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“Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

Family Crises

Lesson Subject: Christian families can find help and comfort in the Lord.

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Topic: Family.

Does a Christian family face crises in life? Yes. Despite the fact that they love God and are serving Him, they have problems. Jesus said to His disciples, *"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

What does a family do when troubles come? They turn to the Lord to help them work through the distress. God is available at times of death, divorce, retirement, sickness, financial reverses, rebellion by a family member, and all those other times when a family passes through *"the valley of the shadow"* (Psalm 23:4). *"The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry"* (Psalm 34:15).

This study is designed to prepare you for problems that will arise. Even if all is well with you now, a time will come when you will need the help that this study offers. Pursue it with an open heart. Keep it in your mind. One day you will be glad you did.

I. EXPECT THE CRISES TO COME

A. Crises are inevitable. The Bible says, *"Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward"* (Job 5:7). That is the common lot of all humanity. Christians are still human and are not exempt from trouble. If you were as sinless and sufficient as Jesus, you would still have troubles. He was *"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"* (Isaiah 53:3). We are no better off

than Jesus. We do not expect to escape troubles through faith in Him; we expect His help in such times.

B. Crises may be severe. Do not be surprised if the physician says, "The sickness is terminal. There is nothing we can do!" What does one do then? The apostle Paul spoke of his trials, saying, *"We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life"* (II Corinthians 1:8).

Some people stumble because they think that faith in God will spare them the trials of life. Never. Their *"thorn in the flesh"* may not be removed, but God always says, *"My grace is sufficient for thee"* (II Corinthians 12:7, 9).

C. Crises are opportunities to see God at work. Thank God in the midst of trials that He knows and sympathizes with you. Trust Him to work in your behalf to give you victory in the midst of the trial. Learn to say in every crisis, *"O our God, . . . we have no might. . . ; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee"* (II Chronicles 20:12).

Good can come out of trouble if we stay close to the Lord in it. Paul wrote, *"We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead"* (II Corinthians 1:9). What a great benefit comes out of trouble: one learns to trust God who does miracles in behalf of His people. Look for such good when trouble comes to you.

D. Crises come in all areas of life. They come in private affairs. They come in family life. They come in community situations. They come in national concerns. Our whole civilization was "bred and born in a briar patch," as Br'er Rabbit said. Look at Paul's testimony of his sufferings (II Corinthians 11:23-27). As to the nature of his trials, he was burdened by work, beaten, imprisoned, and threatened with death. As to suffering, he was whipped, beaten, stoned, and suffered shipwreck. As to the source of the trials, he was in peril of water, robbers, countrymen, heathen, wilderness, sea, and false brethren. As to the extent of his burdens he endured weariness, painfulness, watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, and nakedness. Regardless of the problems you face, others have endured them faithfully and gained victory over them through Jesus Christ.

II. TURN TO THE LORD FOR HELP IN CRISES

A. Many fail to turn to the Lord. One great burden of many pastors is that some of the congregation go to every other resource before they seek the Lord. Often a couple will have already decided on divorce, for instance, before they come to the pastor for spiritual counsel. We ask with Isaiah,

"Should not a people seek unto their God?" (Isaiah 8:19).

Let God be the first one to whom you turn for help. Pray about your problems. Tell God about them and ask His help in dealing with them. Seek out a man or woman of God to counsel, if you cannot deal with them successfully yourself. God will be found and help will be received if you seek Him *"with all your heart"* (Jeremiah 29:13).

B. Turn to God in every situation. Turn to God when you have to endure physical pain (Exodus 14:10). Turn to God when trusted friends betray and oppose you (Exodus 17:4). Turn to God when you seek help for another who is in trouble (1 Kings 17:20). Turn to God when you are discouraged (Psalm 61:2). Turn to God when death comes (II Kings 20:3). Turn to God when revival is needed (I Samuel 7:9). That list could be continued. That is sufficient to show that it is best to turn to God in all situations.

Here is what will happen when you turn to God: *"This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles"* (Psalm 34:6). Glory!

III. DEPEND ON THE LORD TO BE CONCERNED

God is our Father in Jesus Christ. *"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him"* (Psalm 103:13). You can come to Him in trouble and know positively that He is concerned.

A. God loves you. Do not question that statement. Accept it personally and without reservation. If you want proof that God loves you, look at the cross of Jesus (I John 4:9). If you think, "God must not love me or He would not permit me to have this great problem," remember how He loved Jesus and yet permitted Him to go even to death for our sins. God's love is manifest to us through His grace and mercy. Grace is God's kindness to us in view of our guilt. Mercy is God's kindness to us in view of our misery. He deals with us in both grace and mercy when we come to Him. If you think God will not help you because you do not deserve it, remember His grace. If you think God will not help you because you are in such a lowly condition, remember His mercy. Do not think, "God loves me if . . . , " or even "God loves me because. . . ." Just think, "God loves me." Period!

B. God knows all about you. He knows your condition. He said concerning Israel's suffering in Egyptian bondage, *"I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them"* (Exodus 3:7, 8). Look at the verbs: *"I have surely seen. . . ,*

and have heard. . . ; I know. . . " I am come." That is the way God feels toward you in your troubles. Believe it and rejoice.

C. God shares your pain. "In all their affliction he was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9). That sounds almost too good to be true, but it is true. "*We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15). God understands and He cares. One of the most precious invitations to the troubled in all the Bible is this word in I Peter 5:7: "*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*" That invitation means that we can cast all of our anxieties, our worries, and our concerns upon the Lord with complete confidence that He cares about us and watches over us.

IV. RECEIVE THE LORD'S HELP

"The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chronicles 16:9). That means God is looking for an opportunity to show His strength on your behalf. You can expect and receive His help in your crises.

A. His help is freely given. "*The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*" (Psalm 84:11). He gives according to His resources; so, He gives much more than we can ever imagine. He "*giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not*" (James 1:5). The Holy Spirit is with us to help us understand "*the things that are freely given to us of God*" (I Corinthians 2:12). Jesus encourages us to minister without reservation, saying, "*Freely ye have received, freely give*" (Matthew 10:8).

The devil will try to convince you that God helps you on the basis of how well you have behaved. God's help is always based on His grace, so it is always free.

B. His help is personal. Memorize Isaiah 41:10, noticing the second person personal pronouns "*thee*" and "*thy*." It reads, "*Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*" Six times God refers to you personally in that one verse. Six times He says, "My help is available to YOU!" How many times must He say it for us to believe it? Let your heart respond in faith, "*What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*" (Psalm 56:3).

C. His help is given to those who seek Him. Do not presume on God's help in trouble. Turn to Him and seek Him. He calls us, "*Seek ye my face*"

(Psalm 27:8). Again, He says, “Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually” (II Chronicles 16:11). God has promised through His prophet Jeremiah, “*Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*” (Jeremiah 29:13). Never let your trials turn your thoughts from God. Turn to Him in trouble, by an act of your will. Seek Him and He will help you.

D. His help is always effectual. “*We may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*” (Hebrews 13:6).

Psalm 116:1-9 is a testimony by the psalmist concerning God's help in his times of trouble. He recounts how he prayed and God heard. Then he summarizes the help of God in these words: “*Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling*” (Psalm 116:8). That is the kind of help God gives when we are in trials.

What problem are you facing now? Is it financial loss, betrayal by a friend, disappointment in a relative, serious illness, death, or divorce? Face it with this assurance: God knows; God cares; God helps. What greater consolation could you wish than that? Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you!

QUESTIONS

1. How does John 16:33 prepare us for times of trials?
2. What does Job 5:7 mean in your daily experience?
3. How does the experience of Jesus show that trials come on good people?
4. How does Paul show that trials come to faithful Christians?
5. What good can come out of trials according to II Corinthians 1:9?
6. What challenge do you find in Isaiah 8:19?
7. In what kinds of trials should we turn to God?
8. What assurance do you find in Psalm 103:13?
9. What assurance in trials is there in Isaiah 41:10?
10. How can you help someone in trials this week?