

Not a Trouble Could Touch You!

by Anne Dutton

God's children experience great and sore troubles, but through faith in His faithful promise, they can be raised unto a higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation.

Scripture: Psalm 71:20, Isaiah 41:10, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Philippians 4:7, Hebrews 10:23

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

Anne Dutton preaches on the theme of enduring great and sore troubles as part of God's plan for His dearest children, emphasizing the faith required to trust in God's deliverance and restoration. She highlights the experiences of King David, Jesus Christ, and the apostles as examples of facing immense afflictions yet being raised to renewed life and exaltation by God. Anne Dutton encourages the audience to anchor their faith in God's faithful promises, which serve as a source of strength and hope in times of distress, ultimately leading to increased greatness and abundant consolation through God's grace.

Transcript

Dear Madam,

At your request I attempt, as the Lord may afford light and assistance, to give you my thoughts on those words of Psalm 71:20, 21--"Though You have showed me great and sore troubles, You shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

These words of the royal psalmist express his present mournful experience, and his strong faith in God for deliverance, to Jehovah's praise and his own bliss (as verses 22, 23); and in them, we may observe--

1. That great and sore troubles are the lot of God's dearest children.
2. That it is the Lord that brings their greatest troubles upon them.
3. That these troubles may be so great as to make them seem, in their own apprehension, like dead men, yes, as men buried deep in the earth.
4. That from the greatest death the Lord will raise His people unto a renewed life.

5. That it is God's design in the deepest dejection and humiliation of His children to raise them unto a higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation.

6. That the faith of the psalmist and of all the saints was and is founded upon God's faithful promise.

7. That the faith of approaching deliverance, as beheld in the promise, is a mighty support to their sinking spirits and a reviving cordial to their fainting fits. To each of these, if the Lord pleases, a few brief hints, and we may note:

1. Great and sore troubles are the lot of God's dearest children. The royal psalmist, who spoke these words, was a man after God's own heart, an eminent saint, one of the Lord's special favorites, and yet he was a man of very great afflictions. If we read the history of his life in the afflictive part of it, what was it but a scene of very great sufferings! How was he despised and falsely accused by Eliab, his elder brother, when the Lord had spirited him up, and fired his zeal to go forth against Goliath, that proud Philistine who defiled the armies of the living God! How was he envied of Saul when the people praised him, and the Lord was with him! How did Saul hunt for his precious life continually and persecute him severely, so that poor David began to faint, even long after the Lord had promised him the kingdom and Samuel the prophet anointed him to it, when he said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul!" How sorrowful was his sad case, when his son--his beloved son Absalom--rose up against him, to destroy him and take his throne!

And if this psalm was composed, as it seems to have been, at the time of Absalom's rebellion, what deaths, what depths of trouble was poor David under then! How was he obliged to flee for his life from Jerusalem; driven out from the place of God's public worship, separated from the ark, and caused by grief to go up Mount Olivet, weeping as he went, with his head covered, and bare-footed, while all the people who were with him went up in like manner! And when come to Bahurim, how bitterly did Shimei curse him; how cruelly did he cast stones at him! How did Ahithophel, his wise counselor, with a multitude of his subjects, forsake him and join with Absalom; and cruelly and jointly did they plot his destruction! From his anointing to the kingdom unto his possession of it, and from that to his exit, how many were his adversaries, how great his adversities!

And if we look to CHRIST, of whom David was a type, as God's king, set upon His holy hill of Zion, in His wars against his enemies He, though the Father's first and most beloved Son, was yet in His humiliation state, "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"--a man of sorrows by way of eminence from His cradle--the manger--to His painful death, the accursed cross, from the beginning of His life unto His dolorous death! His sorrows, who was the first-born Son of the Most High God, exceeded inexpressibly--inconceivably exceeded--all the sorrows of all the junior brethren, amassed together into one great heap of sorrow. Their sorrows were His, "He bore their sorrows, and carried their griefs." His sorrows had the ponderous weight of the curse in them, but from their sorrows the curse is taken out and gone. It has been well said that "God had one Son without sin, but He has no son without sorrow."

"Whom the Lord loves He chastens." And Christ, the eldest glory Son, standing first in the Father's love, must have the greatest bulk of sufferings, the most ponderous weight of sorrows--be a man of sorrows that dwelt, as it were, in sorrows; who was acquainted with grief; that was familiar with grief, as a man with his intimate.

And the APOSTLES, who were set first in the gospel church, had the most ponderous weight of afflictions. "We are fools for Christ's sake," says Paul, "we are weak, we are despised; even to this present hour we

both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labor, working with our own hands; being reviled we bless, being persecuted we suffer it, being defamed we entreat; we are made the filth of the world, and are the offscouring off all things unto this day, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, for we are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake."

And when James and John, who were our Lord's special favorites, requested to sit, the one at His right hand and the other at His left in His kingdom, He asked them, "Can you drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"--thereby signifying that suffering must precede reigning; and from the greatest even to the least of the saints, I think Dr. Goodwin's assertion will hold true, that "where free grace sets itself most to love, there it bestows the most afflictions."

Every child of God has his own part of sufferings that was allotted for him, and those who are blessed with the largest share of God's manifestative favor have had, have and shall have, the greatest troubles here. And these troubles in their every kind and degree are all appointed and brought to pass upon the children of God's infinite favor. Christ was foreordained to suffer, whence he said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" And, says Paul, "God has set us forth as it were appointed unto death." And as the sufferings of all God's children are appointed for them, therefore, says Peter, "Let them which suffer according to the will of God (that is, His appointed will), commit the keeping of their souls unto Him in well doing."

2. It is the Lord who brings their greatest troubles upon them. As He appoints them for His children, so He brings them upon them, whether they be troubles in soul, in body, in family or in circumstance, in the world or in the Church, they are all brought upon them by the Lord's hand, either by His operation or permission; and thus the psalmist saw God's hand--"Though YOU have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up." Psalm 71:20.

And thus said our spiritual David, the Lord Christ, "YOU have brought me into the dust of death," for of Him and His sufferings at His crucifixion, that assertion is to be taken; and even before it, He said unto Pilate, who vaunted of His power to condemn him to it, "You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above."

And Paul says, "God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed unto death; for we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men," in allusion to that cruel custom of the Romans, who, when they had condemned any person to be torn to death by wild beasts, after having led him about as a spectacle, brought him upon the stage for that purpose. And thus it is with all God's children, "Not a hair of their heads falls to the ground without their Father;" not an affliction lights on them, but is brought on by His hand; and this, in their troubled minds, may cause a calm in the roughest storm, as no evil can touch them but what passes through God's hands, and especially if their faith is in exercise concerning the infinite love of His heart in the sharpest strokes of His hand; but if they speak of their present case, so far as they judge by sense, we may note:

3. That these troubles may be so great as to make them seem, in their own apprehension, like dead men, yes, as men buried deep in the earth. This is implied in what the psalmist speaks, "You shall quicken me again." It is as if he should say, "I am a dead man, as unable to help and deliver myself as a dead corpse is to raise itself again to life." Yes, further, it is as if he should say, "I am a buried man." This also is implied in what he speaks of being "brought up again from the depths of the earth." If he had not been dead in his

own apprehension, he would not have needed quickening; if he had not been buried deep, in his own estimation of his present state, he could not have been "brought up from the depths of the earth."

Troubles, in the sacred Word, are styled deaths--"In deaths often." Great troubles, great deaths--"Who delivered us from so great a death." They are metaphorical deaths, for as natural death deprives the body of life and its comforts, so trouble, which is metaphorical death, deprives the soul, so far as it prevails and is indulged, of that life of joy which it had formerly in the light of God's countenance and in the bounties of providence. And when troubles are great and sore, God's dear children, judging by sense of their troubled condition, esteem themselves to be like dead and buried men. Thus Heman--"They have abandoned me to death, and I am as good as dead. I am forgotten, cut off from your care. You have thrust me down to the lowest pit, into the darkest depths." Psalm 88:5-6

And thus the Jewish Church, in the great and sore troubles of the Babylonish captivity--"Our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts." Here, they seem to apprehend themselves to be, not only in such a helpless, desolate condition as dead and buried men, but even that their case was as desperate, and they as far from hope of life as is a dead corpse when its flesh is consumed in the grave, its bones cast up, dried and scattered about the grave's mouth. And with respect to their own apprehension of their desolate condition, and their utter inability to help themselves, and that of all the creatures to help them, the Lord himself thus represents them to the prophet. "He brought him in vision into the valley, which was full of bones, and caused him to pass by them round about, and behold there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry!" And then He said unto him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" But, nevertheless, we may note:

4. That from the greatest death the Lord will raise His people unto a renewed life. Thus, says the psalmist, "You shall quicken me again, you shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth." Here is life spoken of in quickening, and renewed life in quickening again and bringing up again. David, before this, had been blessed with past experience, in former deaths of trouble, of God's quickening influence--and thus the Lord blessed him again with life after death in the restoration of all the privileges of His kingdom after he had been driven from thence by force, which he foresaw, and, doubtless, all his future deliverances which were comprised in the promise when he spoke these words.

And thus the Lord Jesus after death was raised again to life--brought again from the dead. And thus the Lord spoke by His prophet to His people of old under their dead state and hope as above, and in them speaks to all His people under their greatest deaths, whether metaphorical, or natural, unto the world's end, "Thus says the Lord God, behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord (the unchanging, the covenant-keeping, and promise-performing Jehovah) when I have opened your graves (and then, though He had said 'O my people' before, He repeats the appellation to show the infinite love and abounding affections of his heart, that source of life for them in death, and breaks out upon them again with an O), O my people, I will bring you up out of your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land; then shall you know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, says the Lord." Again, we may note--

5. That it is God's design, in the deepest dejection and humiliation of His children, to raise them thence to a higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation. Thus, says the psalmist, "You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." When the Lord restored David again to his kingdom, he enjoyed it with all its privileges in an increased greatness, and with a more abundant sweetness,

proportionable to the Lord's great and gracious appearance for him, as His servant, in his so great and sore distress. The Lord's design in bringing death upon His children is, not only their restoration to that life and joy which were taken from them, but also to raise them thence, from their deepest dejection and humiliation, unto a higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation. Thus the Lord speaks, when His people of old were to return out of captivity, "I will do better for you than at your beginnings." "I will cause you to possess the double." "In their land they shall possess the double." The double of life and joy, of honor and glory, is God's design to confer upon His people, when He restores them from death and sorrow, from reproach and ignominy.

And thus the Lord's Christ, after His deepest dejection and humiliation, was raised by His Father to the highest exaltation, and made full of joy with His countenance, or had given Him a more abundant and eternal consolation. And thus the apostles, after their deepest deaths, were raised by God unto higher honor and glory in the Church militant, and reserved for them, to their higher honor, glory, and joy, was a richer crown in the Church triumphant. And as it is the Lord's design to advance all His favorites highly, to prepare them for the enjoyment of that advancement more safely, to show His grace more gloriously in its bestowment, and the more abundantly to sweeten their enjoyment of it, He allows them, in His infinite wisdom, to sink into the deepest misery, that from thence, in His boundless grace, He might take occasion to exalt them more highly by His all-triumphant mercy and eternal truth and veracity.

Thus it was, in sin's permitted first entrance, and now is, in all its permitted after-prevalence. Thus it is in all temptations from the world, and Satan, and in trying dispensations of providence, with which the Lord Himself is pleased to exercise His dear children. Darkness and death must be first, to set off the more that light and life with which they are to be blessed; yes, so wondrous is the Lord in His working, that He brings an increase of light and life out of the thickest darkness and deepest death; the greatest joy out of the utmost grief; the highest honor out of the deepest disgrace; the most plenteous fullness out of the most penurious circumstances; and eternal glory out of earthly misery.

Who, then, can withhold from saying, "Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord?" Who, then, of His children, would not give up himself entirely, most humbly and cheerfully, into His all-wise, all-gracious hands, in the most trying seasons? God sees a need, "that His children be in heaviness through manifold temptations, that their faith may be tried and thereby increased, and that it may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," that so, now and then, "He may increase their greatness and comfort them on every side." This He does and will do, in all our deliverances from distress, in time partially; but oh, to what a rich increase shall our tried graces rise, when time-trials are done, and a most enriched crown, in eternal glory, comes on! Then, then we shall be comforted on every side indeed. No side left open for sin and death, for sorrow and grief, for shame and reproach, for necessity of fear of poverty, but all-exalted in fullness of joy, of richest plenty, of greatest variety, and endless perpetuity, in the perfection of holiness and praise, and in the all-sufficiency of glory, we shall reign in life--in the second Adam's life--which is, "life more abundantly" than that which the first Adam lost by iniquity; and in this life we shall reign to a blessed eternity! And as thus the Lord will raise his children from the deepest dejection and humiliation unto an higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation, we may note--

6. That the faith of the psalmist, and of all the saints, for all deliverances, for their earthy happiness and eternal bliss, was and is founded upon God's faithful promise. "You shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side." How came David to say, 'You shall'? Was it not because God had said, 'I will'? Yes, verily. "God had made with him and everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, in which was all his salvation and all his desire!" And all the saints are savingly interested in that same everlasting

covenant of free, absolute, and eternal grace, as David was, in which all their earthly deliverances and eternal joys and glories are comprised, while thus the Lord engages, for all the heirs of promise--"I will be unto them a God (an all-delivering, an all-exalting, an all-satisfying, and all-solacing, an all-justifying, an all-sanctifying, an all-glorifying, and an eternal God), and they shall be unto Me a people"--an all-delivered, an all-exalted, a fully-satisfied, a joy-filled, an all-justified, a perfectly-sanctified, and an eternally-glorified people.

This covenant of promise, which was originally made with our spiritual David, is confirmed and ratified forever by the precious blood of Christ, and by the solemn oath of Jehovah, and contains in it, as in one sum total, all the promises of God, which are all yes and amen in Christ, that lie, as in distinct parcels, scattered abroad throughout the sacred pages, to suit the various necessities and wishes of all the heirs of promise. And whether David or any other saint, in confidence of deliverance, by this delivering God, said, or says, You shall--whether herein he, or they, respected, or respect, the general, all-comprehending promise of the covenant, or any promise of it in particular--this is their faith; their faith of deliverance is founded upon God's faithful promise, and "heaven and earth shall pass away, but not a jot or tittle of Jehovah's promise-word shall ever fail." And therefore, with respect to all heirs of promise, we may note--

7. That the faith of approaching deliverance, as beheld in the promise, is a mighty support to their sinking spirits, and a reviving cordial in their fainting fits. "I would have fainted," said David, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." And the faith of assistance and deliverance, as beheld in His Father's faithful promise, was a mighty support to our great Lord himself in His arduous redemption work. "For the Lord God will help me, therefore I shall not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." And what a reviving cordial to Him was faith in His Father's faithful promise under His most depressing sufferings, when "He endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him," the joy of His Father's highest glory--by His deepest ignominy; of His own greatest exaltation--after His lowest humiliation; and of His people's salvation from all misery--and unto all joy and glory in eternal life, by His pouring out His soul for them even unto death.

Again, what a mighty support, what a reviving cordial, was the faith of deliverance as beheld in God's faithful promise to the apostles and primitive Christians under their great sufferings. They ran their race, not at uncertainties, but in faith's assurance, from the faithful promise, for an incorruptible crown. They were patient and joyful in all their tribulations, while they "looked not at the things which are seen--which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen--which are eternal." They "reckoned that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with that eternal glory which would be revealed in them." And the faith of deliverance, as beheld in God's faithful promise, has been, is, and will be, a mighty support and a reviving cordial to all the saints through all the ages of time, past, present, and to come.

We commonly say, in lesser things, "If it were not for hope, the heart would break." And I am sure, I may say, "If it were not for hope--that good sure hope which springs from faith in God's faithful promise, the hearts of all His people would certainly break, when pressed, as they think, above strength, under great troubles and sore distress." How sadly did David faint, when he said in unbelief, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul," upon which he fled from the coasts of Israel unto Achish, king of Gath. But though poor David met with troubles from the Philistines, and was severely distressed when Ziklag was burnt with fire--and his wives and those of his men carried captive--and his own people, his soldiers, spoke of stoning him, yet then, turning the eye and laying the ear of his faith to God's faithful promise, faith had a mouth to speak comfort, by which "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." His faith in God's faithful promise was a mighty support to him at this time of his distress, and such a reviving cordial it was that kept

him from fainting under sense-apparent ruin, until he saw the promise in performance, in that part of it which respected his being brought to the kingdom, which time was then near to come, although to David it was unknown.

And thus the Church, when carried into captivity, in her doleful lamentations of her sad case and sore distress, while she remembered her affliction and misery, the wormwood and gall, her heart would have broken had it not been for faith and hope in God. But she called the Lord's mercies to mind, His compassions, which fail not, and His faithfulness, which is great, and says in faith, "The Lord is my portion (whence hope began to spring), therefore will I hope in Him;" that is, for delivering mercy from the depths of her misery, unto renewed joy and rising glory. And again, this was the voice of her faith in God's faithful promise, which secured her deliverance from greatest distress--"Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days, He will revive us; in the third day, He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight. His going forth (for our deliverance) is prepared as the morning (which will most certainly come in its season); and He shall come unto us as the rain, and as showers that water the earth," to newly-robe it with greenness and fruitfulness, joy, and glory.

And oh, what a mighty support was this faith of the Church in her approaching deliverance, as beheld in God's faithful promise, under the pressing weights of her present distress; what a reviving cordial was this in her fainting fits; and what saint is there who has not had, more or less, some blessed experience of this? Well, then, may we say with the Church, even in greatest adversity, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy, when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness the Lord will be a light unto me; He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness." And with David, "You which have showed me great and sore troubles shall quicken me again and bring me up again from the depths of the earth; You shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side." With a few words I shall close.

And hence, my dear, worthy Madam, are you under great and sore troubles? Remember that these are the lot of God's dearest children. And yield not to doubt of your being such because you have this mournful experience; and though the inward workings of sin at times under trying dispensations of providence is the greatest trouble of all, and puts your soul to grievous pain, this is a trouble that is peculiar to God's own, and by this grief you may know certainly that you are one of the blessed family, to your heart's joy.

Again, consider that it is the Lord that brings your greatest troubles upon you; not a trouble could touch you but by His operation or permission for the bringing it on. Say, then, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good;" and, "Shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil?" And if the rod is in your all-wise, your all-gracious Father's most kind hand, it will profit your soul in the end.

And are your troubles so great at times as to make you seem in your own apprehension like a dead person, yes, as one that is buried deep in the earth? Think, in faith, that when all help fails within and without, on every creature-side, then for you in your "Jehovah everlasting strength abides."

Further, consider that from the greatest death the Lord will raise you unto a renewed life. You are not always to abide under the power of death. Christ is risen, you must rise; "because He lives, you shall live also." And let your blessed experiences of past deliverances encourage your trust in God for future deliverances. Say, "God, who has delivered and does deliver, in Him I trust that He will yet deliver,"--that He will quicken me again, and bring me up again from the depth of the earth.

Yes, behold, it is God's design in the deepest of your dejection and humiliation to raise you up to a higher exaltation and a more abundant consolation. The greater your death, the more abundant shall be your life; the lower your humiliation, the higher your exaltation; the deeper your dejection, the more abundant your consolation. You shall pass on by every waste to a richer increase of grace, from greatness to greatness; from joy before grief, unto a higher joy after it; from lesser gracious experience before suspended influence, unto a greater, richer, gracious experience under renewed influence. You shall thus pass from blessing to blessing here.

But, hereafter, oh, how highly will the Lord exalt you! At death, in your separate spirit, you shall enter into peace and be surrounded in and by those rivers of pleasure which flow continually at God's right hand for evermore; and at the resurrection-morn you shall enter into your Master's joy; and for grief, there will be no entrance; from the deepest of your soul-misery, from the lowest humiliation of your body, you shall be raised up to the highest joy, to eternal glory. "The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and shall lead you to the living fountain of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes."

Again, is your faith for all deliverance, for your earthly happiness and eternal bliss, founded upon God's faithful promise? behold, this is a sure basis, for the God of promise is the God of performance. "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent; has He said it, and shall He not do it; or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" And "Those who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever." "They shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end."

Once more, as you have had blessed experience that the faith of approaching deliverance, as beheld in God's faithful promise, has been a mighty support to your sinking spirit, and a reviving cordial in your fainting fits, let this put you upon crying to the Lord for wisdom and strength to watch against and oppose the voice of unbelief, which casts the highest dishonor upon the God of promise, and doubles the weight of your every distress. And when the Lord favors you with pleading for prospects of deliverance, by turning the eye of your faith to the great, comprehensive, general promise of His new covenant, or to any particular promise, as a branch of it, by the Holy Spirit applied to your heart, endeavor to hold fast your confidence in the face of all gainsayers, for the honor of the God of promise, and for your troubled soul's bliss; and be bold, also, to tell the enemies to their face that they are liars, and that you, in the strength of Jesus, shall tread upon their high places; for in the deepest distress, "the eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." And therefore, you may say with David, "You who have showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

That "the peace of God, which passes all understanding, may keep your heart and mind, through Christ Jesus," is the fervent prayer of your tender friend, who loves you in the affections of Jesus Christ.

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