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Knocked Out - Never!



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By Dr. Robert A. Cook



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Are you right on the verge of giving up? Life is dealing you some hard blows. You say, "I just can't take any more!"

...You may of necessity be living with relatives who criticize you, or needle you because of your faith, or worse still, ignore you.

...You may be in a job situation that appears to be impossible. You have a boss who is hard to work for. Or your fellow employees are difficult to get along with. Or the job itself galls you.

...Or you have a mate who opposes you, or fails to understand and cooperate as you think he or she should.

Don't give up! If you are dealing with God, He Himself is the answer to every problem. You may be knocked down, but you will never be knocked out. When you are trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you always win. You have at your disposal all the resources of heaven. Because you love God, "all things work together for good" as a part of His wonderful plan for you.

You Have All It Takes To Win

The Word of God is very positive about the resources available to you for winning. Look at some of them:

"Ye [are] in Christ Jesus who ... is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1 :30).

"All things are yours ... the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

"The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. .. hath begotten us ... ,to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 1 :3).

"We are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16,17).

What greater assurance can you ask for than that? But you may still be saying, 'What about my case? Nobody else ever faced what I am up against.'

The Apostle Paul would answer you. He had some hard times, just as you are having, probably worse. Listen to what he wrote:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8,9).

What is he saying to you?

Don't Give Up When You're Troubled Or Perplexed

You may be sure of this: wherever there is a problem, God knew about it before you discovered it. He had the answer before you knew there was a problem.

You may not know the next step, but He does. You may not understand why you are put with people who treat you as they do, but He does. Don't despair. With Him, you are always a winner. Hallelujah for that!

In a wonderful way the Gospel of John illustrates the fact that not only does Christ have the answer to every human need, but He also implements His provision-every time-through human obedience. Look at a few of these instances.

Chapter 2 - Jesus has the answer to household emergencies (and how many of them there are!) You know the story of the wedding at Cana. When the supply of refreshments was exhausted, the miracle-working Lord called for obedience: *"Fill the water pots with water."* What happened? The new supply was far superior to the first.

Chapter 3 - Jesus has the answer to doubt and doubters. Nicodemus, who came to Jesus with the question, *"How can these things be?"* stood face to face with the Creator: *"All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made."* Jesus said, *"Ye must be born again."* Who was talking? Why, it was the One who flung the worlds into space and who maintains not only our universe but also all the galaxies of the heavens! He is the One who makes the new birth possible. And whoever comes into this blessed relationship does so by obedience to Him.

Chapter 4 - Jesus has the answer to deep seated guilt. The lady who came to the well in Samaria to draw water at high noon, and who spoke to our Lord Jesus in response to His request for a drink of water, lingered long enough for Him to reveal to her the depth of her own soul's need. Then He said, *"Go, call thy husband."* That called for obedience. She had her past lifestyle to face. She had messages to transmit. When she obeyed, the whole town turned out

to see this wonderful Man, this Savior.

Chapter 5 - Jesus has the answer to periods of long waiting. Our Savior asked the man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years, *“Do you want to be made well?”* The poor sufferer replied, *“Yes, but there is nobody to help me,”* Jesus commanded, *“Rise take up thy bed, and walk.”* When the man obeyed, he was healed.

Chapter 6 - Jesus has the answer to humanly insurmountable obstacles. Here was a great crowd of people-more than five thousand-all hungry, with no visible means of satisfying their needs. Jesus asked Philip, *“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”*

Our Lord was not asking for information. *“This he said to prove him [Philip] for He Himself knew what He would do.”* God’s plans are already laid, my friend. He knows what He is going to do. In this case, it was a little boy’s lunch - plus God - that spelled sufficiency.

Here again, obedience was a large part of the answer. *“Make the men sit down,”* He said. When they did so, He took the loaves and the fishes, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down ... and when they were filled, He said unto his disciples, *Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”*

You, too, may be encountering tremendous problems like these in the Gospel of John. Yours may be a family crisis ... or you may be having difficulty in exercising simple faith in what God has said ... or you may have grown weary - and perhaps cynical- because of long waiting for relief from your heavy load ... or you may be utterly., without means of meeting your present staggering need ... or your problem may be entirely different from these.

Don’t despair. Don’t give up. My dear friend, Jesus Himself is the answer. With Him, it is always too soon to quit. Paul put it this way: *“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ”* (2 Cor. 2:14).

What Things Tempt A Christian To Give Up?

What are some of the things that cause people to give up?

...We give up on ourselves. We are discouraged because of the limited progress we see in ourselves. We are troubled because of our lack of faith. We look into the mirror and say to the person reflected there, *“I’ll never be any different.”* How wrong we are!

Each of us needs to remember that God hasn't given up on us. *"His mercy endureth forever."* *"Great is his faithfulness."* He has specifically declared, *"I will never (never, NEVER) leave thee or forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper"* (Heb. 13:5,6).

What is your greatest weakness? What is the area of your life that constantly plagues and annoys and embarrasses you? What is the part of your character (as you see it) that most needs positive change? Bring it to Jesus. Let Him strengthen that weak point. He will. You will come to see that God, at work in your life, will produce the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control.

Paul had some weaknesses, too. He called one of them a "thorn in the flesh." But he brought it to Jesus. He tells us:

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:8,9).

What did this encounter do for Paul? It gave him an entirely new attitude, a new sense of triumph.

"Most gladly therefore will rather glory in my infirmities," he declared, "that the power of Christ may rest upon me ... for when I am weak, then am I strong."

What a transformation! From a questioning, even complaining servant of the Lord, Paul steps out as a triumphant believer. How we need to learn this lesson! God can make each of us strong at the point of our greatest weakness- if we let Him do His work within us.

What else discourages us to the point of quitting?

...We give up on other people. Through the years I have heard many folk admit sadly, "Well, I tried for a while to change him (or her), but I finally gave up."

Husbands try to change wives, wives try to change husbands, parents try to change children, and so on. Human nature is the most stubborn commodity in the universe; it simply will not "give." You may think you have it bent into the shape you wish, when all of a sudden it snaps back into the original mold.

God never intended that you and I should change people. That is His work.

And let me remind you, God doesn't give up on people. He took Jacob, a schemer, a supplanter, and made him "a prince with God." Catch the note of almightiness, of compassion, in the words, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob ... I will help thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 41 :14).

No, God doesn't give up on the Jacobs of this world. Neither did He give up on Jonah ... or David ... or Moses. This great truth reminds us emphatically that we ought not to give up on people either. God is not finished with them -or with us- just yet.

Seek The "Presence," Not The Answer

Each of us must admit that we don't have the answer to many of life's situations.

You don't know the reason for the loss of possessions or prestige.

You don't know why there has come a painful rift in family relationships.

You don't know why your former trusted friends have turned against you.

Let me remind you that Job had troubles just like these-and more. And he asked a lot of questions, such as these:

Why am I here? Why didn't I die before I was born?

Why must I endure all these tragedies?

Why must I put up with people who misunderstand and criticize and belittle me? Why? ..
Why?

Will you notice this: Job never received answers to his questions. What he did get was a new vision of God, a new understanding of His divine purpose.

Toward the end of the book that bears his name Job states:

I know that thou [God] canst do everything ... I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:2-5).

You see, Job got a vision of God-and of himself - that he never experienced in the period of his questioning.

Don't insist that God shall explain everything to you. He knows what He is doing: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." We do well not to demand answers, but to earnestly long for God's presence with us.

You remember that it was the presence of God that Moses yearned for: "*If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence*" (Ex. 33:15). Look at the context:

...I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee ... For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? .. And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace, in my sight, and I know thee by name (Ex. 33: 12-17).

Verse 14 is very specific: "My presence," said God, "*shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.*"

Oh, that's what we need - the divine Presence with us. He Himself is the answer to all our deepest needs.

It may be that some one who is reading these lines is hurting terribly today. Your mind is burdened. Your heart is about to break. You are saying to yourself bitterly, "Bob Cook doesn't know what I'm going through. He doesn't understand my situation."

Of course, that's true. I can't feel as you feel because I don't live inside your skin.

But I can tell you this: when you turn to God and really seek *Him* (not merely "a way out"), when you cry out to Him, "O God, let Your presence be real to me, let me know that You are with me," you will be conscious of the nearness of our blessed Lord and the tender touch of His nail-pierced hand will bring you comfort and peace far greater than any oral answer.

Never Forsaken

Look again at Paul's triumphant testimony that we have been considering:

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; We are perplexed, but not in despair;

persecuted, but not forsaken ... (2 Cor. 4:8,9).

Persecuted! You and I know very little about persecution in the stark agony of the term. Recently I met one of God's heroes, a great champion of the faith who spent many years in dank and filthy prisons behind the Iron Curtain, and who knew what persecution was! But because the presence of God was real to him, he experienced personal triumph and his testimony before his captors had a powerful effect.

When the guards were beating and threatening him, he turned to one of his interrogators and said, "You are pressing me to say what you want me to say. You think that will make me hate you. But I want you to know that I have decided to love you for Jesus' sake. My Lord Jesus is enabling me by His Holy Spirit to love you. I refuse to hate you. I love you with the love of Jesus."

The man recoiled as though he had been struck in the face and went away. Not long afterwards the same guard came in the quietness of the night to talk about Jesus and to trust him as Savior.

Persecuted? Most of us have had to bear very little along that line. But we do know loneliness. We do frequently feel left out, forsaken. The grace of God is sufficient for just such circumstances.

To me, my father was an outstanding example of one who enjoyed the presence of the Lord. In his blindness, he used to sit and sing:

*No, never alone,
No, never alone,
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.*

He would sing this old gospel song, then whistle it, and sing it again. His face would light up and he would say, "That's the truth, Boy!"

Some who read these lines are lonely. The years have slipped by. Your children have grown and moved away. Nobody asks for your advice anymore. Your grandchildren scarcely know you or pay any attention to you. (By the way, if you want to hear from a grandchild, try this: Write, "Dear John: I'm enclosing a dollar for you in this letter." Then don't enclose it. In all probability, you'll get an answer by return mail.)

Yours may be a different kind of loneliness. You may be in a pleasant home situation, but you miss the "dear familiar faces" of those you have loved in the past. People around you cannot

take the places of those you have cherished as a part of your very life. So you are lonely.

Have you stopped to think that our Lord Jesus Himself must have been lonely? He triumphed over His loneliness when He said, "And yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." "The Father ... with me" - that will be the secret of your triumph, too.

Have you formed the habit of talking to your Heavenly Father throughout the day? Don't make a religious speech to Him. That's what we do in most of our praying, isn't it? Talk to Him about the little hurts, the small annoyances that crowd in your day.

Are you feeling "down"? Tell Him so.

Are you lonesome? Spell out to Him exactly how you feel.

Do you have aches and pains? Tell Him about them.

You say, "Come on, Brother Cook! You don't mean I should do that?" Why not?

The Word of God says:

"Don't worry about anything ... but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

Sometimes I experience arthritic pains in my hands and arms and wrists. Not long ago, as I was driving to a meeting, and praying about some other things, it suddenly occurred to me to ask God to fix this painful hand of mine.

So I said, "Lord Jesus, I want to ask You to do something for my hand. It hurts something fierce. It's swollen. And I have a lot of miles to cover. I believe You for this, and I want to thank You now. Lord Jesus, I ask this in Your name. Amen."

Now you can believe it or not, but the hurt went out of my hand and a feeling of well-being came in its place. I looked up to heaven and thanked God and praised Him and went on.

"Oh," you say, "that was a coincidence." Maybe it was. It was a blessed coincidence, and I'm giving God the credit for it.

You and I would have a far easier time if we would learn to pray our way through the day, counting on the presence that will never let us fail.

Triumph - For You And For Others

We have been talking about the hard knocks that life deals us, those sharp blows that sometimes come thick and fast. The believer in Christ is not immune from such things. But *“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tested above that ye are able; but will with the testing also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).*

Paul learned - and we may, too - that victory in any situation is gloriously possible, not just sometimes but always. Yes, we may be “cast down, but not destroyed.”
Never knocked out!

Is this triumph only for our enjoyment, our exaltation? Oh, no. It is equally for the sake of those who are watching our lives, who are looking to see whether the presence of God with us, that we glory in, makes any difference in the way we live.

Moses called this surrounding company of watchers *“all the people.”* In pleading for God’s guidance he reasoned *“... so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth” (Ex. 33:16).*

Oh, yes, the Presence “separates,” makes a difference. The little segment of your watching world is scrutinizing your daily behavior, looking to see how you hold up under stress.

If they see you:

...troubled, but not distressed,
...perplexed, but not in despair,
...persecuted, but not forsaken,
...cast down, but not destroyed,

It may very well be that into the hearts of some, at least, will come a longing for the personal word we ourselves have heard, *“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. ”*

