

## When all else fails

If you find yourself in a valley of sorts, and are reaching the end of your strength... If you find yourself at the end of your tether, weary and worn out, you've tried everything you know and still things are not changing for the better... If you feel like you are in relentless warfare, one battle after another without respite... If you feel like the heavens are brass and all around you is wilderness and desert... If you find yourself in a dungeon of sorts... a prison... and you can't seem to get out... If you feel like it's dark, so dark right now and you are wondering if God is seeing you, cognisant of you, cares about what you are going through, or even is powerful enough to change your circumstances, then this message is for you. In life there are seasons where we are led right into the alley of Achor,... the valley of troubling. There are seasons where the Holy Spirit leads us into the wilderness, the desert. And in the desert, there isn't much of anything happening except the heat and cold. There are times when God allows difficulties, and there are times when maybe they aren't his intention, but they happen because we live in a fallen world and He is big enough to use them for our good and his glory and help us through them. But the reality is, there are times when we have done everything that we know to do, and the situation does not change. What do we do then? What do we do when we have utilised every form of spiritual warfare we know to use, and nothing has changed? What do we do when the situation is desperate with no end in sight? Where do we go when we have run to God for help and it seems like no help is in sight? Who do we turn to when we have turned to God and we still wait some change or breakthrough? Who do we trust in when trust in God hasn't resulted in what we thought it would? How does God require us to proceed? What do we do when it seems like all else has failed?

### 1. Guard your heart

#### **Mat 11:2-11 (NKJV)**

*<sup>2</sup>And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples <sup>3</sup>and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"*

*<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. <sup>6</sup>And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."*

**We need to guard our hearts from offence and disillusionment toward God.**

<sup>7</sup>As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: ... <sup>9</sup>But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>For this is he of whom it is written: 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.' <sup>11</sup>"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

- This is great John the Baptist whom Jesus spoke of
- This is John the Baptist whose very purpose in life was to herald Jesus.

### **Mat 3:1-3 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup>In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup>and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" <sup>3</sup>For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS: 'PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD; MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.' "

- This is John the Baptist who recognised Jesus and baptised him, who saw the Holy Spirit (dove) descend upon Jesus and heard the Father's affirmation of Jesus.

### **Mat 3:13-17 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" <sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. <sup>16</sup>When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. <sup>17</sup>And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

- This is John the Baptist whom Paul spoke highly of as one who ran his race and finished his course. He fulfilled his purpose. He was faithful. He was obedient.

### **Act 13:25 (NKJV)**

And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'

- What was happening? John was in prison. About to be martyred. Jesus was continuing to heal, do miracles, and pursue His purpose. John was possibly disillusioned. It hadn't turned out like he had imagined or hoped. Jesus was his cousin, first. Second, Jesus Himself had called John great. John had prepared the way for Jesus. He had been obedient, faithful to God's call on his life. Surely with obedience, faithfulness and then the family tie, Jesus would do something for John if He truly was the Son of God?
- Maybe offence was kicking in. Jesus mentioned it. If God really is good and all that, surely He would get John out of the situation? If God really was all powerful, He could right? He could do something! Why wouldn't He if He was who He said He was?

Disillusionment. Offence toward God. Something we all will have to face sometime. God is not who I thought He was. He doesn't work like I thought He would. Why not? Is it me? Is it God? Is He really who He says he is? I've been obedient and done everything I know to do. What is this happening to me? Maybe this whole Christian thing isn't worth it. Maybe it doesn't work. Maybe I've missed it. Believed a lie. Maybe He is not who He says He is.

## 2. Trust in the Lord

### Pro 3:5-6 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup>Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

### Ps 37:4-5 (TPT)

<sup>4</sup>Find your delight and true pleasure in Yahweh, and he will give you what you desire the most. <sup>5</sup>Give God the right to direct your life, and as you trust him along the way, you'll find he pulled it off perfectly!

### Ps 25:1-2 (NKJV) A Psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup>To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul. <sup>2</sup>O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me.

- Warfare doesn't show that God can't be trusted. It's in the thick of the warfare that we need to trust Him all the more. It's when we can't see that we need Him all the more. It's when our enemies look like they are winning, succeeding, that we need to trust Him all the more.

I want us to turn to Psalm 23. That famous chapter we all love to quote. I fear that we are drawn to certain phrases and portions, and the others fade into the background:

**Psa 23:1-6 (NKJV)** A Psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup>*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. <sup>2</sup>He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. <sup>3</sup>He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. <sup>4</sup>Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. <sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. <sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.*

- Sometimes we need to walk through valleys. Sometimes those valleys are dark. That's where we need to fear no evil.
- We need to learn how to receive comfort in the valley. We can't receive comfort when we are raging against God. If we are offended or disillusioned.
- Sometimes our enemies are strong and real and very close. That's where He prepares a table before us.
- We need to learn to feast in the presence of our enemies, with the threat of war, or in the midst of the warfare. We need to learn to see His goodness in the presence of evil. We need to be able to discern the Lord's provision in the presence of difficulty.

**2 Ki 6:13-17 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup>*So he (King of Syria) said, "Go and see where he (Elisha) is, that I may send and get him." And it was told him, saying, "Surely he is in Dothan." <sup>14</sup>Therefore he (King of Syria) sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. <sup>15</sup>And when the servant of the man of God (Gehazi) arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him (Elisha), "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" <sup>16</sup>So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." <sup>17</sup>And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

- We need to remember that we don't always see the whole picture. God can. That's why we need to trust Him.

**Jer 17:5-8 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup>Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD. <sup>6</sup>For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. <sup>7</sup>"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. <sup>8</sup>For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

**3. Look for the door of hope****Hos 2:14-15 (AMP)**

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, behold, I will allure her [Israel] and bring her into the wilderness, and I will speak tenderly and to her heart. <sup>15</sup>There I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor [troubling] to be for her a door of hope and expectation. And she shall sing there and respond as in the days of her youth and as at the time when she came up out of the land of Egypt. [Exo 15:2; Jos 7:24-26]

**Rom 15:13 (NKJV)**

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is something about hope that opens a door for joy and peace. We have to look for the door of hope and within that door we will find joy and peace. It's a door within a door.

**4. Be strong in the Lord****Eph 6:10 (AMP)**

In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [be empowered through your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength which His boundless might provide].

- Are you feeding on the Word regularly?
- Are you praying regularly?

<sup>18</sup>Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God's consecrated people).

**Jas 5:16 (NKJV)**

*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

- How are your daily spiritual disciplines?
- Are you in community? Accountable relationships that strengthen you spiritually, hold you accountable, tell you what you need to hear and not just what you want to hear?

**Pro 27:17 (MSG)**

*You use steel to sharpen steel, and one friend sharpens another*

**Col 3:16 (NKJV)**

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

## **5. Fight!**

**Deu 2:24 (AMP)**

*Rise up, take your journey, and pass over the Valley of the Arnon. Behold, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land; begin to possess it and contend with him in battle.*

- I think sometimes we forget that just because God has promised us something, it doesn't mean there will be no warfare. Just because He paid for our healing, doesn't mean we won't have to fight for our health. Just because he promised us certain territories, doesn't mean we won't have to contend and go to warfare and repeated warfare at times in order to take hold of what he has already said he has given us.
- Sometimes God allows us into challenging circumstances to teach us how to war.

**Psa 144:1-2 (NKJV)** A Psalm of David.

*<sup>1</sup>Blessed be the LORD my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle— <sup>2</sup>My loving-kindness and my fortress, My high tower and my deliverer, My shield and the One in whom I take refuge, Who subdues my people under me.*

- If you are in a battle right now, have you picked up all your weapons? Have you used them?

(i) Praise

**Psa 149:1-9 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise in the assembly of saints. <sup>2</sup>Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. <sup>3</sup>Let them praise His name with the dance; Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp. <sup>4</sup>For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation. <sup>5</sup>Let the saints be joyful in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. <sup>6</sup>Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, <sup>7</sup>To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishments on the peoples; <sup>8</sup>To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron; <sup>9</sup>To execute on them the written judgement— This honour have all His saints. Praise the LORD!

(ii) Declaring the Word of God in faith

**Eph 6:17 (NKJV)**

*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

*This was Jesus' weapon of choice in the wilderness when the enemy came against him (Lk. 4:3-12)*

(iii) Prayer and intercession

**Eph 6:18 (NKJV)**

*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

(iv) Coming in the opposite spirit

**Rom 12:19-21 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup>Beloved do not avenge yourselves, but rather give no place to wrath; for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup>Therefore "IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM; IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

Remember love ever fails.

**1 Co 13:4-8 (NKJV)**

*<sup>4</sup>Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup>does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup>Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away...*

I remember watching a documentary once where a biblical scholar indicated that he believed the most powerful weapon of spiritual warfare was love.

*(vi) Stand in faith*

**1 Co 16:13 (NKJV)**

*Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.*

*(vii) Being filled with joy*

**Neh 8:10 (NKJV)**

*Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."*

Very often when we allow the enemy to rob us of our joy, he robs us of our strength.

*(viii) Peace*

**Php 4:6-9 (NKJV)**

*<sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup>and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. <sup>9</sup>The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*

Peace is a guard. This scripture reveals some of the keys to retaining our peace: Prayer; thanksgiving; supplication; meditations of our heart and mind (our thoughts).

## 6. Having done all stand

### **Eph 6:13-18 (AMP)**

<sup>13</sup>Therefore put on God's complete armour, that you may be able to resist and stand your ground on the evil day [of danger], and, having done all [the crisis demands], to stand [firmly in your place]. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore [hold your ground], having tightened the belt of truth around your loins and having put on the breastplate of integrity and of moral rectitude and right standing with God, <sup>15</sup>And having shod your feet in preparation [to face the enemy with the firm-footed stability, the promptness, and the readiness produced by the good news] of the Gospel of peace. [Isa 52:7] <sup>16</sup>Lift up over all the [covering] shield of saving faith, upon which you can quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked [one]. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation and the sword that the Spirit wields, which is the Word of God.

- Give it up, but never give up!

### **2 Co 4:7-9 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. <sup>8</sup>We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—

### **Conclusion:**

1. Guard your heart
2. Trust in the Lord
3. Look for the door of hope
4. Be strong in the Lord
5. Fight!
6. Having done all stand