

WHAT TO DO IN TROUBLE

"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Psalm 50:15.

This verse is linked to the preceding verse which says, "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High." The Psalm is a protest against worship that is just empty form. God wants something more than that. He wants a thankful heart, for we read, "offer unto God thanksgiving." He also wants a faithful life, for we read, "and pay thy vows unto the most High." When these two things are done, then worship becomes acceptable and prayer will avail. People who live thankfully and faithfully are best prepared to pray effectively in the day of trouble.

Past ingratitude and unfaithfulness need not discourage us from pleading Psalm 50:15 in our day of trouble. The past can be confessed. We can call a halt to the ingratitude and faithlessness of our ungodly past, and enter upon that thankful and faithful living that confidently calls upon God about our troubles and looks to Him for deliverance.

In the days of your youth you were doubtless charmed by the book entitled, "Robinson Crusoe." Likely you could read it now with fresh delight. Robinson Crusoe had been wrecked and left on a desert island all alone. His case was a pitiable one. He was smitten with fever, but he did not have anyone to do anything for him, not even bring him a drink of cold water. He was about to perish. He had been accustomed to sin and had the vices of a sailor, but his condition caused him to think. Solitary and sick, he found a Bible and began to read it. He said, "Having opened the Book casually, the first words that occurred to me were these, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'" Before I lay down I did what I had never done before: I knelt down and prayed to God to fulfill the promise to me, that if I called upon him in the day of trouble He would deliver me."

There is nothing about the simple words of our text that is difficult to explain and apply to our own lives.

I. The Prospect.

The prospect of trouble looms before everybody. Immediately after they had sinned, but prior to driving them out of the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve the assurance that they faced a life of trouble and sorrow. In the book of Job we are told that "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (5:7). Our Lord once said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Nobody is exempt from trouble. Life is "alternate shade and sunshine." The day of trouble comes to us all. If you are spared at present, then be thankful, but be prepared for trouble coming your way sooner or later. It is part of human experience in this world, which is under a curse. It is part of Christian experience, too. To become a Christian does not exempt anybody from trouble. Some measure of trouble is a portion of the most godly.

Our day of trouble may be the time of temptation to sin. Our day of trouble may be the time of sorrow. Sooner or later sorrow comes to us all. Even a little child's sorrows may be painful and distressing. Many can recall their childish griefs and their little prayers of sorrow that went up to God. Later on, life brought greater sorrows which no earthly power could remove. Our day of trouble may be the time when some duty seems too great for our strength. As life moves forward we may come to the place where things are required of us for which we are not prepared, either by knowledge or experience.

II. The Privilege.

God invites us to call upon Him in the day of trouble, regardless of what it may be. It is truly wonderful that God has told us what to do in trouble. He said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble." Such a word from Him is a great blessing indeed. Our troubles may be personal, domestic, social, spiritual or financial. Here God offers Himself to us in our days of trouble. God wants us to call upon Him sincerely, earnestly, humbly, believably and expectantly. He knows all about our troubles and stands ready and willing to help. He cordially invites us to call upon Him at any moment.

III. The Promise.

God's promise to those who call upon Him in their day of trouble is, "I will deliver thee." His promise of deliverance is exactly what poor troubled souls yearn most to hear. God's ways of deliverance are many and varied. Sometimes he delivers His children from temptation to sin immediately. Sometimes God delivers His own by preserving them in the very presence of the enemy. From the presence of some enemies we shall not escape while we are in the flesh, but we can be delivered from their power. The enemy shall not have dominion over us even though he may annoy us. Sometimes God delivers us by calming our minds in answer to our prayers. This is often the case in trouble. All the facts remain as they were when we called upon God, but He so works upon the souls that we ourselves are changed in our attitudes toward those facts. Paul besought the Lord thrice that his handicap, his "thorn in the flesh," might be removed. That was not to be. Instead, God responded by saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9). The thorn remained, but Paul was able to say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He accepted that handicap for what it was intended to do. Paul was not delivered from the thorn itself, but from being defeated by it. When he understood that it was given to him lest he become too proud, he did not have any further complaint. Through the bearing of this handicap there was more grace coming to him than through the removal of the handicap.

Frequently God answers our calls by gifts of strength which may surprise us and others also. How often He has given us the power to perform duties which seemed too great for us! When there was no one else to take up the work, and circumstances compelled us to make the attempt, we have been carried through in answer to prayer. The weakness that casts itself on God becomes strength. New confidence comes to us and we echo the words of Paul, "I can do all

things through Christ who strengtheneth me." God will deliver His children at the time He sees best, in the way He sees best and by what means He deems best. Infinite Love and power are behind His promise. He can do exactly what needs to be done in every case.

IV. The Praise.

For His mercy to us and deliverance of us we should praise God with our lips and our lives. God indicates the importance and necessity of praising Him for His wonderful deliverance. The happy result of calling upon God in prayer and receiving deliverance is our glorifying Him. When we call upon Him in our troubles, He delivers us, either by granting what we ask, or by doing something else for us in our need that is more for His glory and our welfare. The day of trouble is a time of opportunity, the opportunity of putting God and His promises to the test, and of entering upon new experiences of His love and His power.

We glorify God when we win the victory over temptation in answer to prayer. Our example will have a wholesome effect upon others. Every time we resist evil we glorify God. The deliverance which prayer brings contributes to the glory of God. This is true also of Christians who by prayer are enabled to preserve calmness under trials and afflictions. What is more glorifying to God than the patience of His children? Many can testify to the good which they have received from the influence upon them of those believers who have walked without self-pity or repining through rough paths, and have carried heavy loads with courage and cheerfulness. Illustration: Mrs. W. S. Bay.

God cannot deliver a person who is not in trouble, so it is some advantage to be in distress, for He can then deliver one. Adversity provides an opportunity for the display of divine grace. When you are in adversity, call upon God and you will experience a deliverance which will be richer and sweeter than if you had never known trouble.

If you will call upon God in the day of your trouble, He will deliver you at the best time and in the best manner possible. As soon as you receive the deliverance, give Him the glory for it. When you obtain that which you need, see to it that He immediately gets the glory which is due unto His name. Glorify Him because He has saved you.

"I'll praise him in life, and praise him in death,
And praise him as long as he lendeth me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
'If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.' "

Since none of us can know when we are going to have to face trouble, and in order that we may be prepared for it, we can well afford to heed the advice of Andrew Murray who said, "In time of trouble say: I am here by God's appointment, in God's keeping, under God's training, for God's time."

Let us remember that in any place of difficulty into which we may come we are there by God's appointment. It is not by chance or

accident, but with His knowledge and permission. This is part of His loving will for us. So it is not for us to rebel or question, but to rest humbly, trustingly and obediently in the Father's will, knowing that He never makes a mistake. Trouble takes on a new look when we learn that our Father is in it, and that there is not a hard or bitter fact in life which is not matched by some grace in Him. It is in trouble that people are most often made aware of God. He is nearer to those in trouble than He is to those who are not. Even though you do not understand the reason for your trouble, God has a loving purpose in permitting it. He wants it to keep you from sin, help you to discover His will and cause you to love Him more.

Let us also remember that in time of trouble we are in God's keeping. He Who has been with us elsewhere and heretofore is with us here. He Who has helped us through so many difficult hours will help us now. He will give us sufficient grace in time of trial to behave as His children should. Trouble drives us to God and makes us realize more than ever our utter dependence on Him.

The valley of trouble is perhaps the last place in which we would look for the best fruits of the Christian life. Yet repeatedly people have brought the fairest flowers of character out of it. How many a devout servant of Christ owes the beginning of his real allegiance to Christ to a serious illness, to some crippling disappointment or to an overwhelming sorrow. In all humility many can say with the Psalmist: "It was good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."

"I walked a mile with Pleasure,
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser,
For all she had to say.
I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a words said she,
But oh, the things I learned from her
When sorrow walked with me."

Let us remember that in any day of trouble we are in God's keeping. It is not without a purpose that God allows His children to pass through tribulation. Trouble may be transformed. "They who sow in tears shall reap in joy." Of course, we can miss this. It is possible to travel through the dark valleys and come out unblessed.

Let us remember that in any time of trouble we are in it for God's time. He by whose loving will we have come to this place will bring us out again. Teresa taught herself to say of every difficult hour: "This too will pass." There are times when there is really nothing to do but just to wait in patience till the trouble has passed away. The Psalmist said: "In the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge until these calamities be overpast." In one of Baron Von Hugel's letters to his niece he tells her of one image that had helped him through many a difficult time. "A man travelling on a camel across a desert is suddenly overtaken by a wild sandstorm. What shall he do? It is useless to try to battle onwards through the storm. Dis-mount from the camel, fall face downwards on the sand, covering your head with your cloak, and lie there thus, an hour, three hours, half a day. The sandstorm will go, and you will arise and continue your journey as if nothing had happened."

That indeed is the only way to deal with many of the troubles that come to us. Sometimes all that one can do is just to hold on until the storm is over and to say to oneself, "This too will pass." There is a strange quietness that comes to us in the darkness and the storm, a deep conviction that our times are in the hands of God. The way before us may be dark to us, but to God it is light. We are here for God's time and His time is always best. He is never too late nor too soon. Meanwhile, let us abide His time, facing each day as it comes, claiming from Him the help which the day requires, eager each day to miss none of the good that the day has for us, and waiting patiently until this also is added to the lengthening list of memories in which we can trace the lovingkindness of our wonderful Lord. Let us ever give Him all the glory for His deliverance.