

AS SOON AS I PRAY

INTRODUCTION

Many of our congregation are receiving our "daily blessing" e-mail. You will have noticed that often the scriptures quoted are from Psalms. The purpose of the e-mail is to build us up and encourage us and I find that the book of Psalms overflows with encouraging scriptures.

I also find the Psalmists often tell of trials and attacks, betrayal, sickness and difficult circumstances for which they either request God's help or come with thanksgiving for prayers that have been answered.

Pastor David Templeton last week reminded us that trials are a part of life. I often wonder though at the number and level of trials that we seem to be facing. That could be a dangerous place to be because we could be tempted to give up hope. Therefore, I want to once again encourage us as a congregation this morning with the Word of God so that we can see we are certainly not alone. God is with us, He is for us and He will help us through every trial we face.

MESSAGE

WE CAN STAND ON GOD'S PROMISES

Psalm 138:1-2 I give You thanks, O Lord, with all my heart; I will sing Your praises before the gods. 2 I bow before Your holy Temple as I worship. I praise Your name for Your unfailing love and faithfulness; for Your promises are backed by all the honour of Your name.

This psalmist was so confident in God that He would give thanks before other gods – it was like him saying – "what can you do? My God answers my prayers – you can't compare with Him.". He was not only confident but he was thankful and full of praise to God who he knew would answer his prayers.

And then he makes an amazing statement... "for Your promises are backed by **ALL** the honour of your name".

- What better backing could we ask for? God places **ALL** His honour – His whole reputation - behind His name, and as we pray in His name, He is willing to put **all** His honour on the line as a guarantee that He will keep His promise.
- Think about that – when God makes a promise, He will keep it. When we trust His promises which are guaranteed, it's far different from trusting the word of a used car salesman in a written guarantee.
- We can hardly trust our own promises, but when God gives us His promise, we can be sure that He will keep it.
- The Psalmist had reason to praise God continually. His love cannot fail and nor can His faithfulness.

What promise of God are you standing on today?

- "I will never leave you nor forsake you".
- "With Me, nothing is impossible".
- "I am the Lord who heals you".

When we face difficult circumstances, we need to know that we can stand on God's promises and we need to find a promise in His word which we can use as an anchor in the storm. (ask the people to bring a scripture forward for the prayer line at the end of the service).

WHEN WE FACE DISTRESS, GOD IS ON OUR SIDE, HE IS WITH US

Psalm 118:5 (NLT) In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and set me free.

- This is a personal testimony from the Psalmist which states that the Lord both heard and answered Him, and delivered him.
- God still answers prayers today and grants us personal testimonies: **Call Larry to give his testimony.**

Psalm 118:6 (NKJV) The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

Psalm 118:6-7 (NLT) The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me? 7 Yes, the Lord is for me; He will help me. I will look in triumph at those who hate me (victory, victory).

Not only will the LORD answer our prayers and help us but we need to know that He is on our side, He is for us. **Romans 8:31** states "If God is for us, who can be against us."

Therefore as we face life's trials we need to know that in the midst of them, God is still on our side – He is with us!

Are you feeling all alone in your trial? Don't, the best help you can possibly have is with you!

JUST BECAUSE WE ARE FACING TRIALS DOES NOT MEAN THAT GOD DOES NOT LOVE US.

Sometimes, when our trials seem overwhelming, the enemy will come and try to rob us of our faith. He will place questions in our minds like:

- "If God loves me, then why am I still sick?"
- "If God loves me, then why can't I find work?"

Or any other similar question - these are all intended to destroy our faith!

This is what Paul wrote to the Romans:

Romans 8:35, 37-38 (NLT) Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 37 **No**, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. 38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—**not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.**

- When we face trials, God's love abounds toward us in the midst of the storm.
- The storms can't separate us from the love of Christ!
- Our fears and worries can't separate us from God's love.
- Even the devil and his demons can't separate us from God's love!
- **The only way we can be separated from God's love is if we turn our backs on it!**

Have you been tempted to turn your back on God because of a trial or storm of life?

- If so, then today is the day to turn back to God.
- Don't let pain, danger, financial troubles, family troubles or anything cause you to turn your back on God's love.
- If we remain steadfast, God will give us "**OVERWHELMING VICTORY!**"

GOD ANSWERS IMMEDIATELY

Daniel sought God and it says that for twenty one days thereafter he was mourning (probably about the state of Jerusalem) only then did he have an encounter with an angel who said this:

Daniel 10:12 For from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before Your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.

Psalms 138:3 (NLT) As soon as I pray, You answer me; You encourage me by giving me strength.

"From the first day"... and ... **"as soon as I pray"** – these are clear evidence that God hears our prayers and responds immediately.

When we pray in times of trial, we normally expect God to answer. In fact, this scripture tells us that "as soon as we pray, God answers". But often, it does not appear that God has answered... Does that mean that we have missed it? Does it mean that God is ignoring us?

Definitely not!

As we re-read that Psalm we find the answer: **Psalm 138:3** As soon as I pray, You answer me; You encourage me by giving me strength.

- How does God answer us immediately?
- You encourage me by giving me strength – He both encourages us in our trial and He gives us strength to endure them!

This means that no matter how difficult our trial, it will not break us!

- How else did Paul and Silas manage to praise God that night in the prison? They did it in God's strength.
- David experienced it too when his village was attacked and his family carried away by the Amalakites... He wept and was in great distress and then he did this: **1 Samuel 6b** But David strengthened himself in the LORD His God.
- When we strengthen ourselves in the LORD, our situation immediately becomes more bearable, more manageable and we set ourselves up for **overwhelming victory**.

There may be many reasons why a trial lasts longer than what we think it should

- It could be that there is a spiritual battle going on that we are not aware of like when Daniel prayed.
- It could also mean that the LORD is allowing the trial so that we can be built up in faith and perseverance, but one thing we must know is that the moment we pray, God immediately encourages us, and gives us strength in the trial.
- **Are you in the middle of the trial right now?**
- **Are you aware that God has given you the strength to endure it?**
- **Are you allowing yourself to be encouraged in the LORD like David did?**

If not, today is the day to ask God help you to turn it around.

WE WILL NOT FEAR

Psalm 46:1-4 God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. 2 So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. 3 Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!

Psalm 46:10a "Be still, and know that I am God!"

This is a statement of faith! God is always ready to help us in our difficulties.

- We will not fear the storms of life.
- We may not look forward to difficulties but in our hearts, we have faith to know that we will make it through – God will give us overwhelming victory.
- We can be still and know that He is God!

CONCLUSION

We all face trials and problems but these are times when the amazing blessings and love of God are most evident! We simply need to remember what the Word tells us about God and about His promises for times of distress and trouble.

When we face trials:

- We can stand on God's promises – they are guaranteed by ALL the honour of His name
- God remains on our side and He remains with us in the midst of our difficulties.
- It does not mean that God does not love us. Nothing can separate us from His love. He is about to give us Overwhelming victory!
- God answers us immediately when we pray and He gives us strength to endure.
- We will not fear the trials, we will be still and trust God.