

Knockin' on Heaven's Door

BY PASTOR PANCHO JUAREZ



“Knockin’ On Heaven’s Door”—I remember listening to that song as a non-Christian teenager, and it evoked in me a sense of sadness and despair: “It’s gettin’ dark, too dark for me to see, I feel like I’m knockin’ on heaven’s door. ... That long, black cloud is comin’ down. I feel like I’m knockin’ on heaven’s door.” (Bob Dylan, 1973)

The song isn’t speaking of heaven; rather, it speaks of the darkness that looms over anyone in the absence of God. Darkness in the Bible speaks of death, desolation, despair, and the void of God in the lives of people. It could mean physical darkness, but figuratively it refers to spiritual blindness. It also speaks metaphorically of moral darkness—the emblem of sin—a condition of moral or spiritual depravity.

The apostle Peter says we Christians are like travelers on a pilgrimage. Along the way there are bumps, bends, and potholes on the road. Paul the apostle warned that the Christian must go through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of God. Reading the narrative of the Garden of Gethsemane, I realized it was the power of darkness that overwhelmed the Savior.

Matthew 26 records Jesus saying, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Luke states that an angel came and strengthened Him. Consider that this is Jesus Christ the Lord. If Jesus needed an angel from heaven to strengthen Him during such an ordeal, imagine how much more we need comfort in times of despair when we are battle-weary against the powers of darkness.

Jesus was in agony. The word “Gethsemane” means olive press. Think about the symbolism: An olive press is a huge granite stone that crushes the olives to produce oil. Luke, being a medical doctor by profession, mentions something the other three Gospel writers do not: “And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were

great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke 22:44)

Now we know this phenomenon of sweating blood is actually a rare medical condition called hematomidrosis. It occurs when there is overt pressure on the forehead blood vessels. The vessels burst and mingle with sweat, giving the appearance of sweating blood. This is what happened to Jesus.

That’s why I beg of you: When you’re going through some calamity, don’t say, “Lord, You don’t know what I am going through.” Don’t ever say that! Jesus lived among us so that He could suffer like a human being.

Through our Christian lives, we will pass through valleys and low points. It’s not a matter of *if*, but *when*.

When He rose from the dead, the Bible says He ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father.

In life there are both mountaintop and valley experiences. There are times when you’ll be on the mountaintop, and life is easy: you’re in cruise-control. However, we are also promised that we will tread in the valley—the school of affliction and testing.

All the apostles died brutally, but they were prepared, my friends. They had been to the mountaintop, but they had also been through the valley. Through our Christian lives, we will pass through valleys and low points. It’s not a matter of *if*, but *when*. I want you to be prepared so that, when it happens, you’re not caught unaware and ask God why.

In Gethsemane, the angel came as a comforter from God the Father to the Son who was suffering. He was sent to provide strength—not muscular mass, not physical might, not “intestinal-fortitude” (guts); but moral valor—virtuous character, a noble and ethical constitution. Paul exhorts the Ephesians with the same sentiment: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10).

Thinking that we won’t go through difficulties and hardship because we’re Christians is absurd. Our Savior did. There is no other God who lived among humanity and actually experienced what man goes through in his daily existence. He came to taste death for you and me. He understands physical pain, emotional turmoil, loneliness, dejection, and desertion. Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (NIV).

In Acts 7:55, we see an example of God’s grace in time of need in Stephen, the first martyr: “[Stephen], being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” My friends, this is the only place we see Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Why? Perhaps because Jesus knew Stephen was about to be killed. We also see God’s grace, as Stephen found strength to say in his last breath: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (verse 60). Remember that Jesus also said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34a).

It doesn’t matter how strong or educated you are, there will come a time in your Christian life when you’ll be “knockin’ on heaven’s door.” I encourage you to turn to God and ask for His strength in time of need. ☞

All scripture references are KJV unless otherwise noted.