

Ever been through a difficult time and asked the question **why?** I think it can be helpful to take stock of our situation to see if there is sin in the camp, or maybe God is putting us through a refining process that is necessary to developing healthy growth in our Christian walk.

In **PSALM 34** David is going through his own difficulty, but as he shares his struggles he gives us some very good advice to follow

Bless the Lord v.1-3 Over the years Challenge has gone through some difficult and discouraging times which are hard to explain or understand. So David's advice **to bless** the Lord at all times comes like a stab in the eye with a sharp stick. How can one bless the Lord when your business is going under or when your husband or wife has just walked out on you or a dear friend or loved one has just received news they have terminal cancer?

What I have discovered in my walk with God during these times is that He is vitally interested in helping us to keep our focus on Him, because if we don't we could end up like Asaph in Psalm 73:1-3; *"Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled: My steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."*

You can see what happens when we take our eyes off the Lord and onto something that stirs our emotions, but doesn't satisfy our deep spiritual needs at the time. David goes even further when he declares that he will **praise the Lord** continually. As I contemplate the scriptures the only way we can come to this position is to have confidence that God has our absolute best at heart. The problem is that humanly speaking it does not appear that this is the case, especially when you have outstanding bills to pay or a family member that is desperately ill.

David is building to a peak of praise and thanks when he not only wants to bless and praise the Lord, but to **boast in the Lord** despite his dilemma. To boast in the Lord takes time to reflect on all God has done, so by implication this requires us to remember the Lord's past blessings. Again focus is the issue because if God could bless and deliver then why can't He do it now? Good question. The only reason God cannot do what He did in the past is because we are not willing to trust Him for it. These times of testing can be a great time of witness for us. It is easy to be a witness when the going is easy, but what are we like in difficult times? Because this is how we can wonderfully magnify and exalt the amazing grace of God at work in our lives.

PRAISE the Lord for:

- His help in enabling us to meet our monthly expenses
- His protection over the Challenge building and facilities
- Continued unity, focus and vision amongst the team

Seek the Lord v.4-8 It seems strange to say this but often when we feel we are between a rock and a hard place, the last thing we do is seek God. We are beautifully reminded of what happens when we do seek God in these verses. David proclaims with a sense of relief that **God heard** his cry for help. Friends we need to see that seeking the Lord should be our first response to difficult times. It helps us to keep our focus on God and

**CONTINUED
OVER**

stops us becoming bitter and bent.

Then David declares that as a result of seeking the Lord he experienced **God's deliverance**. This is not rocket science when it comes to working out what we need to do when in trouble, but maybe for some of us we don't seek God the way we should. One preacher said it well "so many church members are filing into the pastors office for counselling when in fact they should be on their knees talking to God".

Then as David experienced **God's deliverance** from all his fears he was given a promise of the **Lord's protection**, and **all his needs were satisfied**. All of this was founded on the basis that he was willing to trust God despite the circumstances he was in.

Fear the Lord v.9-16. One thing I often observe is the lack of understanding of who it is we know and worship. We treat God, at times, in a very frivolous way and so we read David's heart desire for Christians to **fear the Lord**. This means to stand in a reverential awe of God as we are taken up with who He is and what He has done in our lives. When we view God in this manner there is **no lack in our lives** as Psalm 23:1 declares; "*The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want.*"

One writer describes the fear of the Lord as; "a wholesome dread of offending God." Such a person then is marked by a desire to **keep their tongue from evil**, from speaking evil such as gossip and or slander. Sadly for some of us when going through tough times we have a tendency to shoot from the mouth without giving much consideration as to the effect of the words being spoken. We need to **keep away from evil** and not put ourselves in the way of temptation. We need to **pursue peace** and allow God to deal with the troubles that are around us. Where we have encountered someone who has evil designed against us, leave them to the Lord, because He knows what is best to do.

Keep trusting in the Lord v.17-22. When we cry out to the Lord we must do so in **trust**.

That is difficult if the Lord does not respond quickly. Of course most of us want an instant answer and that can cause all sorts of frustrations. However, despite this we must cry out to God in trust and **expect Him to answer**. We must **come humbly to the Lord** not with arrogance, not demanding our agenda. As we wait on the Lord we must strive to **maintain a right walk** before God and not allow discouragement to cause us to succumb to temptation.

We must understand that as Christians we will have difficult times and critical to making the most of these times is having the right attitude towards them. Often our desire when we are praying is that God would get us out of the situation, rather than seeing what we can get from the situation. As we come with the right attitude to God we can have confidence that **He will keep us and protect us** physically, emotionally and spiritually.

{ CARL CARMODY
EDITOR CHALLENGE }

PRAYER needed for:

- The physical, mental and spiritual health of our team around the world
- South Africa project, being our largest hub producing five different editions of the paper
- USA hub which produces three different editions (main, Spanish, prison) of the paper
- Upcoming promotion trip to Queensland for Carl (11-25 October)

Challenge Direct Deposit details :

BSB: 066162 (Commbank)
Account: 00900455

AU.CHALLENGE.NEWS

Contact us by phone (08) 9453 3311
Email: info@challengenews.org