



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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<https://aulc.us>

Title: I Have Been There...

Well, here we are at the end of another year, which means we are beginning a New Year! For some, 2024 was a great year, for others, not so much!,,,

They say that time flies when you are having fun, and 2024 has seemed to just fly by, however, many has not had fun this year.,,,

With rampant unemployment, divorce, foreclosures, evictions, wages being cut, and a whole lot more, many are not having a great time at all.,,,

No matter in good times or bad, God is always there! No matter what we take to God that is happening in our lives, God reassures us that He has been there!,,,

Today's Scripture Reference is from Romans 8:18,, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." ,,,

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!,,,

-- Hello, I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.,,,

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!,,,

Hard times are not new to humanity. In 2024, people face numerous challenges that test their faith and perseverance. These struggles, while unique in context, echo the trials endured by Jesus and the Israelites as recorded in Scripture. Today, we will draw parallels between our modern difficulties and biblical examples, seeking encouragement and guidance from God's Word.

In 2024, many has faced some very real challenges in their lives.,,,

For one, Economic Instability has been a very real challenge to many.,,,

Inflation and rising costs of living have made it challenging for families to afford basic necessities. Many parents are faced with the heartbreaking decision of choosing between paying rent and buying groceries. ,,,

A person I know, just lost her job of 10 years. New owners decided to clean house. She went from a nice income to a measly pittance that unemployment pays and no prospects for a new job. She came close to losing her house, losing her vehicle, and now a little at a time, is losing luxuries, like cable, in order to survive.,,,

Small businesses, which are often the backbone of local economies, are grappling with the lingering effects of the pandemic and global economic disruptions. This has led to widespread layoffs, leaving families without stable sources of income. ,,,

Christmas is always hard on families that are struggling to make ends meet. A New Year coming, just doesn't have the same appeal for these families. They look for assistance anywhere they can find it. Food pantries usually see all types of people coming through their doors. Some familiar faces and some new faces, but all are welcomed with opened arms.,,,

These challenges mirror the struggles faced by biblical communities, reminding us to trust in God's provision even when resources seem scarce. ,,,

Secondly, there are Natural Disasters that happen and we have no control over.,,,

The wildfires that have ravaged North America have destroyed homes, taken lives, and left entire communities in despair. Similarly, severe flooding in parts of Europe has washed away years of hard work, while droughts in Africa have exacerbated food insecurity. ,,,

The emotional toll on those who have lost loved ones and possessions cannot be overstated. Yet, in the midst of these trials, communities come together to rebuild, exemplifying the resilience and unity that God calls us to embody. ,,,

These events challenge us to remember that God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble,, (as we see in Psalm 46:1). ,,,

Then there is the Mental Health Crisis.,,,

The aftermath of the pandemic has left many struggling with feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression. Social media and societal pressures have added to the burden, especially for young people who feel the weight of unrealistic expectations.,,,

Mental health resources are often inaccessible or stigmatized, leaving many to suffer in silence. As Christians, we are called to be a source of support and encouragement, offering the love and hope that Christ gives freely. ,,,

Jesus' own experiences with loneliness and anguish, such as in the Garden of Gethsemane,, (like we see in Matthew chapter 26 verses 36 to 39),,, remind us that He understands our struggles and offers His comfort. ,,,

Here are some Biblical Examples that Jesus and the Israelites faced in Hard Times.,,,

First, we see The Israelites in the Wilderness.,,,

After their miraculous escape from Egypt, the Israelites found themselves in a barren wilderness, facing hunger and thirst. Their faith wavered, and they grumbled against Moses and God, saying, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death" ,,, (we see this in Exodus 16:3). ,,,

Despite their complaints, God demonstrated His unfailing love and provision by sending manna from heaven and quail to eat,, (in Exodus chapter 16 verses 13 to 15). ,,, When they thirsted, He provided water from a rock,, (seen in Exodus 17:6). ,,,

This story reminds us that even in our most desperate moments, God is faithful to provide for our needs, often in unexpected ways. ,,,

Next we see Jesus' Suffering.,,,

Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness,, (we see in Matthew chapter 4 verses 1 to 11) ,, were marked by hunger and temptation. The devil sought to exploit His vulnerability, yet Jesus remained steadfast, relying on the truth of God's Word to resist. ,,,

On the cross, Jesus endured the ultimate suffering—physical pain, emotional anguish, and spiritual isolation. His cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ,,, (we see in Matthew 27:46),,, echoes the feelings of abandonment we may sometimes experience. ,,,

However, Jesus' resurrection reminds us that God's power and love overcome even the darkest of times, offering us eternal hope. ,,,

Ok, I know you are saying,, Doctor Rob, what does this have to do with us today? We all have struggles, and we know that the Bible tells us that people had struggles in Biblical times as well.,,,

So, here are some Parallels and Lessons from God's Word!,,

First, we have Economic Instability and God's Provision when difficult times occur.,,,

In times of economic hardship, we may be tempted to give in to fear and doubt. However, the story of the Israelites receiving manna encourages us to trust in God's daily provision,, (as we see in Matthew 6:11). ,,,

Modern examples, such as food banks and community initiatives, highlight how God works through His people to meet the needs of the vulnerable. As believers, we are called to be His hands and feet, sharing our resources and offering support to those in need. ,,,

Next, we have Natural Disasters and God's Presence during these disasters.,,,

Just as God parted the Red Sea to deliver the Israelites,, (seen in Exodus chapter 14 verses 21 and 22),,, He is present with us in the midst of natural disasters. Through acts of kindness and the tireless efforts of first responders and volunteers, we see God's hand at work. ,,,

The rebuilding of homes and communities after disasters serves as a testament to the resilience and hope that God inspires in His people. We are reminded that "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit",,, (Psalm 34:18). ,,,

Then there's the Mental Health issues and God's Comfort to those in need.,,,

The mental health struggles of today call us to extend Christ's compassion to those who are hurting. Jesus invites us to come to Him for rest, saying, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls",,, (Matthew 11:29). ,,,

As a church, we can create spaces where people feel safe to share their burdens and find support. Prayer, counseling, and fellowship are powerful tools to remind individuals that they are not alone and that God's love is unending. ,,,

Remember, no matter what our struggles are, God has been there and is still there today with each and pray about it and I could feel God tugging at my heart and telling me to not give in, keep going.,,,

In August 2022, after my first heart attack, I thought it was over, but God had another plan for me. I had moved to a new town, closer to my day job, so that my commute wouldn't be so long. Due to my heart attack, I had other health issues that came with and in November 2022, I was forced to retire from my job of 16 years, due to my health. God's plan called me to startup my online ministry that I had put on hold due to not having enough strength and energy to even setup the equipment to do my weekly sermons. I took sermons that I had recorded in 2018 and replayed them each Sunday. That got me through a dry spell there.,,,

Just recently, I was looking at my analytics for my Roku channel and seen that I was getting 1 view a week for about 5 minutes. This pretty much told me that this one person was probably watching one of the music videos I posted.,,,

Up to this point, I was going to drop the Roku Channel, but God told me to take off the sermons and put on more music videos, so I am in the process of restructuring the Roku Channel now!.,,,

Again, on this same trek, I was pondering leaving the Ministry and shutting everything down! Why keep it up and going, no one is listening to my sermons anyway. Then after much prayer, God told me to keep going, keep the faith, that someday I would see the fruits of my labors.,,,

So, no matter what your problems are, remember, the God has been there! He is still here today and will be there tomorrow!.,,,

Here are three things to take to heart for Encouragement for Today.,,,

One, Trust in God's Plan:,,, Jeremiah 29:11 assures us, "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 hope and a future." This promise encourages us to remain hopeful, even when the future feels uncertain. ,,,

Two, Persevere in Faith:,,, Hebrews chapter 12 verses 1 and 2 urges us to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us," fixing our eyes on Jesus, our ultimate example and source of strength. His endurance gives us the courage to face our own trials. ,,,

And three, Be a Light to Others:,,, In times of hardship, we are called to reflect God's love and grace. ,,, Galatians 6:2 reminds us to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." By supporting one another, we fulfill our role as the body of Christ. ,,,

As I conclude today's message and as we navigate the challenges of 2024 and look forward to 2025, let us draw strength from the examples of Jesus and the Israelites. Their stories remind us that God's faithfulness is unwavering, even in the hardest of times. May we hold fast to our faith, trusting that "all things work together for good for those who love God" ,,, (Romans 8:28),,,

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!,,,

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!,,,

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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