficult time that He led me back to the Old Testament story of Hannah and her son Samuel. (If you aren’t familiar with the story, please check out the first two chapters of 1 Samuel). In short, Hannah was unable to have children then finally had a son late in life. Overcome with gratitude she vowed to “give him to the Lord”, promising to allow her son to serve with the priests the rest of his life. So, at the age of about three, she did just that. For the rest of his life. Hands off. Let go. Entirely. Entrust her son to her faithful God. Sounds simple enough...right. Until it’s your child.

I read and reread and read again her story. And then it hit me. Every year she made her son a robe. Did the temple accommodations not include clothing? Of course they did. But every year she and Mr. Hannah went to the temple to worship, and just as they were readying to return home, she opened her bag and pulled out the robe, slipping it into her son’s hands. Hannah’s way of doing something, anything to be a part of what God was doing in Samuel’s life - before walking away for yet another year. Closing my Bible I prayed, “Okay, Father...how do I “make a robe” in my situation? How do I trust You entirely, hands off and letting go?”

“Make cookies. Pray for the team of men I have put around your son. Send him a new pair of shoes and socks. Order the guys a few pizzas. Don’t stop praying for him. But let Me handle it. Trust me.” He spoke to my spirit.

What about you dear one? Is there a situation in your life where the Lord is calling you to step back, let go and “make a robe”? Only He can tell you what that looks like in your particular circumstance – but tell you He will! Just ask. Then go make your robe!

Father,

*Thank You for the Living Word that speaks right into my life!
Thank You for Your great faithfulness to move on my behalf and for
allowing me to be a part of it all by making a few robes along the way.
How I love You and worship You my Lord and my God. In Jesus
mighty name, Amen!*

When life is difficult,
God wants us to have a faith that trusts and waits.

KAY ARTHUR

101 *Filled with Courage*

*I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail
with waiting for my God.*

*Hear and answer me, O Lord, for Your loving-kindness is
sweet and comforting; according to Your plenteous tender mercy
and steadfast love turn to me. Hide not Your face from Your servant,
for I am in distress; O answer me speedily!
Draw close to me.*

Great is Thy faithfulness.

PSALM 69: 3, 16, 17,18A LAMENTATIONS 3:23B AMP

It's been said that if you want to find out if a person needs encouraged, just check for a pulse! Isn't that the truth? All of us could use a word of encouragement. Most reading this face challenges in one form or another, ranging from running late for work to having no job at all. From children with never-ending sniffles and upset tummies to burying a child. From the busy-ness of life to an aching loneliness. Difficulties are wrapped in the human experience. Being a follower of Jesus doesn't exempt us; it assures us! (JOHN 16:33, 2 TIMOTHY 3:12 NASB)

Would you allow me the privilege of speaking a word of encouragement to you today? No, not your friend or that guy who came to mind - you. There is hope - life will not always be this hard. God sees, He is aware. Even of that long-buried disappointment. Trust Him with your pain. Even if that pain is - at this very moment - causing you to double over with the intensity of it all. O dear one. Cry out to Him! Rest in His tender care. Be encouraged that the same God Who parted the waters of the Red Sea, can, and will, part your sea of difficulty. The same God Who provided water from a rock can, and will, provide all you need. He will accomplish what concerns you (PSALM 138:8 NASB). His faithfulness is the mighty Rock (Psalm 62:2 KJV) we stand on.

Please know these words of Scripture and encouragement flow from the pen of one who has experienced the reality of deep grief and pain but with the even greater reality of His comfort, faithfulness and power as He moved on her behalf. He is utterly faithful! Be encouraged today!

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

PSALM 81:10 MEV

Oh Father, encourage me today. Though not ignoring the difficulties before me, keep it from becoming my focus, dragging me down into despair. I choose to trust You – to take my stand on Your faithfulness and sovereign control over all things. I bow in awe of Your great mercy and grace! I love You. In Jesus Christ's name I pray, Amen and Amen.

Could it be that God has given you a platform of suffering from which you can be a witness of His power and grace to those who are watching?

ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ

Scripture themed prayers:

Life's Trials

Father, Your Word tells me that I am not to be surprised by fiery ordeals that come upon me for testing, as if it is an unusual thing for Your children to endure difficulty. I am told in Your Word to consider it pure joy when enveloped in trials and tests of every kind because of what those tests are accomplishing in me. I admit that I don't like that very much.

Father, grant me the grace to choose to trust You and then bow in submission to Your will. This I know... You are for me and not against me and have promised to cause all things to work together for my good and Your glory.

You have assured me that the testing of my faith will produce endurance, and have promised to bless those who persevere under trials, even promising a crown of life to those who love You, and therefore obey You. I stand in faith and believe that You will do as Your Word declares.

Fear not (insert your name), there is nothing to fear, I AM with you; don't look around in terror and become dismayed....I AM your God! (insert your name), I will strengthen you and harden you to difficulties, yes, I will help you My child! I will hold you up with My victorious right hand. I AM the Lord your God, (insert your name) who says, to you...Fear not, I will help you. I will open rivers on the bare heights of your life and fountains in the midst of your valleys. I will make the wilderness of your trials become pools of water and I will turn the dry land of testing into springs of water. I will do this for you...then men will see and know and consider and understand that the hand of the Lord has done this! Be still child, and know I AM God. You are precious in My sight.

1 PETER 4:12,13 ROMANS 8:31, 8:28 ISAIAH 41:10,13,18,20 & 43:4
PSALM 46:10 AMP

God uses trouble to teach His children precious lessons.

ANNIE JOHNSON FLINT

Prayer of Complaint and Praise

In You, O LORD, I take refuge; please don't let me be ashamed; in Your righteousness deliver me. Please, rescue me quickly!

O, Father, be to me a rock of strength, A stronghold to save me. For Your name's sake lead me and guide me.

You are my strength, and I choose to trust in You. I rejoice and am glad in Your lovingkindness because You have seen my affliction; You have known the troubles of my soul, and You have not given me over into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a large place. Thank you!

Don't stop being gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; even my eye is wasted away from grief, my soul, and my body also. I feel like my life has been spent with sorrow and my years with sighing; my strength has failed and even my body is wasting away. Yet despite such great struggle, I choose to trust in You, O LORD, I say, "You are my God." My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.

You have hidden me in the secret place of Your presence, blessed are You LORD, for You have made marvelous Your lovingkindness to me in the "besieged city" of my circumstances. When I've felt overwhelmed because of the challenges of life, in my alarm, I have mistakenly said "I am cut off from before Your eyes"; nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried to You. You are utterly faithful even when I am faithless.

This I know, You LORD preserve the faithful and fully recompense the proud doer. I will be strong and let my heart take courage. I love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PSALM 21 2 TIMOTHY 2:13 NASB

God is so sovereign. He's so much in control that even when Satan tries to ruin our lives, God takes the weapon that Satan wants to use to destroy us and turns it into a good thing.

JAMES MACDONALD

Prayer for Comfort

Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4 MEV

Lord Jesus, the pain of my heart is great...stealing sleep from me and robbing me of Your peace. Arise as my Comforter and Defender, O God. As the enemy (name it specifically) arises against me, lift up Your standard and put him to flight on my behalf. I know You sit as King over the flood of my difficulties and that nothing comes into my life without Your knowledge. I choose to take comfort in Your sovereign control over all things, knowing You declare the end from the beginning. Envelop me in Your peace as I sit and meditate on You and Your ability to do exceedingly above and beyond all that I could dare ask for or imagine. Face-to-the-floor amazing!

As I trust in You, I will find quietness and rest, my soul becoming like a weaned infant, fully satisfied in You. You are my strength and my song. I will take comfort knowing that if You are for me, who or what could be against me? Nothing can separate me from You, Your love and Your blood-bought covenant of peace. As You comfort me in my distress, enable me to comfort others with the same comfort You have given me. Precious Lord, faithful Father, thank You for moving on my behalf, praise You for Your abundant provision of comfort! Amen and amen.

There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still.

CORRIE TEN BOOM

Prayer for Peace

In quietness and trust is your strength.

ISAIAH 30:15B NASB

Father, the enemy tempts me to doubt You, to question Your timing, Your goodness and even Your awareness of my circumstance. Words and phrases like, Frantic, Anxious, Striving, Worrying, Fearful, or “What if...?” attempt to pierce my soul and spirit like a poison dart. Forgive me for the times I’ve allowed them to penetrate - wreaking havoc within me. Cause me to be aware and then able to quickly discern the enemy’s lies, holding up my shield of faith as I wield the mighty sword of the Spirit which is Your Word.

By the power of Your Holy Spirit I will be still before You and before the sea of my circumstances, in quietness and trust I shall be confident in You and Your faithfulness. I love You, Father. In the matchless name of my Lord Jesus Christ I pray. Amen.

EPHESIANS 6:10-17 LAMENTATIONS 3:23 NASB

This I know – God is for me. And He is for you, dear one.

BECKY WHITE

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2. Through Faith and Patience... - John Aliva [[Personal letter]]
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