



never grows tired or weary. In order to do so, there are several things we must know in our hearts and commit to do them.

## I. Trusting in God’s providence as we sleep

Whatever the circumstances we face that tempt us to worry instead of sleep, we must first learn that these circumstances are according to God’s plan and purpose for our lives. Like the disciples in the tumultuous sea, or Peter chained in between Herod’s guards, we must understand that God is orchestrating everything in our lives for His purposes. We have to recognize that nothing can happen to us except what God allows and wills in our lives.

Romans 8:28 says this: “We *know* in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose.” [emphasis the author’s] First, this verse states that we know—not think, understand, or feel. The Greek word for “know” in this passage is *eidon*. It literally means to perceive with the senses, to inspect, to examine, and to experience. This means we should be able to look at past events where God has been faithful, to perceive that in our present circumstances, He will be faithful as well.

There are times we may not be able to rationalize or understand the circumstances we encounter. This verse does not mean that “all things” are necessarily pleasant for us. On the contrary, sometimes things we experience in life can be

*Have you ever thought about the trials Jesus went through? Here was God Himself, in the flesh, putting Himself at the mercy of the humanity He had created. How does reflecting on His experiences help you to view yours in a different light?*

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*Our God never, not for one moment, loses sight of us or where we're at. One effective way of building faith, is to "pray God's Word." It reaffirms for us the promises that He has made, and it opens spiritual doors of opportunity for God to work miraculously in our lives. An example of praying God's Word using Psalm 121 is found on the next page.*

quite painful. We must also know that God not only plans things for us to strengthen our faith, He takes the choices we make and the consequences we endure and uses these experiences as well for our benefit or "good". There are no situations we find ourselves in that happen without the knowledge and direction of a loving God.

This verse reminds us as believers that God does things for us, not to us. Like the drowning disciples, our human nature cries out with questions. "God, do you really care about my circumstances?" "Don't you care that I am drowning in debt, or tragedy, or illness?"

We must also come to know that God has only good intentions for our lives. Jeremiah 29:11 says: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." This was given to the nation of Israel during a time of crisis, but I believe it is relevant for us personally today. Like Peter, we will learn to cast all our cares upon Him, "for he cares for you." <sup>2</sup> By faith, we must come to know that nothing is allowed in our lives except that it is filtered through the loving sovereign hands of the Lord.

## **II. Trusting in God's protection as we sleep**

As the waves began to fill the boat, the disciples began to fear for their very lives. Jesus was there in the boat, protecting them just as He promised them when He said, "Let us

go over to the other side.”<sup>3</sup> By His very words, Jesus was promising them that they would arrive at their destination.

Psalm 121 reassures us that God is constantly protecting us.

I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

This psalm reminds us repeatedly that the Lord is watching or “keeping” us. This means that He guards, protects, and cares for us, and we can rest in this knowledge. God is always watching us as we sleep keeping us from all harm, even as He watches our coming and going, not allowing our foot to slip.

The life of Elisha gives us another example of how God protects us while we are sleeping. Because of Elisha’s ability to predict every move of the Arameans, the King of Aram sneaks an army into Samaria to capture the prophet.

*Father God, there have been many times in my life when You have held me up and have kept me from falling. Your Word tells me that You do not slumber or sleep, not for one moment, and that I am always before You. It tells me that You watch over my life. Well, my life is kind of ragged right now, God; I really need Your strength and Your presence to comfort me. You are the maker of all heaven and earth, and I know that there is nothing that You cannot do. Father, I believe. Help me with my unbelief. Strengthen my faith. Show me the way. In the name of Your precious Son, I pray. Amen.*

# SURRENDERED SLEEP

Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh, my lord, what shall we do?” the servant asked. “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, ‘Strike these people with blindness.’ So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked. Elisha told them “This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.” And he led them to Samaria.<sup>4</sup>

An unrecognized and unexpected danger was developing around the city of Dothan as Elisha and his servant slept. What the servant saw was the great peril of the conquering army which had surrounded them. But Elisha, looking through the eyes of faith, saw God’s army of angels surrounding the city protecting its inhabitants. Like Elisha, we need to learn to see fearful situations through the eyes of faith.

So it is for us. We can rest with the assurance that God is

surrounding us with His hedge of protection, even when we are unaware of the potential danger. Like Elisha, we must know in our hearts that “those that are with us are more than those who are with them.” Our fears diminish when we understand that God’s army of angels keeps us secure as we sleep. “You will not fear terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.” <sup>5</sup>

David also comprehended God’s watchful, protective eyes over him as he slept. Hiding in the desert from his son Absalom who was seeking to kill him, David confessed in his evening prayer: “I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.” <sup>6</sup> Rising in the morning, David again thanks God for keeping him free from harm during the night: “I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side.” <sup>7</sup> David, Peter, and Elisha all learned that the secret to sleeping calmly amidst adversity was trusting in God’s ability to shield them from the enemies during the night watches.

### **III. Trusting in God’s provision while we sleep**

Many times, the greatest hurdle to going to sleep is all of the things yet to be done. The things that didn’t get checked off our “to do” list weigh heavily on our minds as we lay our heads on our pillow. We need to learn how to leave our unfinished tasks with God, resting in His ability to pick

# SURRENDERED SLEEP

up where we left off if He desires to do so. (On the other hand, we sometimes put things into our daytime agenda that shouldn't be on our "to do" list in the first place.)

*What unfinished business at the end of the day plagues your sleep at night?*

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Psalm 127:1-2 states: "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves." This passage reminds us of the futility and frustration of a busy lifestyle that follows our own agenda. Our ambitious agenda may impress others, but from a heavenly perspective, you may be spinning your wheels. Another aspect of this psalm that we have not discussed is the understanding that God is providing for our needs even as we sleep if we are obeying His will for our lives on a daily basis. Being still and trusting God typically defies our logic and reasoning. Like drowning in quicksand, we think that trying harder to get out will help. However, our pointless struggling only serves to suck us down deeper in the mire. We must learn to relax and allow God to deliver us.

This lesson had to be learned the hard way for the nation of Israel after the Lord miraculously brought them through the Red Sea. As they slept in the desert, the Lord provided yet another miracle in the form of manna to eat every morning. This provision was always just enough to get them through the day—no more, no less. If they hoarded more than they needed, it would rot and stink to high heaven. The nation learned to trust in the Lord one day at a time; anything else

was only an act of futility. For forty years, God fed over one million people in a desert that had no food or water in sight. He is that same God today. We must simply learn to trust in His provision as we travel through our own personal wilderness experiences.

There's the story of the mother who was talking to her preschool daughter at bedtime.

"Mommy, is the moon God's light?" the little girl asked.

"Yes, sweetheart," the mother replied.

"Will God ever put out His light, mommy?"

"No, God never goes to sleep," the mother answered.

With simple childlike faith, the little girl told her mother, "Well, as long as God is awake, there is no sense in both of us staying awake." And off to sleep she went.

A calm heart is one who understands that God never slumbers or sleeps, and in simple childlike faith, rests peacefully. A calm heart understands God's promise of providence, protection, provision, and presence as he or she drifts into slumber. Like a child, allow yourself to be enveloped in the arms of the Omnipresent One.

Fall to sleep in His arms.