

The God who raises the dead

Intro

Have you ever felt like giving up? Have you ever got to the place where the pressure or the demands are too much to cope with and you just want to throw in the towel?

Marriage, family, work, commitment to God/church, living holy in this age - all of these face unique pressures and we can sometimes feel tempted to quit.

If you ever feel like that then one thing to realise is that you are in good company! As we read the Bible we find God's people have to deal with the same issues as we do, they fight the same battles as us and have the same struggles. What I want to do today is look at one particular person who was ready to throw in the towel and how God dealt with him.

1. Paul's experience

2 Co 1:8-11 ⁸For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. ^{ESV}

Paul is sharing here how he had passed thru' a very testing time in his life and ministry. Listen to how he describes it:

- ☞ **Affliction** = pressure, antagonism, oppression.
- ☞ **utterly burdened beyond our strength** = exceedingly weighed down, totally overwhelmed. *This is far more, way beyond anything I can bear!*
- ☞ **we despaired of life itself** = literally - no way out! *I don't think I'm going to make it! This is the end!*
- ☞ **we felt that we had received the sentence of death** = *If I honestly assess this situation, my answer would be that I can't see any way out of this. The pressure is too much, I'm going to go under.*

Have you ever spoken like that? Don't be ashamed! So had Paul!

Notice something very important that Paul said - **For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength...** He had come to the end of his ability, the end of his tether.

2. So that....

We have looked at how Paul had felt totally overwhelmed. We don't know exactly **what** he was referring to but we do definitely know the **why** of what he was referring to - **2 Co 1:8-9** **For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.** ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. **But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.** ^{ESV}

Why did it all happen? Why did God allow Paul to come to the end of his tether and reach a point of self despair? **that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.** Even in Paul there was a degree of self-reliance - he said that God had allowed all of this to get him to the place where he wasn't trusting, confident or relying on himself any longer - but to rely, put his trust in and have confidence in God!

We were created to be God-dependant people; people who live in reliance upon God. We are meant to be people who walk by what? Faith! Trust! Reliance upon God!

2.1 Abraham.

Abraham had waited years for a son by his wife Sarah. God had miraculously provided that son, the son whom God had promised and concerning whom God had made wonderful promises. Then, one earth-shattering day, God spoke to Abraham – **Gen 22:2** - **Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and**

go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.

- ☞ Your son
- ☞ Your only son
- ☞ Whom you love....

What was God doing? Bringing Abraham to the point where he would surrender everything to God, to cast himself utterly upon God and rely solely upon Him.

2.2 Jacob.

Jacob was a twister and a deceiver. He was a man who worshipped God but relied on his own wisdom, strategising and planning to get ahead in life. He'd had a big bust-up with his brother Esau who had threatened to kill him and consequently, Jacob had left home and fled for his life. After making his fortune, Jacob returns home several years later (Gen 32). The next day he is due to meet his brother and he spends the night alone under the stars.

Suddenly, in the darkness, someone jumps on him and starts beating him up! Jacob fights back but realises that this guy is stronger than him but Jacob won't give in. Sometime during this wrestling match, Jacob realises that it is God he is wrestling with – he refuses to let go and begs God's blessing. God dislocates Jacob's hip and changes his name to Israel.

Abraham, Jacob & Paul – God getting them to the place where they rely solely on God and not on their own efforts or resources.

2.3 God dependancy

God wants each one of us to know what it is to move away from a reliance upon ourselves to the place where we have trust, reliance and confidence in the God who raises the dead. God wants us to be a God-confident people.

Paul doesn't just say that this happened so that he would trust in God but the God who raises the dead. *The world says where there's life, there's hope* - but what happens when the situation is totally desperate? Rely upon the God who raises the dead! If God can raise the dead then He can do anything - He is what we call Almighty/Omnipotent.

3. Application

3.1 Realise our insufficiency.

We can't come up with the goods! God isn't just for life's emergencies – in case of emergency, break glass, pray, go to church.... We aren't meant to cope without our Creator!

Jer 17:5 Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.

Instead of trusting and relying on ourselves, who are we to rely on? The God who raises the dead!

"Where there's life, there's hope" – but what about when there is no life? When the situation is devoid of hope & you are despondent?

In His very first public sermon, Jesus' opening line was, **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven** (Matt 5:3). We need to be in the place where we realise we are bankrupt and bereft without Jesus! We haven't got what it takes for life and we haven't got what it takes to face death & merit eternal life.

3.2 Realise God's sufficiency – He is enough.

Prov 3:5 Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding.

Don't – rely on your own insight or understanding. Ever laid awake at night trying to figure things out?

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

Do - Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind.

God wants us to be people who are God-confident. God wants to rip the self-confidence out of our lives and replace it with a confidence in Him.

The worse the disease, the harsher the cure.

If I talk in jargon I can tell you to **have faith in God**. To bring it close to home I can say to **trust in God**. If I say that we are to **have confidence in God**, that we are to rely on Him, then that makes it more personal, more active. **Jer 17:6 – Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is in the LORD.**

You have an option today - have confidence in your own strength & resources or to have confidence in God and His unlimited and unhindered power.

If you are someone who professes to love Him then God wants to get you to the place where you are confident in Him - and He will pursue this point with you even to the extent of stripping things from you and allowing you to pass thru' trials and perplexing times.

3.3 Confidence for today and tomorrow.

Paul was no longer running under his own steam but relying on God - confident in God for today and the future – **2Cor 1:10 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope and right now still maintain that attitude of hope that he will deliver us again.** (ESV & Wuest) **Be confident of God's help!**

John 14:1 – Don't let your heart be troubled, distressed or agitated... believe in, trust in and rely on Jesus. Don't let it! What are we to do instead? Have confidence in Jesus!

3.4 Confidence expressed thru' prayer.

V11 - **You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.**

Paul's God-confidence didn't mean that he became a loner, that he just now kept things between him & God. Far from it! One of the marks of a person who is confident in God and is relying on Him is that of prayer.

Do you pray? If not, it shows that you are self-reliant.

Paul expresses his confidence in God by praying himself and asking others to pray for him. He gets other people in on the act.

- ☞ Cast your cares on Him
- ☞ Pour out your heart to Him.
- ☞ Philippians 4:6 – Pray about “anything & everything”!

So, next time you feel like quitting, next time you feel at the end of your tether - ask yourself, *has this happened to make me not rely on myself, but on God who raises the dead?*