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Trust and Faith in Hard Times

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Hardships and problems come our way in life, and sometimes they are very severe hardships and problems—the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job or health, financial problems. They are most confusing to us as Christians when we are trying to do everything we are supposed to do like serving God and others. Then we begin to ask that oft asked question, “Why?”

The Psalmist struggled with the same question in Psalm 44. In the first eight verses, he speaks of how he had been taught about God and His mighty power, how he saw God as his King and ruler, and how he trusted in Yahweh to deliver him in battle.

But, beginning in verse 9, the psalm takes a very dark turn. The psalmist startles us with these words, “But You have cast us off and put us to shame, and You do not go out with our armies. You make us turn back from the enemy, and those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves. You have given us up like sheep intended for food, and have scattered us among the nations. You sell Your people for next to nothing, and are not enriched by selling them. You make us a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and a derision to those all around us. You make us a byword among the nation, a shaking of the head among the peoples. My dishonor is continually before me, and the shame of my face has covered me, because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles, because of the enemy and the avenger” (44:9-16). “Why” is not stated, but it is certainly implied. And, he states very matter-of-factly that he and his people had been faithful to God. “All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten You, nor have we dealt falsely with your covenant.

Our hearts have not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your way... If we had forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a foreign god, would not God search this out?” (44:17-18, 20-21).

Have you ever felt that way in hard times? Have you ever thought, “If I wasn’t obeying God, these problems would be understandable.” What is the answer? What is remarkable about this psalm is that there is no answer given as to why God was not there... because in the end no answer would satisfy. What answer could be given to the person eaten up with cancer as to why they are suffering that would cause them to say, “Oh, I get it! Now I understand! Everything is alright now”? There is no answer that immediately removes the pain of a heart broken by the loss of a loved one or a broken or troubled marriage.

There is no answer. There is only trust and faith.

Though overcome with questions and doubts, the psalmist persevered with these words of power, “Arise for our help, and redeem us for your mercies sake” (44:26). Our comfort in hard times does not come from an “answer,” but from continued confidence in our God we have believed in and submitted to. It comes from having faith that “farther along we’ll know all about it, farther along we’ll understand why. Cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine; we’ll understand it all by and by.” Then we will know that, though we didn’t understand our problems at the moment, God got us through—and that will be enough.

He Cares For You

Craig Thomas

Psalms 102 repeats a quite common theme in the Psalms. In it the psalmist pours out his complaint before the LORD. Note verses 3-5:

“3 For my days are consumed like smoke, And my bones are burned like a hearth. 4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass, So that I forget to eat my bread. 5 Because of the sound of my groaning My bones cling to my skin.”

In addition to his downcast spirit and inability to even summon his appetite to eat, he is also having trouble sleeping (v. 7). He is reduced to weeping (v. 9) and is in total despair over life (v. 11). He endures endless criticism at the hands of his detractors (v. 8). In verse 10 he appears to suggest his plight may involve some measure of self-infliction due to his own sin as he laments:

“10 Because of Your indignation and Your wrath; For You have lifted me up and cast me away.”

As the psalmist laments his sadness and sorrow, he calls on the LORD to hear his prayer (vv. 1-2):

“1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, And let my cry come to You. 2 Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; Incline Your ear to me; In the day that I call, answer me speedily.”

Since this psalm repeats a familiar refrain, the lessons and application should be familiar as well. God hears our prayer if we offer them in the proper spirit and with a determination to face our sins and repent of them. In this psalm, I believe that thought is expressed in verse 17:

“17 He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, And shall not despise their prayer.”

As we pour out our burdens to the LORD, we must have the faith that He hears, and He cares. It is critical for our prayer to be heard and acted upon by the LORD that we demonstrate our humility and recognition that we cannot make it on our own. Peter puts it this way (1 Pet. 5:6-7):

“6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

We must also remember two other things as we pray. First, we must be persistent in our prayers (Lk. 18:1-8). We cannot give up! God is listening! So, we must continually pour out our hearts to Him! Second, as we await His answer, we must exercise patience. In this psalm the psalmist asks the LORD to “answer me speedily” (v. 2). I don’t think it is wrong to ask for a speedy resolution to our needs. However, we must remember the LORD operates on His own timetable and not on ours.

Hence, it is critical for us to exercise patience:

“14 Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!”

If we will do these things, I’m convinced the LORD will A-L-W-A-Y-S answer our prayers! We may not receive the exact answer we seek, but He will answer! (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-10) We must accept His answer in faith and realize His answer may not take away our pain and suffering. But His “grace is sufficient” for us and we must remember His “strength is made perfect in [our] weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). As the psalmist closes this psalm, I believe he is expressing his confidence the LORD will answer his prayer. It is a confidence we too can have and should express.

“28 The children of Your servants will continue, And their descendants will be established before You.”