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Our God Who Delivers Us

1: 8-11

Our God who delivers us DIG: What causes you to be on the ropes? Can you identify recurring themes? Why is hope such a powerful thing? How is the hope described by Paul different than wishful thinking? What pressures do you suppose Paul was facing that caused him despair even of life? What reaction was Paul trying to get from the Corinthians?

REFLECT: Paul found that intense pressures led him to depend on God all the more. Who do you know that is under intense pressure now? How would Paul have you pray for them this week? Think about the last time you were discouraged in your faith. What led to that? What can you glean from Paul's story that will help you handle it the next time it comes?

Problems force us to look to God and depend on Him rather than ourselves.



Paul was on the ropes. At the time of **his** writing **Second Corinthians**, **he** was up to **his** neck in spiritual warfare. The tone of this entire letter - particularly in the first two chapters - sounds understandably dire. The celebrated **apostle** found **himself** fighting on multiple fronts. The ministry in **Ephesus** was coming along. But any progress there came at quite a price. The situation in **Corinth** showed some signs of improvement. But cracks formed in the foundation of the church, its doctrine and unity, was coming apart. Fan clubs developed around various people in the church that threatened to undermine the only witness for **Messiah** in that sinful seaside city. Not only that, **false apostles** who claimed apostolic

authority had infiltrated that infant church (**to see link click [Af](#) - The Problem of the False Apostles**), causing significant doubt in the minds of many of the members concerning **Paul's** own apostolic authority.²³ But **ADONAI** has a purpose behind every problem. **He** uses circumstances to develop our character. In fact, **He** depends more on circumstances to make us like **Yeshua** than **He** depends on our reading the Bible. The reason is obvious: You face circumstances twenty-four hours a day.

Discouragement is no respecter of persons. **Yeshua** warned us that we would have **trouble in this world (John 16:33)**. No one is immune to pain or insulated from **suffering**, and no one gets to skate through life trouble-free. Life is a series of **trials**. Every time you solve one, another is waiting to take its place. Not all of them are big, but all are significant in **God's** growth process for you. **Peter** assures us that problems are normal, saying: **Don't be bewildered or surprised when you go through the fiery trials ahead, for this is not a strange, unusual thing that is going to happen to you (First Peter 4:12 LB)**.

God uses **trials** to draw us closer to **Himself**. The Bible says: **The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those who are crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18 NLT)**. Your most profound and intimate experiences of worship will likely be in your darkest days - when your heart is broken, when you feel abandoned, when you're out of options, when the pain is great - and you turn to **ADONAI** alone. It's during **suffering** that we learn to pray our most authentic, heartfelt, honest-to-**God** prayers. When we're in pain, we don't have the energy for superficial prayers.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that you are a powerful **God**, always near **Your** children especially in times of pain and **trial**. For **God Himself** has said: **I will never leave you or abandon you (Hebrews 13:5c)**. Thank **You** for giving us the excellent example of **David** as someone in a very hard and lonely situation - when King Sha'ul was seeking to kill **him** and **he** had to flee from family and friends - yet by focusing on **Your** steadfast love, **he** was encouraged and **comforted**. **Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. (Psalms 63:3 ESV)**.*

*We need to follow **David's** example of not just throwing up a quick cry for help and then going our own way. **His** heart **meditated** on **Your** great power, and **loved You** all thru the night. **David's** focus on **You** was not just a reading of **Your Word** and then forgetting what **he** had read, **he meditated** on how great **Your** power and love are in all situations. **I meditate on You through the night watches (Psalms 63:7)**. May you guide us to **meditate on You** each night before we fall asleep and make it a point during the day to remember **Your** power and love.*

May we learn, as **David** learned, where to go to get strengthened. **His** safe place was not in family or friends, but in **You**. **His** family had to be sent away to Mo'ab for their safety (**First Samuel 22:3**). The prophet **Samuel** was a wise person to flee to for help, but even there, King Sha'ul sent men to capture **him** (**First Samuel 19:20**). **David** found **his** refuge in **You**. Thank you dear **Father**, that when there is no place else to run to for refuge and safety - **You** are always there by us to **comfort** and help. We **love** and worship **You** in good and in hard times. In **Your** holy **Son's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen.

YHVH could have kept **Joseph** out of prison (**Genesis 39:20-22**), kept **Dani'el** out of the lion's den (**Dani'el 6:16-23**), kept **Jeremiah** from being thrown into a cistern (**Jer 38:6**), kept **Paul** from being beaten with rods three times (**2 Cor 11:25**), and kept **the three Hebrew young men** from being thrown into the blazing furnace (**Dan 3:1-26**). But **He** didn't. **He** let those problems happen, and every one of those persons was drawn closer to **ADONAI** as a result. Problems force us to look to **God** and depend on **Him** rather than ourselves. **Paul** testified: **In our hearts we felt we were under sentence of death. However, this was to get us to rely not on ourselves but on God (1:9)**. You will never know that **God** is all you need until **God** is all you've got.²⁴

Suffering causes us to focus on what really matters: For, brothers, we do not want you to be uninformed. This was a standard phrase that a writer in that day used to introduce new information, or, more probably in this case, a new perspective **about the seriousness of the trials he and his coworkers had undergone in the province of Asia**. That the event occurred recently seems to be indicated by the vividness of **Paul's** description of divine **deliverance**. It was fresh in **his** mind. Although **he** gives no further details of **the trials**, **Paul** is most likely referring to the city-wide uprising in **Ephesus** that brought to an end **his** ministry there (see the commentary on **Acts Ch - Idol-Makers Start a Riot in Ephesus**). Given the well-known passion of the **Ephesians** for **their goddess Artemis**, it is likely that the **Acts** incident was extremely dangerous for **Paul**.²⁵

The burden laid on us was so far beyond what we could bear that we even despaired (Greek: *exaporethenai*, meaning *no way of escape*) **of living through it (1:8)**. No stranger to extreme danger (**11:23-27**), **the apostle** here expresses **his** exceptionally dire circumstances. **He** stared **death** in the face and fully expected it to embrace **him**, a sentiment **he** repeats in **1:9a** below. **He** was overpowered with **despair**. It was beyond **his** strength to endure, but not beyond **ADONAI's** grace to **deliver him**. When a near-death event happens to us or a **loved** one and we or they survive, it really puts things into perspective. All the little, insignificant things that used to bother us just don't matter anymore.

Suffering reminds us that ADONAI alone is the One who can deliver us: Following closely on **his despair of life** in the previous verse, **Paul** declares: **In our hearts we felt we were under sentence of death (1:9a)**. **Paul** equated **his** position to be like a prisoner whose request for mercy had been denied and was condemned to die. So futile did the situation appear that when deliverance came it was tantamount to a resurrection: **However, ADONAI, who raises the dead (1:9c) has delivered us (1:10)**! The verb delivered denotes **the LORD's** ability to preserve or keep in tact. The purpose of this near-death experience, **Paul** states, was to substitute dependence of **God** for **reliance** on **self**.²⁶

This was to get us to rely not on ourselves but on God (1:9b). From the TaNaKh, **Deuteronomy 32:39** exclaims: **See now that I, yes, I, am He; and there is no god beside Me. I put to death, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; no one saves anyone from My hand! First Samuel** declares: **ADONAI kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave, and He brings up**. And **Solomon** adds: **Trust in ADONAI with all your heart; do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him; and He will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6)**. For the believer, self-reliance is not only an inadequate resource for life that is to be pleasing to **the LORD (Second Corinthians 5:9; Colossians 1:10; First Thessalonians 4:1)**; it is an affront to **God** on whom we are totally dependent for our physical life and spiritual well being.²⁷

There is a cliché that we often hear, but one that is simply not biblical. It goes like this, **"God will never give us more than we can handle."** Do you really believe that? Does the Bible really teach that? When asked to give scriptural support for such a statement, they usually turn to **First Corinthians 10:13**, which says: **No temptation has seized you beyond what people normally experience, and God can be trusted not to allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear. On the contrary, along with the temptation He will also provide a way out, so that you will be able to endure**. Now it is true that temptation can be translated into trial or testing. But this verse does not convey the idea that **ADONAI** will never give us more than we can handle. What it does say is that **God** will never give us more than **He** can handle. When we exhaust all of our own physical, mental, or emotional resources. **He is the One who He delivers us from such deadly peril (1:10)**.²⁸ **He is the One** who will hold you by the hand and walk you through **the trials** of life.

Suffering causes us to realize that we need each other: **YHVH** came alongside us during our **trials**, so that we can come alongside others during their **trials** in their moment of need. **The Ruach Ha'Kodesh** inspired **Paul** to write that **ADONAI is the God of all**

comfort Who comforts us in all our suffering so that we can comfort others in whatever trials they may be undergoing with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (1:4b). The question for believers is not *why* we **suffer**, but *how* we **suffer**. What do we do with **it** when **it** comes? **Paul** decided not to wallow in **his suffering**. Not to feel sorry for **himself**. **He** chose to channel **his suffering** in a positive direction by using **his** pain to **comfort others**.²⁹

Suffering causes us to become more thankful: He delivers us from such deadly peril (in Ephesus), **and He will deliver us** (from other deadly situations) **again** (from death)! **Paul's** brush with **death** had caused **him** to trust in **ADONAI** even more fully than **he** had before. **The apostle** now reintroduces the note of **hope in God (1:7)**. **The one in whom we have placed our hope will indeed continue to deliver us (1:10)**. Since **YHVH**, who **raises the dead**, had **delivered him** in Asia, **His** servants may both rely on **Him** in the present and hope in **Him** in the future. And for this both **Paul**, and we, are most thankful.

Suffering motivates us to pray: A request for **prayer** usually appears in the closing section of **Paul's** letters. The fact that **he** departs from **his** usual practice and includes it here should get our attention. **His** request for **prayer** highlights what is probably a sore spot in **his** relationship with **the Corinthians**, namely, a lack of reciprocity. As **Paul** would say later: **We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us (6:12)**. There had been a cooling of **the Corinthians' affection** for **Paul**. So **Paul** seeks at the start of **his** letter to rekindle that affection and concern by sharing with **them** how close **he** came to **dying** and how **his** very well-being depended on **their** taking a personal interest in **his** affairs. Perhaps **he** is even suggesting that **his** encounter with **death** was due to the fact that **they** had stopped **praying** for **him**.³⁰

And you must add your help by praying for us; for the more people there are praying, the more people there will be to give thanks when their prayer for us is answered (1:11). **Paul** does not hide behind the façade of a superman who pretends that **he** can survive quite well on **his** own without help from anyone else. **He** has no qualms about expressing **his** desperate need for **prayers**. **Paul** is firmly convinced of the power of **prayer** because **he** knows that **YHVH** listens, responds, and **delivers**.³¹

One of the great mysteries of spiritual warfare is the role of our intercessory prayer in the midst of the battle. You might remember the **Ephesians 6:11** passage in which **Paul** encourages the believers in **Ephesus** to **put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand against the deceptive tactics of the Adversary**. After listing the primary pieces of armor, **Paul** then made a most thought-provoking request. **He** flat-out asked the

Ephesian believers to continue to **pray at all times, with all kinds of prayers and requests, in the Spirit, vigilantly and persistently, for all of God's people . . . and for me too (Eph 6:18-19a)**. When do we **pray? Always!** How do we **pray? As the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** prompts our hearts to **pray!** What should characterize our **prayers? Perseverance!** We never stop **praying**. For whom do we **pray? For all of God's people!**³²

Suffering allows us to be conformed in the pattern of Messiah: Because **ADONAI** is sovereign and in control, **trials** are merely **His** good plan for you. For every day of your life was written on **God's** calendar **before you were born (Psalm 139:16)**. Everything that happens to you has spiritual significance. **Romans 8:28-29a** explains why: **Furthermore, we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called in accordance with His purpose; because those whom he knew in advance, He also determined in advance would be conformed to the pattern of his Son.**

This is one of the most misquoted and misunderstood passages in the Bible. It doesn't say, "**God** causes everything to work out the way I want it to." Obviously that isn't true. It also doesn't say, "**God** causes everything to work out to have a **happy** ending in my life." That isn't true either. There are many unhappy endings in this life. We live in a fallen world. Only in heaven is everything done perfectly the way **God** intends. That is why we are to **pray: May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10b)**. To fully understand **Romans 8:28-29** we must consider it phrase by phrase.

We know: Our **hope** in difficult times is not based on positive thinking, wishful thinking, or natural optimism. It is certainly based on the truth that **ADONAI** is in complete control of our universe and that **He loves** us. **Hope** based in favorable circumstances will always disappoint, but when based on **the love** of **God** and our proven character, we will never be disappointed.

that God causes: There is a **Grand Designer** behind everything. Your life is not a result of random chance, fate, or luck. There is a master plan. History is **His story**. **YHVH** is pulling the strings. *We* make mistakes, but **God** never does. **The LORD** cannot make a mistake - because **He is God**.

everything: **Ha'Shem's** plan for your life involves all that happens to you - including your mistakes, your sins, and your hurts. It includes illness, debt, disasters, divorce, and the death of **loved** ones. **He** did it on **Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:2)**.

to work together: Not separately or independently. The events in your life **work together**

in **God's** plan. They are not isolated events, but interdependent parts of the same process to mold you **like Messiah**. To bake a cake you must use flour, salt, raw eggs, sugar, and oil. Eaten individually, each is pretty distasteful or even bitter. But bake them together and they become delicious. If you will give **ADONAI** all of your distasteful, unpleasant experiences, he will blend them together **for your good**.

for the good: **God** does not promise to make a bad thing **good**, that everything would turn out exactly as we would like, nor has **He** assured us that **He** will keep bad things from happening to us. Much of what happens in our world is evil and bad, but **YHVH** specializes in bringing **good** out of it. In the official family tree of **Yeshua Messiah**, four women are listed: **Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba**. **Tamar** seduced her father-in-law Judah to get pregnant. **Rahab** was a prostitute. **Ruth** was not even Jewish and broke the Torah by marrying a Jewish man. And **Bathsheba** committed adultery with David, which resulted in her husband's murder. These were not exactly spotless reputations, but **Ha'Shem** brought good out of bad, and **Yeshua** came through their lineage. **God's** purpose is greater than our problems, our pain, or even our sin.

of those who love God and are called: Nothing more characterizes the true believer than genuine **love** for **God**, are sensitive to **His** will, **loves** the things that **He loves**, hates the things that **He** hates, and is obedient to **His** Word. It is through the content of His Word, specifically the truth of the Good News, and through the power of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, that **ADONAI** brings people to **Himself**. Therefore, this promise is only for **God's children**. It is not for everyone. *All things don't work for* those living in opposition to **the LORD** and insist on having their own way.

according to His purpose: What is the purpose? It is that we be **conformed to the pattern of his Son**. Everything **God** allows to happen in your life is permitted for that purpose!³³ The question we need to be asking is not *why* we suffer, but *what* does **God** want me to learn from my **suffering**. **ADONAI** will cause your **suffering** to work **for your good** if you will trust **Him**.

That's your choice.