

may not understand the reasons God would allow us to endure a trial, He has a purpose for each moment of our lives. As I was facing such a great trial, one passage of scripture encouraged me greatly. James 1:2-3 (NIV) says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance." I knew I needed to thank Him and praise Him in the midst of this trial, for I knew rejoicing in the midst of this disconcerting situation would strengthen my faith. I also knew it would give me a greater testimony than I could ever imagine. For every time we go through a fiery trial, we emerge as gold refined!

If you are going through a difficult situation in your life, look to God for strength. The Bible says, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:16 NIV). I can tell you with full confidence that God answers prayer. Just as God answered my prayer and healed me, He will answer your cry for help. He loves you more than you could ever imagine. Put your trust in Jesus Christ. He will comfort you, heal you, and rescue you. As First Peter 5:6-7 (NIV) says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

If you are looking for everlasting hope, a constant friend and help in times of trouble, pray these words:

Dear Jesus, Thank You for loving me unconditionally. I believe You died on the cross and rose again. Please forgive me of my sins. Come into my heart and make me a new creation. I want to live for You. I want to worship and adore you forever. Help me share Your love with others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, I encourage you to read the Bible, find a church family who can encourage you in your new walk with Christ, and most importantly, pray for God to help you.

May God bless you always,
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Don't Worry!

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In the fall of 2018, I experienced one of the most difficult trials of my life. A severe throbbing in my right leg escalated into a three-month long battle, which threatened my life. Many days, I would sit on our sofa at home with tears rolling down my cheeks because of the intensity of the pain. The symptoms caused critical side effects, including dangerously high blood pressure. Following multiple scans, tests, and appointments, the doctors presented some discouraging images to my dad and me on September 28, 2018. The MRI results showed what looked like a mass, which had grown to the entire width of my leg. As I heard the physicians saying words like *cancer*, *oncology*, and *amputation*, my mind raced with the implications of the possible diagnoses. My dad and I found this news to be greatly discouraging. I remember crying myself to sleep that night with long, deep sobs, wondering what the coming days would bring.

Even in the midst of these dismal circumstances, I had peace beyond all human understanding. My dad and I held on to the promise in God's Word that says we can receive healing through the stripes Jesus bore on the cross (Isa. 53:5). We knew God would walk beside us in the midst of this horrible trial. In October, I had surgery to repair damaged arteries in my leg, caused by my connective tissue disorder. God healed me, and mercifully allowed me to avoid cancer and to keep my leg as well. I give Him all of the glory, honor, and praise. Despite what some of the medical experts were telling me, I knew God would never fail. I thank God for the caring specialist who patiently operated on my leg for three tedious hours. The right doctor at the right time is sometimes very critical. Then and now, I believe God made the arrangements, and His hand was at work. I had calm assurance that He would give me peace in the middle of this dark valley.

Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your

hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” This passage in God’s Word is not referring to the eternal peace we will one day have in Heaven, for we will not experience anxiety when we are forever at home with the Lord. I do not believe anyone in Heaven will be standing around the throne of God asking for peace, as peace will certainly abound when we are in the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

On the contrary, life on this earth is a continuous stream of trials, so our unending need for peace is truly great. Philippians chapter four tells us how to have peace even in the most violent storms of life. First, we must pray. However, we cannot simply present our requests to God. We must also come before Him with thanksgiving. We must be thankful. You may be wondering how you are supposed to be grateful for a calamity that comes your way. God is not demanding that we thank Him *for* the trials, but instead, we are to praise Him in the *midst* of the trials.

When we pray and thank Him for everything He has done, then we will receive God’s perfect peace. Someone may experience peace as they relax beside a resort-style pool, walk along the sandy shores of the ocean, or hike through the lofty peaks of a towering mountain range, but the peace spoken of in this scripture is something which cannot be discovered on this earth without the intervention of the hand of the Almighty. The Bible clearly tells us this peace exceeds our own human knowledge (Phil. 4:7). Therefore, we will never be able to explain this peace nor can we ever fully understand the way it helps us make it through difficult situations in life. What we can know for sure, though, is that this unprecedented peace is an essential element to enduring the hardships life brings our way. Without the peace of God, we will be like an out of control ship hazardously drifting into an outcropping of jagged rocks. Unless we have His hedge of protection, we will have no hope for the future. He is our only source of true peace.

Although we know God will grant us peace, there are moments in life when we may find it difficult to have the words to speak. Perhaps we become troubled to the point where we can no longer utter a prayer request or a word of thanksgiving, simply because we cannot muster up the strength to do so. As I endured such a physical battle in 2018, there were times when the pain in my leg was so great that I could barely even speak. I had confidence the Lord would bring me through, but sometimes, I felt as if this trial was seemingly without end. I felt like the psalmist

David who questioned the Lord, inquiring, “How long, LORD?” (Ps. 13:1 NIV). He wondered if God had completely forgotten him. He went on to ask, “How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?” (Ps. 13:2 NIV). He was terribly worried and distraught, much as I was when I was facing such life-threatening health concerns. It seemed my dad and I prayed diligently, yet no answers came. Day after day, week after week, month after month, I sought the Lord for comfort, healing, and deliverance.

Is this you? Are you seeking an answer from God today? Perhaps you have been waiting, praying for healing or for some other need in your life. I want to encourage you. Do not give up hope. Keep persevering and trusting God to help you in your time of need. Maybe you are like King David, at the end of your rope. In his despair, he was so desperate that he asked God to restore the sparkle in his eyes; otherwise, he felt he would ultimately die (Ps. 13:3). Nevertheless, he also knew deep within his heart that God would intervene. Two verses later, he wrote, “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD’s praise, for he has been good to me” (Ps. 13:5-6 NIV). Even when he felt as if his human flesh would not be able to make it one more mile, he assertively knew in his spirit that God would not fail.

One interesting aspect of this psalm is that David rejoiced in the midst of the trial. Rather than living in despair or simply throwing in the towel, he sang praises to the Lord. Instead of continuing to worry, he worshiped. His trust in the Lord outweighed his anxiety. Even before the Lord had rescued him, he acknowledged the Lord’s unfailing love. Yes, his human flesh edged toward distress, but ultimately, he wholeheartedly knew God would deliver him from his troubles. David was like someone who had fallen overboard from a ship, rejoicing over their rescue, even before someone had thrown them a life preserver. We should all follow the psalmist David’s example. When we feel as if we are nearing the last thread of hope, we need to remember who created the threads of our lives in the first place. God created us, He loves us, and He will never forsake us. When we put our trust in Him, God will intervene on our behalf.

Due to our imperfections as human beings, it can be difficult for us to understand God’s timing. We pray for particular needs, and we often expect an answer to come instantly. Nevertheless, God knows exactly what we need when we need it. Although we