

"Forever Near"

August 9, 2021

Psalm 34:18-20 - The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.

We know what it feels like to be brokenhearted and crushed in spirit. The death of a family member or close friend is heart-breaking. Shattered relationships and family strife can shatter hearts as well. Financial worries, the loss of employment, and continuous quarrels can be spirit-crushing. We know all about "the afflictions of the righteous," and we trust the Lord who is near to deliver us.

The Lord knows what it means to be afflicted, brokenhearted, and crushed in spirit. He experienced these things as He lived among us. His afflictions were many, but for the sake of our salvation, He was not delivered from them; He endured them for us. As the Scriptures foretold, "He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrow and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3a). As the Lord prayed in Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed, He asked His disciples to support Him through the spirit-crushing distress He experienced: "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with Me" (Matthew 26:38b). As His disciples abandoned Him, Jesus was delivered into the hands of His enemies. He was condemned to death and nailed to a cross, suffering in our place the penalty of death that we deserved for our sins.

As that Good Friday came to an end, the soldiers approached to break the legs of the crucified victims and hasten their deaths. They saw that Jesus was already dead, so they did not break His legs, but

instead pierced His side with a spear. The words of our psalm of deliverance were fulfilled: "These things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of His bones will be broken" (John 19:36). Jesus was taken down from the cross and buried in a sealed and guarded tomb. But on the third day after His death, the words of this psalm were again fulfilled in the resurrection of our Lord. The innocent, righteous Son of God rose up in triumph, delivered from His afflictions and from the darkness of death.

Through the afflictions suffered by our Savior, we are delivered from sin and death. When our hearts are broken and our spirits crushed, the Lord is near to us. He may, according to His perfect will, deliver us from earthly afflictions. By His grace through faith, we will be delivered, finally and forever, from every affliction to live in His eternal presence. On the Last Day, we will be raised up from death, transformed and glorified in body and soul, flesh and bones. The promise of Scripture will be fulfilled: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God" (Revelation 21:3b). We will be forever near to the Lord who has always been near to us.

THE PRAYER: Lord, deliver me from evil and keep me close in Your care. Amen.