

HOLY WHOLE

BY JAN DE CHAMBRIER

May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together - spirit, soul, and body - and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ. I Thessalonians 5:23 (MSG)

Psalm 107 is a chronicle of God's goodness, faithfulness, and abiding love. Four times, the psalmist repeats a reassuring refrain, then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. The context of each refrain speaks of different life circumstances: the first, of wanderers in a desert, hungry and thirsty; the second, of those imprisoned by darkness; the third, of fools stumbling in their rebellious ways; the fourth, of those enduring the storms of life. Most of us can relate personally to all four of these metaphors.

So what did God do in response to the cries of His people? He saved them from their distress. He led the hungry and thirsty to a place of refuge; He brought the prisoners out of darkness and broke away their chains; He sent His word, Jesus, to rescue the rebellious from their ways; He stilled the storm and hushed the waves. He heard their desperate cries and saved them from their distress.

Distress. The mere sound of that word makes me want to throw up my arms, grasping for help from the nearest source. When we are in distress, nothing short of God will do. He is near. He is the air that we breathe, our living water, the bread of life. He is the one whose robe we can reach out and touch, the Lord who heals us.

One of my favorite devotional books is *Secrets of the Secret Place* by Bob Sorge. He writes, "When we enter a season of distress, our first response is to cry out for relief. However, God does not always bring immediate relief because He destines the distress to produce desperation within us." In my own experience, those times of physical and emotional desperation have produced a passion for Jesus I could never have known otherwise. When all else failed, the help of the helpless met me

in my distress; the Shepherd left the 99 and embraced this little lost lamb in the safety of His arms. Pure love enfolded me.

We wonder why Jesus sometimes tarries in the healing process, just as He did when Lazarus was dying. Although Jesus dearly loved Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, He had a purpose in the time of waiting that superseded their distress. Jesus delayed his arrival until Lazarus had been dead for four days. He wanted to demonstrate to them in the midst of their distress that He is the resurrection and the life. He is enough. He is everything.

Many years ago, I sustained inoperable damage to my cervical spine in a roller-blading accident. Pain dominated my days, compromising my quality of life, causing me to cry out to the Lord day and night for healing.

After enduring a few years of chronic pain, one day He touched me and miraculously removed my affliction. For a few days, I was jubilant. Yet with the absence of physical pain came the exposure of emotional issues that needed His touch every bit as much. He wanted to free me from an even deeper distress, to break the soul chains that had imprisoned me.

God desires that we be free indeed, made holy and whole in spirit, soul, and body by the finished work of Jesus on the cross. As I sought Him desperately once again, I discovered the power of His perfect love that casts out fear and ushers in His presence. I finally allowed Jesus to enter into the deepest recesses of my innermost being, shining His glorious light of truth into the crevices of darkness. He delivered me from my distress and deposited His love in me.

As we wait for the Lord to heal us, or to answer our cries on behalf of others, let us remember that He is always faithful to deliver us from our distress. But sometimes He is after a far deeper healing than just our bodies. The Lord who heals us wants to live fully in us.

As we wait with a desperate desire for Him, He is making us holy and whole, with all parts conforming to His image and perfect design. He is revealing His love that surpasses knowledge, filling us to the measure of all of the fullness of God. He is making us to be like Him.

The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it! I Thessalonians 5:24 (MSG)



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