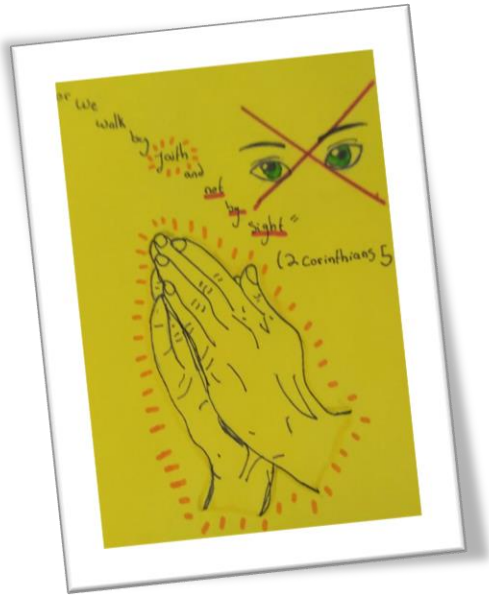


LIVING BY FAITH

For we live by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor 5:7)



A PSALM OF PRAISE

You, O Lord are an amazing God
You love me with a love so deep I cannot
comprehend it.
You understand me better than I understand
myself
because you made me and know all about me.
You are there through everything
through every situation,
through the storms and the rainbows.
You bring sunshine through the clouds and joy
in the darkness.
I praise you because you know my name and
you let me know that I am yours.
You Lord, my Lord are all I have
and so I put my complete trust in you.
You are my hope and my salvation.
Show me the way you want me to go as I rest in you.
Amen

These beautiful words of praise remind us of the love and faithfulness of God. They speak of a trust and dependence that enable a confidence to be expressed even amidst difficult times, a faith that professes hope in the One who provides for our all need.

SB: 5 (selected verses)

**BE not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you!**

**Beneath His wings of love abide,
God will take care of you!**

**Through days of toil when heart
doth fail,**

God will take care of you!

**When dangers fierce your path
assail,**

God will take care of you!

**All you may need He will provide,
God will take care of you!**

**Trust Him, and you will be satisfied,
God will take care of you!**

**Lonely and sad, from friends apart,
God will take care of you!**

**He will give peace to your aching
heart,**

God will take care of you!

**No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you!**

**Lean, weary one, upon His breast,
God will take care of you!**

As the weeks have passed and we have gone through different phases in our own personal response to the pandemic, I wonder if the words and sentiment of the psalm and the song are true for us? Do we have a confidence in God that will enable us to respond positively to our current situation even if there seems to be no end in sight, or are we constantly dragged down by what we see and hear? **What is it that makes the difference in our response?**

There were two Christians, both facing very similar challenging situations. One developed great bitterness towards God for allowing it to happen. Their spiritual roots went to the surface for sustenance, seeking relief in the arts, alcohol and comfort eating. Sadly, life for them became unfruitful as they were unable to see God's prosperity when it came along. The other Christian, though deeply hurt, began to focus on God, not their distressing circumstances, actively seeking His presence and direction. This resulted in a new ministry that encouraged many others, drawing them into a closer walk with God.

Without ultimate trust in the goodness of God in our hearts, we are most likely to turn to things that are temporary and unsustainable for spiritual sustenance when we encounter troubles.

When trials come *'Consider it pure joy'* says James 1:2. George Muller, the founder of the Bristol orphanages was a man of great faith and he said *'The only way to learn great faith is to endure great trials'*. Not necessarily something we want to hear but it is what we need to hear.

During these testing times, actively turn to God, the one who cares for you in all situations, and seek His strength and sustenance and when you do, be joyful, knowing your faith is being strengthened and deepened. Nothing and no one else is able to meet our deepest needs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PjSO5IhI0M>

FAITHFUL ONE, SO UNCHANGING

Ageless one, you're my rock of
peace

Lord of all I depend on you
I call out to you, again and again
I call out to you, again and again

You are my rock in times of trouble
You lift me up when I fall down
All through the storm
Your love is, the anchor
My hope is in You alone

Lord, I may not always see Your purpose in troubles and trials, but teach me to extend my spiritual roots so that I draw, not from the surface of life, but from the depths that are to be found in You alone. Amen

Isaiah 4:1-5a "But now the Lord who created you, O Israel, says: Don't be afraid, for I have ransomed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. ²When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up—the flames will not consume you. ³For I am the Lord your God, your Savior, the Holy One of Israel. I gave Egypt and Ethiopia and Seba to Cyrus^[a] in exchange for your freedom, as your ransom. ⁴Others died that you might live; I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me and honoured, and I love you. ⁵Don't be afraid, for I am with you".

SB: 804

(Tune: St.Denio / Foundation)

HOW firm a foundation,
ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in
His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you
He hath said,
"To you who for refuge to
Jesus have fled:

"Fear not, I am with thee,
O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God,
I will still give thee aid!
I'll strengthen thee, help thee,
And cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My gracious,
omnipotent hand.

"When through the deep waters
I call thee to go,
The rivers of grief shall

not thee overflow,
For I will be with thee thy trials to
bless,
And sanctify to thee thy
deepest distress.

"When through fiery trials
thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all sufficient shall
be thy supply;
The flames shall not hurt thee;
I only design
Thy dross to consume and
thy gold to refine."

The soul that on Jesus hath
leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to its
foes;
That soul, though all Hell
Should endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never
forsake.

Such reassurance found in God's word. Such hope held out in the Word that became flesh. Such stability founded on the one in whom we put our trust - Jesus!

Jesus who calms the storms, turns water into wine and is the Saviour of humanity - a man of miracles, yet somehow, we find ourselves seeking reassurance, hope and stability in temporary things that ultimately cannot meet our need. I wonder if that is because we can see them and we put more trust in things we can see than those we can't?

Hebrews 11:1-3

1-3 Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see. It was this kind of faith that won their reputation for the saints of old. And it is after all only by faith that our minds accept as fact that the whole scheme of time and space was created by God's command—that the world which we can see has come into being through principles which are invisible. (JB Philips)

Now faith brings our hopes into reality and becomes the foundation needed to acquire the things we long for. It is all the evidence required to prove what is still unseen. 2 This testimony of faith is what previous generations were commended for. 3 Faith empowers us to see that the universe was created and beautifully coordinated by the power of God's words! He spoke and the invisible realm gave birth to all that is seen. (TPT)

Talking with Thomas after his resurrection, Jesus says, ***“Thomas, now that you’ve seen me, you believe. But there are those who have never seen me with their eyes but have believed in me with their hearts, and they will be blessed even more!”***

Faith is something that continues to develop as we trust in and depend more on God, and as faith develops so the life of Jesus in us, becomes fuller and more evident.

James writes 1:2-4 ***Dear brothers and sisters when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing***

In these continuing days of uncertainty, seek your strength and comfort from the One who cares for you. Let your roots go down into the truth of His eternal word, rather than to the surface and in doing so, may your faith and endurance flourish, bringing hope even in the midst of trials - you never know, you may even begin to consider it joy!

“everything I’ve taught you is so that the peace which is in me will be in you and will give you great confidence as you rest in me. For in this unbelieving world you will experience trouble and sorrows, but you must be courageous, for I have conquered the world!” John 16:32-33

**FAITH is the victory!
Faith is the victory!
O glorious victory
That overcomes the world.
SB:919**