



Deuteronomy 33:27

Where is God When I Need Him?

When crisis hits your personal life how do you respond to God's sovereignty? How do you transfer the intellectual sense of God's power and presence into the practical, emotional reality of this national and personal crisis? Where is God when I need Him?

WHERE IS GOD WHEN I NEED HIM MOST?

We don't have to turn far in the Scriptures to find examples of God's presence when His children have needed Him most.

Where do you turn in terrorist attacks?

Amalekite terrorists raided David's camp at Ziklag in 1 Samuel 30:1-6. The terrorists overthrew their camp at "Ziklag and burned it with fire, and they took captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried them off and went their way" (v. 1). David and his men arrived at camp and "behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive" (v. 3).

What did David and the men do? "Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep" (v. 4). They cried. They acknowledged and deeply felt their emotions. The shock, fear, anger was acknowledged and felt. The feelings were there and they were real. The emotionally healthy person can acknowledge and deeply experience whatever emotions are there at any given moment if he so chooses.

David also "was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. . ." (v. 6). Where do you turn when you are in total helplessness? It is a humbling experience to realize you do not have the inner resources, all human help has turned against you, and only God can be turned to for help.

We have also been reminded these days that the war with terrorism has only begun. It will continue for a long, long time. There will be many occasions when we will need to turn to the only One who can give us His strength in time of crisis.

David realized that only the LORD can be counted on in times of total helplessness. "David strengthened himself in the LORD his God. . . David inquired of the LORD . . ." (vv. 6, 8).

George Macdonald once said, "We look upon God as our last and feeblest resource. We only go to Him when we have nowhere to go. And then we learn that the storms of life have driven us, not upon the rocks, but into the desired haven."

We do not strengthen ourselves in the LORD until we give up all dependence on everything else, and we are forced to depend upon Him alone. As long as we trust in other things, nothing but disappointment will come upon us. Yet, for many people the thought of waiting upon God alone seems one of the most precarious things we can do in our day. Is there not a natural tendency to reach out for something in addition to depending upon God? Is it not until everything else fails that man puts his trust in God alone?

David came to the realization that only God was left. His friends were ready to desert and stone him. He was as good as dead. Only God was left, just God. David strengthened himself in Yahweh his God.

Our nation is double minded. Jesus Christ has not been all we want in America. We have wanted a great many things besides or in addition to Him.

Where do you turn in your time of total helplessness? Where do you turn when everyone turns against you? The LORD God is always there when we most need Him. Perhaps, we have been looking in the wrong place.

Where do you turn in kidnappings?

Joseph was an arrogant teenager who was thrown into a cistern by his brothers to await a decision that ultimately led to his being sold into slavery in Egypt by an Ishmaelite caravan. Do you think it was easy for Joseph to keep a positive attitude while in a stinking prison in Egypt? It was probably no easier than for you and me when financial disaster hits, you lose your job, your marriage breaks up, and your teen is hooked on drugs or something worse. Where is God when you are kidnapped by real terrorists, or an emotional or spiritual kidnapping?

Where was God when I needed Him? Joseph looked into the eyes of his brothers years later and said, "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

Sometimes we have to face the worst crises in our lives alone with God. Have you found that to be true in your life? In God's sovereign wisdom everything comes together to His glory even if we do not understand it today. The word "why" can drive some of us to madness unless we turn to God's infinite love and wisdom and realize that this crisis does not change His attitude toward us. He still loves us.

Where do you turn when there is no light at the end of the tunnel? Where do you turn when it is only you night and day, day and night, week after week, month after month, year after year? Where is God when you need Him most? He is there. "God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result."

Someone said, "God is too kind to do anything cruel. . . Too wise to make a mistake. . . Too deep to explain Himself. When we know Who, we can stop asking 'Why?'"

Nothing in this world happens outside of the will of God—literally, nothing. There are no failures and there are no loose ends in the ultimate plan of God. What can I learn when I have blown it, or things go wrong? What is God teaching me? What does He want to say to me in this? What is He doing to make me more like the Master?

Note carefully, I did not say God caused this tragedy. He is not the author of evil. There are some things we simply cannot explain about evil.

Where is God during terminal illness?

King Hezekiah lay at the point of death with his face to the wall weeping bitterly in 2 Kings 20:1-3. God sent him a messenger saying, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live."

God's answer to Hezekiah's humility and prayer was an additional fifteen years of life as ruler of Judah. God in His wisdom sometimes chooses to heal His people on the basis of prayer. However, more often in His wisdom He chooses not to bring physical healing that way. The apostle Paul had his "thorn in the flesh" and God still teaches and encourages us through his suffering. In those moments God reminds us that all we need is a simple trust in Him. He is all-sufficient to meet our need.

Where is God when I need Him most? In God's sovereign wisdom He sees the beginning and the end. We can trust Him to accomplish His eternal purposes. This crisis does not change His attitude toward us. He has already demonstrated His love for us by going to the cross and dying for us.

Where is God when I face death?

Two sisters at the death of their brother got angry with Jesus. "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). Lord, where were you when I needed you?

Martha tried to focus her faith, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day," she said (v. 24).

I have had people say to me while riding through a personal storm, "I felt as if my whole world had been blown apart. My confidence in God was gone." There are a lot of people who feel that way today.

Jesus told Mary and Martha that He *alone* is *all-sufficient*. "I am the resurrection and life." He said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (vv. 25-26).

Who said this? The great I AM. "I am the way, the truth, the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

He is here when we face death and suffering. Job said, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him."

Where was God when Jesus needed Him?

Sometimes we face incomprehensible and desperately painful situations in which God alone can comfort our hearts. Jesus was "very distressed and troubled" in the Garden of Gethsemane. He said to His disciples, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death" (Mark 14:32-34).

God used that tragedy to remedy our sin problem and give us eternal life. The only time when God was not present when He was needed most was when the eternal fellowship between God the Father and God the Son was broken as a result of being made sin on our behalf. "The wages of sin is death," but He was sinless. He never experienced sin. "He [God] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

You see, the question to ask is not where is God when I need Him, but where am I placing my faith when I need Him most. People evade the crucial question by asking, "If there is a God, then why did He do such and such?" "If there is a God then why . . . ?" "Why did He permit this to happen?"

If I admit there is an all-sufficient God, then I have to ask what is my responsibility to Him? I fear we would rather ask question and play intellectual blame games rather than focus our faith upon Him rather than ourselves. Most of our pseudo-intellectual questions are blame games. The truth is God is all-sufficient when I need Him most.

GOD IS ALL-SUFFICIENT WHEN I NEED HIM MOST

The eternal God is all-sufficient

Moses was coming to the end of his life and the great leader was addressing the children of Israel before they would go into the promised land of Canaan. Moses said,

"There is none like the God of Jeshurun,
Who rides the heavens to your help,
And through the skies in His majesty.
The eternal God is a dwelling place,
And underneath are the everlasting arms;
And He drove out the enemy from before you,
And said, 'Destroy!'" (Deuteronomy 33:26-27)

The God of the beginning and the end is your dwelling place. "The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." The imagery is like standing on a balcony in a tall building overlooking a parade. The God who was at the beginning is our refuge. He is our dwelling place. God is no further removed from you and me than He was from the first man in the procession. The eternal God, the God of the beginning and the end, is our dwelling place. He is alive. He is all-sufficient. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the One who was dead and is now alive forever. The apostle Paul reminds us that He who began a good work in you will complete it (Phil. 1:6). We follow God, in company with God. "The eternal God is your dwelling place."

Underneath are His everlasting arms for you and me

The Hebrew word for "underneath" means bottom. The root idea is depressing, humbling, and beaten down. Underneath is the uttermost limit of that which is beaten down. How far down can your imagination take you, or your experience carry you today? How far down does the terrorism of yesterday take you? How profound are the sufferings of your illness? How weak are you in your personal kidnapping and suffering? How deep into life have you been? How profound has been your experience of sorrow? How far into sin have you sunk in some hour of weakness? How near have you come unto death in your suffering?

G. Campbell Morgan said, "When you have reminded yourselves of that lowest level—and some soul may say, I was never deeper down than now—then listen, 'Underneath,' lower than that, 'are the everlasting arms.'"

No matter how far down you go you cannot get below His everlasting arms!

No matter how deep you go in your experience of sorrow and hurt and anger you will find His "everlasting arms." The figure "arms" speaks of strength and power. If everlasting takes us to the ultimate vanishing point, the ultimate reach of the imagination and thought, then we are reminded the infinite is underneath our load of grief, fear, hurt, pain, terror, and sorrow. The eternal God is underneath it all. He is our sustaining power and strength in time of need. His arms reach into that dark mystery that baffles our soul and assaults us with fear today.

Moses declared, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." G. Campbell Morgan crafted these words:

". . . Underneath life, this mystery of my own life that baffles me, and fills me with fear, and drives me hopelessly along the pathway—underneath it all are the everlasting arms. There is nothing in my life unknown to God. There is nothing in my life outside the compass of that embrace of eternal strength and tenderness. 'Underneath are the everlasting arms.'

"Underneath all suffering. He encircles our sorrows with His own; but in His sorrows there is nothing of despair, there is nothing of weakness. They are greater than mine by virtue of the strength of God, but there is nothing in them of despair, and nothing of weakness. In the depth of suffering I presently find the arms of God underneath.

"Weakness? . . . we fall, and fall, all supports giving away; we sink, sink, sink, until, when no finger can be lifted and no glance of the eye tell the agony of our weakness, we suddenly find we are cradled in the arms of God. 'Underneath are the everlasting arms.'

"By these signs and tokens, by these experiences of the soul, we know how it shall be in death. 'Underneath are the everlasting arms.' Death will be the gate of life. Through it we shall find God.

"Here, then, is the answer to our fears. . . We find our rest in God. He is the beginning. He is always the beginning. He began this day, this very day. This is the day that the Lord has made. He will begin every tomorrow that shall come . . . He is the God of the everlasting arms. It is impossible to sink beneath them, for they are always underneath. "The God of the morning is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms'" (*The Westminster Pulpit*, vol. x, pp. 333-34).

Is He your dwelling place? Is He your shelter in the storm? Do His strong arms sustain you?

There is nothing of greater agony than a sense of helplessness. The unknown future and the unfathomable present produce an assault on the soul and a profound sense of fear. However, in my helplessness the Lord God is always there when I need Him most.

God alone is enough for all our needs in this life and eternity.

Jesus Christ has not been all we want in America. We have wanted a great many other things besides Him. We have craved something besides or in addition to Him. Our soul has been attacked at our two most vulnerable points of false security—financial and military security. What if God should choose to remove both? Where would you stand as an individual? Is Jesus Christ all that you want? Are there other things you desire besides Him? Are we quick to rationalize and make excuses for our selfishness?

For many people it is not the Lord who satisfies us, but our own *feelings* about the Lord. When our feelings fail we think it is the Lord who has failed, and we are plunged into further despair.

Many think that Christ cannot be anything to us unless we find in ourselves something to assure us of His love and care. They only think of God in a time of emergency, i.e., when they need Him, and then of course they think of Him as being insufficient because He does not answer the way they think He should answer. He is conceived of in finite images like themselves. Who am I in my sinfulness and depravity to sit in judgment on a holy and righteous God? How arrogant can our depravity become?

Jesus Christ is enough for everything we face. He is all-sufficient. All our salvation is from beginning to end upon the Lord alone. We have found that He is able and willing to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think."

I have found again this week that my faith in the Lord God was the same as the day *before* the events that took place Tuesday, September 11, 2001, as it has been since then. If there is no lack in Him, then He of

Himself and in Himself is enough. Everything depends upon whether the Lord, in and of Himself, is enough for our salvation, or whatever else we face in life. He is all-sufficient, or you must add other things on your part to make Him sufficient. How dreadful to think that there is something that we must add to make Him sufficient. What you are doing is worshipping a god made in your own image rather than the Lord Jesus Christ who rose from the dead.

Perhaps you are thinking that I don't realize how perplexing and serious the situation is in our nation. I am saying you don't need something more than just the Lord Jesus Christ. I am saying that in all of these situations Christ is utterly and absolutely all-sufficient. "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

There is nothing else that your soul needs than the Lord Jesus Christ. He issued an invitation to all to come to Him who are in need. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Our responsibility to appropriate God's all-sufficiency

It is our responsibility as believers to permit the Holy Spirit to activate the truth of His Word in our lives when we need it. But we must accept responsibility to study His Word daily, and memorize Scriptures so they can settle down in our subconscious mind. How we live our lives each day determines how we face a crisis. The Holy Spirit can only appropriate the truth of His Word as we have taken time to study it.

Perhaps you say, "This all sounds good, but if only I could be sure that it applies to me. I am good-for-nothing and full of sin. I do not feel as if I can make any such claims on God's grace."

Then you do not understand God's grace. Hannah Smith writes:

"All the more, if you are good-for-nothing and full of sin, you have a claim on the all-sufficiency of God. Your very good-for-nothingness and sinfulness are your loudest claims. As someone has said, it is only the sinner that wants salvation who stands in the Savior's path. And the Bible declares that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; not to save the righteous, not to save the fervent, not to save the earnest workers, but simply and only to save sinners. Why then should we spend our time and energies in trying to create a claim, which after all is no claim, but only a His deliverance.

"As long as our attention is turned upon ourselves and our own experiences, just so long is it turned away from the Lord. This is plain common sense. . . . we can only see the thing we look at, and while we are looking at ourselves, we simply cannot "behold God." It is not that He hides Himself; He is always there in full view of all who look unto Him; but if we are looking in another direction, we cannot expect to see Him.

"Heretofore, it may be, our eyes have been so exclusively fixed upon ourselves that all our interior questioning has been simply and only as regarded our own condition. Is my love for God warm enough? Am I enough in earnest? Are my feelings toward Him what they ought to be? Have I enough zeal? Do I feel my need as I ought? And we have been miserable because we have never been able to answer these questions satisfactorily. . . .

"If we want to see God, our interior questioning must be, not about ourselves, but about Him. How does God feel toward me? Is His love for me warm enough? Is He sufficiently in earnest? . . .

". . . . All things are yours because you belong to Christ, not because you are so good and so worthy, but simply and only because you belong to Christ. All things we need are part of our inheritance in Him, and they only await our claiming" (Hannah Whitall Smith, *The God of All Comfort*, pp. 251-252).

Nothing else is needed to quiet our fears, but the fact that God is. His existence is all you and I need for this hour. We don't need any evidence, or proof. All we need is *Him*. God has provided for every possible contingency. Absolutely nothing can possibly separate you from His love. Neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature or thing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord. Nothing!

"We do not need to beg Him to bless us," says Hannah Smith, "He simply cannot help it." That is the nature of a loving Father. "Therefore God is enough! God is enough for time, God is enough for eternity. *God is enough!*" Is God our Father negligent, indifferent, forgetful, or ignorant? Of course not. He knows about

everything. He cares about our every need. He can manage everything, and He loves us. He has demonstrated that once and for all at Calvary. Do you dare ask for more evidence of God's great love? "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (v. 8). What more could we ask?

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