



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Subject: Trouble

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PREPARING FOR DIFFICULTY

The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, but... he will pursue his foes into darkness. Nahum 1:7-8

In reading the mail which comes to our office both by Internet and the mail carrier, I often hear from frustrated, sometimes angry, sometimes confused people who ask a lot of variations of the same question: Where was God when trouble knocked at my door?

Sometimes we blame God for the problem, thinking that He could have prevented the difficulty but didn't; or we blame the devil; or we blame ourselves. The "blame game" is an exercise in futility which a lot of people play.

I personally feel that both God and Satan get too much blame for things they are not directly responsible for. Many of our difficulties are the result of living in an imperfect, broken world. You became a victim of a bad economy. The bottom fell out of the market and you couldn't sell your home. Your retirement got chipped away by inflation. Your company laid off people and you lost your job because they were losing money. The storm ruined your crop and you couldn't pay for even the seed which you had planted. Sometimes we are the victims of ourselves. Poor choices, mistakes, even sin creates difficulty and pain for which we are responsible.

Placing blame isn't the answer in spite of the fact we delight in doing it. The answer is knowing what to do, how to cope, how to survive. Three powerful guidelines can help you stay afloat spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. Write them down and memorize them:

Guideline #1: Get to know God better. We often suffer because we don't understand His nature or character. We fall into the trap of thinking that God equals prosperity and blessing, and difficulty equals failure or a lack of spirituality. Sadly, enough, the preaching heard in many churches today does little to equip us to handle difficulty or personal failure. We are told that this loving God wants you to be happy, to be successful, and to live happily ever after. The result: ill-equipped men and women who are disappointed and unable to cope when difficulty comes.

Guideline #2: Get to know the Word of God better. Scores of people have never discovered the Old Testament or learned how God's people have always faced difficulty, but the theme of the book is that God does meet us at the point of our pain, at the level of our frustration, and will take us through. Study the lives of great men and women of the faith such as David, Elijah, Esther, Deborah, and the Twelve who walked with Jesus, and you will learn God can be counted on.

Their lives were often marked by difficulty, by pain, and suffering; yet in their difficulty they found that God is sufficient. He is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace, as one of the three Hebrew children told his captors. If you can't get it straight from the pulpit, get it straight from the book so you are not caught off-guard when the economy goes sour or your health begins to fail.

Guideline #3: Get to know yourself better. OK--so you are weak and ineffectual. You've lost confidence in yourself. Good; put your confidence in God and discover what amazing things God can do with someone who acknowledges he is a nobody.

Hear the voice of David as he says, "For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall" (Psalm 18:29, KJV). Mark Philippians 4:13 in your Bible, which says, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Put your confidence in the Almighty, and you will accomplish what you wanted to do yourself but couldn't--in His strength and power.

Resource reading: Nahum 1