

27. I SAW YOU UNDER THE FIG TREE

*I would rather walk in the dark
with God, than go alone in the
light.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

I SAW YOU UNDER THE FIG TREE

Psalms 34:18: "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Some of you may have asked questions like: "I wonder where God is? I wonder how active He was in the trials of life that I've experienced until this point? Has He been active? Has He seen what I am going through?" It made me think of Psalms 6:2 where David wrote and said: "*Have mercy on me Lord, for I am faint; heal me Lord, for my bones are in agony. I have prayed a prayer, Lord heal me.*" Have you ever prayed a prayer like David prayed, desperately calling on God amidst trials and desperation? When your spiritual throat is hurting because you haven't had water in a long time? Times when you feel emotionally parched and all you desire is relief – a little bit of hope and a little glimmer at the end of the tunnel?

The worst part of going through agony, going through heartbreak and pain, is when we have to do it **alone**. Many of us feel worse in the situations we face because we feel we face them alone. Most people struggle to find somebody to talk to when they are faced with heartache and pain. Somebody to talk to, to cry with and to be comforted by in times of distress. Sometimes we even question whether **God knows**, whether He understands, whether His heart breaks when we are in pain. If today, you are struggling with heartache, with a broken heart, with the pain of emotions overwhelming you, I want to remind you of Psalms 34:18 that says: "*The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*"

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Psalms 147:3 says: "He heals the broken-hearted and bandages their wounds." Jesus is like a paramedic. He comes and He sees your hurt and your pain and He bandages it up. In the midst of heartache and loneliness one sometimes tends to ask, "Where is God and how does He feel about my pain? Does it even bother Him that I am in pain?" David addressed this question of whether God sees and whether God cares about the trials and tribulations and pain that we experience.

Psalms 94 talks about how "*The arrogant wicked gladly crush God's people, killing and murdering them. Hurting those whom God has claimed as His own.*" It is clear that God's people are hated and they may feel very lonely in this world because the world hates them and the world may at times even persecute them. I am not necessarily talking about them being killed or being crucified or all those torturous things that sometimes happened to Christians. I am simply talking about being cast aside because of your beliefs, not being able to talk to somebody about how you feel because they don't believe the same as you do.

Someone who felt like this, who felt abandoned, alone, and as if the world was against him with nobody to turn to who would understand what he was going through, was the prophet Elijah. He specifically felt that there was no one he could explain his trials to. There was no other prophet who he could turn to as a friend for assistance. He said in 1 Kings 18:22: "*I am the only prophet of the Lord that is still left.*" Ahab and Jezebel were the king and the queen during the time of Elijah and they killed all God's prophets.

**EVER ASK THE QUESTION: 'WHERE
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GOD SEES YOU, HE NOTICES
EVERY TEAR YOU CRY!**

Elijah further said: "There were 450 Baal prophets (unrighteous prophets that didn't serve the true living God)." Elijah also said: "In my life I can't find any other prophet, it is just me." I wonder if he felt very alone. God called him to do a very specific work and that was to tell Jezebel and Ahab what they were doing was wrong.

When Elijah delivered the message to them, Jezebel got so angry that she said to him: "Before the sun sets tonight, I am going to kill you!" Elijah ran into the wilderness. He ran for his life, fearing for his life, feeling that his trials were his own and that there was nobody to explain to and who would understand. 1 Kings 19:4 tells us what he did: *"Elijah walked a whole day into the wilderness. He stopped and sat in the shade of a tree and wished that he could die. 'It is too much for me, Lord,' he prayed. 'Take away my life; I might as well be dead.'"* Elijah further responded in 1 Kings 19:10: *"The Lord God Almighty, I have always served You – You alone. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with You, torn down your altars, and killed all your prophets. I am the only one left – and they are trying to kill me."* Elijah did not say this once, he repeated it in verse 14: *"The Lord God Almighty, I have always served You – You alone. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with You, torn down your altars, and killed all your prophets. I am the only one left – and they are trying to kill me."*

So twice he said to the Lord: "Lord I wish I was dead because I am the only one in this situation and nobody understands. There are no other prophets. It's just me! It's just me!!'ve served You and now I am alone in serving You."

THE PROPHET ELIJAH FELT VERY ALONE WHILE WORKING FOR GOD, HE BECAME DISCOURAGED EVEN TO THE POINT OF GIVING UP, RUNNING AWAY AND EVEN WANTING TO DIE.

He said nobody understood what he was going through (this is my own interpretation of what he was saying). Then in verse 18 the Lord answered him: *"Yet will I leave seven thousand people alive in Israel – all those who are loyal to Me and have not bowed to Baal or kissed his idol."* [This was after God declared some destruction that would take place.]

Elijah declared that he felt very much alone in his spiritual battle, that there was no one serving the Lord, not even prophets. But God said to him: 'Elijah, you are mistaken, there are 7000 people who are still serving Me. I have left them alone because they are loyal to Me.' We often feel that we are alone and that God does not see our distress. We think He does not understand our heart and everything we go through. I want to tell you that God understands, He sees and He is there to help. Not only to help, but to comfort and to sympathise with you through His Word as He sympathised with Elijah to say, "You are not alone. Let me show you who is still there, who can be there for you."

We tend to read the Bible one-sidedly. An example of how God cares for us is found in the book of Matthew where God says He takes care of the grass and the fields and the flowers and the birds of the air. Then He continues: "How much more will I care for you?" We often think this means that God is going to take care of our food and our clothes. What God is saying here is that He will take care of all your needs. Your need for companionship, your emotional support needs and the need not to go through the trials of life alone. There will always be someone and if that someone is not a human, it is God Himself. God further says He also understands that you have a broken heart that needs to be healed and He will work on it, He will heal your broken heart.

**GOD UNDERSTANDS THAT YOU HAVE
A BROKEN HEART THAT NEEDS TO BE
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BROKEN HEART.**

Psalms 94 says: *"The wicked say that the Lord of Israel doesn't care."* This is usually true of people who are not believers. They want you to believe when you follow the Lord, He does not care; or they want you to think He doesn't care because they do not believe in Him. I want to tell you today that God does care. A song I am reminded of that we used to sing, says: *"... Oh yes He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief. When the days are weary and the long nights are dreary, I know my Saviour cares."* Jesus cares when you are in emotional pain, when it hurts so bad that you cannot sing or even pray. Jesus cares when your burdens become so pressing and you find no relief because they just keep dragging on and on without an end. Jesus cares when you have lost a loved one and your mind is so broken that you cannot focus anymore. Jesus cares when you are struggling with sin and you lose the battle and guilt starts to overwhelm you. Yes, He cares when fear of the unknown grips your soul and you can no longer see the light at the end of your life. Jesus cares when you wake up in the morning and you have puffy eyes from crying all night. Jesus cares when you are heartbroken and in pain, when it hurts so bad that you even struggle to breathe.

I know **Jesus cares** because the Bible tells me that He spoke to Peter and said: "Peter I have seen sin crouching at your door. I have seen your temptations and I have prayed for you that there might be a way for you to escape." Sometimes we do not see or feel the presence of God in our trials and that makes us think He does not care.

JESUS CARES FOR YOUR EMOTIONAL PAIN, WHEN YOU FIND NO RELIEF FROM YOUR BURDENS. WHEN YOU HAVE LOST A LOVED. WHEN YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH SIN. WHEN FEAR GRIPS YOUR SOUL. WHEN IT HURTS SO BAD THAT YOU EVEN STRUGGLE TO BREATHE.

Psalms 94:9 tells us how God cares: *“Is He deaf who made our ears? Is He blind who made our eyes?”* This verse can be interpreted in two ways. It can be seen as very sarcastically in asking how can He be so blind, He made our eyes? He made our ears, why is He so deaf? With this Psalm, David is saying that it cannot be! God made our ears so He cannot be deaf for us. He made your ears and your eyes therefore He is not deaf or blind for your pain. Psalms 94 tells us that God will not leave those who hurt His people, unpunished. He knows everything they do. He knows all the hurtful and cruel things they are doing to you. When you hurt like that, I would recommend that you take your pain to God, the One who **hears** and who **sees**. He will hear your prayer and relieve is on its way. He will send an answer at the right time.

I've experienced many difficult times in my life, but I am reminded of one specific thing I've been struggling with for years. A pain, a heartache that I have been carrying with me for years. During one specific week in the beginning of 2020, I prayed to the Lord and asked Him whether He didn't care that I was in pain? I asked Him when He would relieve me from this constant oppression of Satan's hand in my life making me feel so miserable? That morning when I read my daily devotional, God gave me a promise from His Word in Isaiah 43:19: *“I'm about to do something new. See I have already begun! Do you not see it? Do you not perceive it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.”* My heart skipped a beat when I read this verse. I was so excited and said: “Lord, I claim this promise.

ISAIAH 43:19: “I’M ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING NEW. SEE I HAVE ALREADY BEGUN! DO YOU NOT SEE IT? DO YOU NOT PERCEIVE IT? I WILL MAKE A PATHWAY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS. I WILL CREATE RIVERS IN THE DRY WASTELAND.”

You promised, now please help me to hold on to this promise until You bring relief.” A few days later I saw the same verse posted on Facebook by one of my friends. I was renewed in my strength to say, “The Lord has made this promise. I must just hold on until it is fulfilled.” Time passed and I was waiting and waiting. Things got a little bit better in my mind, but not really. Then I started thinking to myself that the promise was in my imagination and it wasn't really a direct promise from God for my situation. Maybe I was just hoping for it. I then attended an ordination and commissioning service where my friend Pastor Tataiso was commissioned. At the end of the commissioning service, during the charge towards the pastors, she read a verse and lo and behold, the verse she quoted was this very same verse, the promise that was given to me.

For about two months this promise kept being repeated to me over and over again, but it was only fulfilled or in the beginning of fulfillment in the third month. Guess what made the way for me? Guess what ushered the water into my wilderness? It was the lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic. It brought new hope and prosperity into my life, into my emotions and into my well-being. The broken-heartedness I felt for so long has finally lifted. This might not be the same for you. COVID-19 might be your trial, but know one thing, Jesus cares and He sees your pain. When you call on Him, He will send relief in due time. Do not give up. Though life might seem to be ganging up against you and things are just piling up, God has not abandoned you, He has not forgotten you. The eyes of the God of Israel are on those whom He loves.

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I am sure you know the saying *'tragedies strike in threes.'* In other words, tragedy does not ask you if it can come knocking at your door, it does not ask if you are ready for heartache. When you are in a bad space already, tragedy just has a tendency to show up and pile up. Some days the cross you've been called to carry may seem too heavy to bear. One thing I can tell you is that even though relief has come for me, my desert has not been removed. There is something important we all need to realise – God did **not** say He was going to **remove** the desert completely. He said He was going to make a way **through** the desert. There are going to be streams in the desert, but someday the heat of the desert will still strike you in the face and dust will blow into your mouth. This is exactly what happened to me. It wasn't all sunshine and roses for me during the lockdown, but a way has definitely been made. I experience it in the happiness and the contentment I feel. The broken-heartedness has been healed.

Sometimes there is a little poke of the sword, there is a little wind in my mouth and a little heat on my head. And that is okay. The verse said He will make a way in the desert. In other words, He shows us the path out and He waters the path with goodness so that we can better endure the harshness, the desert around us. In Psalms 94:17-19 David clearly says: *"If the Lord had not helped me, I would have gone quickly to the land of silence. I said: 'I am falling', but your constant love, o Lord, held me up. Whenever I am anxious and worried, You comfort me and make me glad."* God sees your pain and He can comfort you.

There is a story in the Bible of a man with the name of Nathanael who was sitting under a fig tree.

GOD DID NOT SAY HE WAS GOING TO REMOVE THE DESERT COMPLETELY. HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO MAKE A WAY THROUGH THE DESERT.

Nathanael was a person who really searched the kingdom of God. He had a lot of spiritual troubles and trials inside him, searching for goodness, searching for the one answer that would answer all the questions he had in life. After Philip met Jesus, he went and called Nathanael: "Come and see the Messiah, come and see the Lord." The Bible tells us in John 1:47-48, when Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, He said about him: *"Here is a real Israelite; there is nothing false in him. Nathanael asked the Lord, 'How do you know me?' Jesus answered: 'I saw you when you were under the fig tree before Philip called you.'" Jesus was saying to Nathanael that He saw him under that fig tree, not meaning that He walked past the fig tree when Philip was busy calling him and literally saw him with His eyes. Jesus was saying that He knows Nathanael and He understands the trials of his heart and what he was going through. When he was sitting there under the fig tree, waiting for answers, Philip went to him because God knew he wanted answers. Without saying it straight away, Jesus said to Nathanael: "I know you and I know you are a good man seeking the truth. **I am the answer to your truth.**" Jesus is saying so much in the one sentence when He said: "I saw you while you were sitting under the fig tree."*

Have you ever gone through a trial where you were in a specific space in your life, where you were sitting somewhere crying, holding your head, ready to do something bad to yourself? Ready to give up on life? Jesus is saying to you like He said to Nathanael, "I see you sitting there under the fig tree. I see you feeling hopeless and abandoned, alone in the trials you are going through. You think you are alone, but I see you, I hear you. I have eyes and ears.

GOD HAS SEEN YOUR DISPAIR, SITTING ALONE IN THE TRIALS YOU ARE GOING THROUGH. YOU THINK YOU ARE ALONE, BUT HE SEE YOU, HE HEAR YOU. HE HAS EYES AND EARS.

I know what you are going through.” Your relief might not be right now but when relieve comes, when God finally answers, when He calls you from underneath the fig tree, when He makes that way through the desert, you must be careful. When things start to change – the people around you or the situation or your feelings – be careful of **not trusting** that the changes are **for real**. You can sabotage that which is good because of the fear that it won't last.

Sometimes we are so used to our old ways that we cannot imagine newness coming into our lives. We cannot imagine that it was possible. We've been in the desert for so long and then, when we see the real water, we think it is a mirage and we walk right past it. Please be careful when God starts making changes in your workplace or in the life of your family or in your personal life or in your spiritual life, and it starts feeling good, that you do not imagine it to be a mirage. Take God's promises, hold on to it, cling to it and know the changes are taking place and move positively in that direction. Enjoy the streams of life that God is bringing upon your path.

When a little desert sand blows into your newly formed river, don't freak out. When He cures your diseases of sin and trials and tribulations, it does not mean that you won't catch a cold every now and again. Do not despair, Jesus is the great physician. Mark 2:17 states: "Jesus answered them, 'People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts.'" Jesus is saying He is here for you if you are sick, if sin has overwhelmed you, if you feel broken-hearted. He is the great physician and He can bind up those wounds.

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2 Corinthians 1:5-6: "For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with His comfort through Jesus Christ." God is saying His comfort will be directly equal to your amount of sorrow and sadness. He is there for you when you are healthy. He is there for you when you are sick. He is there for you when you are at the end of your life, when you are lying on your deathbed. In good times and in bad times, the Lord is there for you. He has not abandoned you.

God knows and He sees your broken heart today. Soon He will make a way. He is there to comfort you in distress. He has not abandoned you. He has always given you compassion. He has given you the Holy Spirit. He has given you angels to protect you. You are not alone. Be assured today that He is near you, sympathising and ready to comfort you. He has already made a way. Do you not perceive it? Do you not see it? He will not allow you to perish.

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