

ENCOURAGING WORDS FOR DISCOURAGING DAYS

WHEN THE BOTTOM DROPS OUT

LAMENTATIONS 4; ISAIAH 43



The Heart of the Matter

We can all identify with that sudden urge of panic that accompanies calamity. The mixture of surprise and disappointment, fear, and confusion converges upon our emotional frame instantaneously . . . inflicting an almost intolerable pressure within us. What anguish! Yet how necessary for growth! Adversity is the measure of our mettle . . . the true touchstone of our stamina. Like it was for Isaiah. And for Jeremiah. Let's take a look at one such situation that occurred more than 2,500 years ago.



Discovering the Way

1. The Time

Because of Judah's sinful disobedience to God, the Babylonians came and laid siege to Jerusalem.

2. The Siege (Isaiah 43:1–5; Lamentations 4:1–11)

Destruction comes to the city, material possessions lose their value, and people begin to lose their dignity.

3. The Catastrophe (Lamentations 4:12–22)

Calamity is unexpected, it makes us feel helpless, we believe we are beyond comfort, and it leaves us exposed and vulnerable.



Starting Your Journey

We should all remember two things about the difficult times. First, *sudden devastation could be the beginning of a reconstruction period*. And second, *behind the human pain of calamity is the faithful presence of God*.



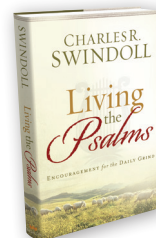
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PROVIDENCE MADE PRACTICAL

ROMANS 8:28–30



The Heart of the Matter

In a context dealing with suffering, groaning, and weeping (Romans 8:18–26), the apostle Paul’s words give the reader reason for encouragement and hope. While a purely horizontal perspective tends to bring upon us a heaviness of heart, the first bright ray of hope comes with the introduction of a vertical perspective. In verse 27, we are told that the Spirit of God intercedes on our behalf “according to the will of God.” What a thought! But we need to know more. As the rest of the passage makes clear, we need to understand and accept that such intercessory support works effectively for our good and for God’s glory.



Discovering the Way

1. Wrestling with God’s Providence (Romans 8:12–13, 23–27)

We sometimes struggle with God’s providence because of our self-centeredness, our fear, and our pride. Two facts about God should remind us of where our perspective so often falls short.

2. Thinking through God’s Providence (Romans 8:28–30)

God provides us with an unconditional promise to work for our good and an unfathomable basis—conforming us to the image of His Son, Jesus.



Starting Your Journey

To come to grips with God’s providence, we must move past our initial *rejection*, progress beyond our *toleration*, and be encouraged by our *realization* of God’s faithfulness.



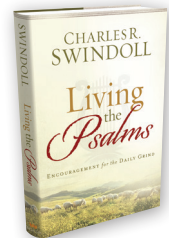
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ENCOURAGING WORDS FOR DISCOURAGING DAYS

BREAKING DEATH'S JAWS

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

Death. Poets and playwrights from Euripides to Shakespeare acknowledge its all-consuming presence in the world. From its opening pages to its resounding conclusion, the Bible reminds us time and again that none will evade the inevitability of death. We see it all around us—on the news, among acquaintances, and even in our families. Where does encouragement come from with so many dying? The story of Lazarus and his grieving sisters provides us some guidance on the source and content of the hope we have in Christ.



Discovering the Way

1. Death Comes to Us All

No one can escape the clutches of death. Each of us will be touched by it, as the Bible makes clear from Genesis to Revelation.

2. Preparing for Death (John 11:1–6, 17–27)

How do we cope when death takes a loved one from us? Like Mary and Martha did, we should trust that Christ, who called Himself “the resurrection” (John 11:25), will resurrect His people when He returns.



Starting Your Journey

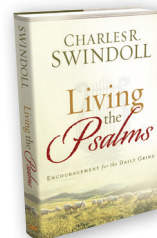
Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Place your faith in Him today, believing in His death and resurrection on your behalf.



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ENCOURAGING WORDS FOR DISCOURAGING DAYS

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP ON ENCOURAGEMENT

HEBREWS 10:19–25



The Heart of the Matter

People attend church for all sorts of reasons. One reason common among most believers is that church attendance affords us an opportunity to worship God. While that is certainly one of the reasons Christians should attend church, there is at least one other: We attend church because it allows us the opportunity to encourage others. The Bible teaches us that we are to come alongside others that they might be encouraged. For when we seek to encourage and help others, we engage in the same ministry as God Himself (John 14:16–17).



Discovering the Way

1. Our Position before God (Hebrews 10:19–21)

When we become Christians, God provides us the confidence to approach Him because of the work of His Son, who gives us access to the Father in heaven.

2. Our Responsibility before God (Hebrews 10:22–25)

As a result of our faith in Christ, we should draw near to God in prayer, hold fast to His promises, and consider how we might encourage others toward love and good deeds.



Starting Your Journey

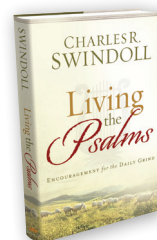
As we seek to become a people who encourage, we must be available to others and initiate our encouragement of others.



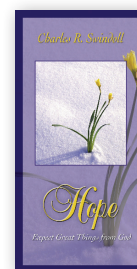
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