

# “But God...”

*Bob Chatten*

There have been a lot of challenges lately, haven't there? We've seen situations with people's health, with jobs, with families, other things. But we've also seen the grace and the power and the deliverance of God in many situations, not least of which has been in Jerry's illness. We've seen God's deliverance, we've seen God do some great things, answer a lot of prayers, but we want to see more, don't we?

Complete deliverance is God's will for every believer in every situation. Paul, speaking of how God had been for him and the believers who were with him, gave in 2 Corinthians 1:10 what to me is one of the great summaries of God's will to deliver.

2 Corinthians 1:10:

<sup>10</sup>Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us*;

He has delivered us (in the past), He does deliver (in the present), and He will yet deliver us (in the future). That's just part of His nature. One of my favorite sections of Scripture is in Exodus 3.

Exodus 3:13-14:

<sup>13</sup>And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them?

<sup>14</sup>And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

At the time that God spoke this to Moses, the children of Israel had been in captivity in Egypt for a long time, and the Egyptians had a god for everything: they had a god of the Nile, a god of the sun, an earth god, a cat god, a fish god, a childbirth god, and on and on. God's answer to Moses' question here sounds kind of weird, but actually it's fantastic because the Hebrew here doesn't read "I am that I am," but "I will become what I will become." What did God want Moses to communicate to His people? That, unlike the Egyptians, they didn't need a bunch of different gods, that He, the one, true God, would become whatever they needed Him to become. If they needed a God to fight for them, He would be their God of war. [He defeated the most powerful army in the world for them without their lifting a finger]. If they needed a God to prosper them, He would be the God who saw and provided for them. [They were slaves, yet they left with all the riches of Egypt and He fed them supernaturally for 40 years, 6 days a week, in the wilderness]. If they were hurt, he would be the God who healed them [Remember? He

provided the Passover, not only giving them health but protecting them from the destroyer]. Would He do less for His sons and daughters today? Impossible.

I think that one of the greatest phrases in the Bible is “But God...” For every attack and pressure that we suffer, for every weakness and failure on our part, God’s Word responds with a “But God...” – But God **delivers**, but God **heals**, but God **forgives**, but God **loves**, but God is **present**. In December, since it was the end of the year, people come up with a lot of top ten lists for the year that’s just ended. I heard one list that was famous quotes or phrases for 2009, and one of them was “there’s an app for that.” I’d like to change that to “there’s a ‘but God...’ for that” so I thought this afternoon we could enjoy reading through some of the “But Gods” in the Scriptures and remind ourselves of God’s ability and willingness to meet our every need and overcome every challenge in our lives.

We have a tendency to think that our problem is unique, that nobody else is going through what we’re going through. God, however, comforts us by reminding us that that’s not so, and that’s the first “But God” I’d like to look at.

1 Corinthians 10:13:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: **but God** is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

So my problem, my situation, isn’t unique, it’s common to mankind. And that’s a good thing because it means that I don’t need a unique and special solution either. If my situation is common to all of humanity, then it’s part of those things that Jesus Christ defeated when he was “tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin.” [Hebrews 5:15] Then what I’m suffering is one of those things we all face to one degree or another. And then God’s solution applies just the same to me as it does to others.

And this verse also gives us two great keys to overcoming these things: first, that God is faithful – we can look to Him and trust Him for the solutions we need. In the end, all the trials and temptations we face boil down to the same thing: to try to get us not to trust God, to not put God first, to break fellowship with God. Secondly, this verse tells us that if we remember and believe that God is faithful, then He’s always going to be able to make a way to escape, a way out. And that way out of every situation we find ourselves in – every attack, every pressure, every trial, every temptation – is always God’s Word. Believing God’s Word is always the way out, because it’s that’s what allows God to go to work and bring to pass His promises.

So what about all these situations? For example, some of God’s people have been treated badly by their employers. That’s not new or unique, either. There’s a great one in Genesis 31, where Jacob was working for his father-in-law, Laban, and Laban was trying to cheat him out of his wages.

Genesis 31:5-7:

<sup>5</sup>And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it *is* not toward me as before; **but the God** of my father hath been with me.

<sup>6</sup>And ye know that with all my power I have served your father [Jacob still did his best, he still worked heartily, he still worked as unto God and not unto men, despite how his boss treated him].

<sup>7</sup>And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times [he kept changing the deal]; **but God** suffered him not to hurt me.

Instead of getting into a big fight and trying to correct the injustice, He went to God and asked God to help him and protect him. And God did! God helped him in that situation and then helped him to leave the situation, find a better job, so to speak. Can God help us with situations with our jobs, our bosses, our pay, even if the boss is an unbeliever? Sure! How do we know? It's in the Bible!

How about Joseph. You want to talk about being treated unfairly! The Bible says that his brothers sold Joseph into slavery because they envied him [Acts 7:9] But instead of being mad at the whole world and ending up bitter and resentful, he decided to maintain his relationship with God and trust God. Did God let him down? Joseph has some tremendous "but Gods..." in his life.

Genesis 39:20-23:

<sup>20</sup>And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners *were* bound: and he was there in the prison.

<sup>21</sup>**But the LORD** was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

<sup>22</sup>And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer *of it*.

<sup>23</sup>The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing *that was* under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and *that* which he did, the LORD made *it* to prosper.

Isn't it interesting that the 1<sup>st</sup> usage of word prosperous in Bible, earlier in this chapter, is in regard to Joseph, when he was a slave and later a prisoner! True prosperity must not be dependent on our physical circumstances but on God and what He can do. And after all the crises he went through, Joseph was able to say in Genesis 50:20: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; **but God** meant it unto good,..." God turned it around, made it turn out better than anybody involved could have imagined. He can do that for us, too.

So if we've had problems at the hands of employers or family members, God is bigger. There's a "but God..." for that.

Sometimes we feel very alone, especially when things aren't going well. Maybe the people we think should really have been there for us aren't. But there's One who's

always there, and we're never alone. When Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel, was about to die, he called his son Joseph to him and reminded him of something very important.

Genesis 48:21:

<sup>21</sup>And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: **but God** shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

He said to his son, "I'm not going to be here anymore, but it's gonna be okay – God's still here and He's going to bring to pass His promises." It says in Psalm 27[:10]: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Even the best of us, as people, aren't perfect and are very limited in how we can help. If we're depending on people to solve our problems or meet our needs, it's not going to go so well for us. The key is to believe that God is with us and tap into that.

Hebrews 13:5-6:

<sup>5</sup>*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

And that's not even remotely close to the emphasis God gave it. In the Greek it's a double negative followed by a triple negative. A more accurate translation would be: "God will never, never leave you [a double negative], nor ever, ever, EVER forsake you [a triple negative]." That's why, verse 6 says:

<sup>6</sup>So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Many of the "but Gods..." in the Bible have to do with God being with us and therefore not needing to be afraid.

In the time of Jeremiah, there were a lot of people after him because he was faithful to speak God's Word, even when nobody liked what he had to say. He was threatened and persecuted, but God reassured him:

Jeremiah 39:17-18:

<sup>17</sup>**But I** will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou *art* afraid.

<sup>18</sup>For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee [I'll give you your life as the prize in this battle, I'll protect you]: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

Look also at Chapter 20 of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 20:11:

<sup>11</sup> **But the LORD** *is* with me as a mighty terrible one [an awesome strong champion]: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed [they'll be the ones who will be put to shame or disgraced, not you]; for they [unlike the person who puts his trust in the Lord] shall not prosper: *their* everlasting confusion [disgrace or humiliation] shall never be forgotten.

A lot of times the way battles worked in antiquity was that, instead of two armies fighting each other, they would each send out their champion and if our champion defeats the other side's champion, we win and they go home humiliated and in disgrace. The rest of the army doesn't have to fight. It's over!

Remember Goliath? He was the Philistines' champion, right? And he was a really, really big guy. Everybody who saw him was afraid because they compared him to themselves. Everyone said, "He's a lot bigger and stronger than I am," until David came along and said, "Well, God's a lot bigger and stronger than he is," and down he went. Well here God says that He's going to be our "awesome strong champion." Is anyone going to beat Him in one-on-one combat? No, but we have to get God involved, trust Him, do it His way, allow Him to go before us and fight rather than try to do it ourselves. God said to Israel "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, **but God's.**" [2 Chronicles 20:15]

In order to not be afraid, we have to compare what we're facing with God's ability, God's wisdom, rather than our own. In Jeremiah 9 we see the three basic things that God says people trust in, the things they think are going to help them work their own way out of situations.

Jeremiah 9:23-24:

<sup>23</sup> Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom [how smart he is] , neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might [how strong he is], let not the rich *man* glory in his riches [all these great resources he can call on]:

Well, if I'm not smart enough, nor strong enough, nor resourceful enough to find my own way out of the situations and pressures and problems I face, what CAN I trust in and glory in?

<sup>24</sup> But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.

That's when the "But God..." can go into effect in our lives. Sometimes it has to start with admitting that we can't do it, that we're not smart enough or strong enough – but He is.

Psalm 73:22-26:

<sup>22</sup>So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was *as* a beast before thee.

<sup>23</sup>Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.

<sup>24</sup>Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory.

<sup>25</sup>Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee.

<sup>26</sup>My flesh and my heart faileth: **but God** *is* the strength [in Hebrew – “the rock”] of my heart, and my portion for ever.

He’s the Rock, the immoveable one we can build on lives on. Just as we’re the Lord’s portion, we’re His inheritance, what He gets out of all this mess in the end; He’s our portion, He’s what we get in the end. (I think we get the better part of that deal, don’t you?) But that’s a victorious confession: I can’t so I need to cry to God, and *He* can.

Psalm 34:17-20:

<sup>17</sup>*The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of [how many of their troubles?] all their troubles.

<sup>18</sup>The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

<sup>19</sup>Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: **but the LORD** delivereth him out of [how many of them? out of] them all.

<sup>20</sup>He [God] keepeth all [that person’s] bones: not one of them is broken.

In the Bible the bones many times represent the strength of the body. When we trust God and believe Him, when He and His Word are the strength of our lives, then we may get knocked down a time or two, but we can never be broken because God’s Word can’t be broken and God can’t be defeated. That’s a pretty good “But God...” I’d say.

Psalm 94:17-19:

<sup>17</sup> Unless the LORD *had been* my help, my soul had almost [quickly] dwelt in silence. [if we try to be our own help, we might not last too long]

<sup>18</sup> When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.

<sup>19</sup> In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.

It’s the Word of God that gives us comfort, but we need a multitude of God’s thoughts in our mind, a lot of Bible.

Psalm 94: 21-24:

<sup>21</sup> They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

<sup>22</sup> **But the LORD** *is* my defence [my stronghold, my retreat, my high tower]; and my God *is* the rock of my refuge.

<sup>23</sup> And [when I’m strong in the Lord, then what happens to those who are trying to hurt me?] he [God] shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and

shall cut them off in their own wickedness; *yea*, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

Our ultimate fear, and the ultimate attack, the adversary's ultimate weapon, is death. But there's a "But God..." for that, too. More than one, in fact. First of all, God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

Acts 13:28-30:

<sup>28</sup>And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

<sup>29</sup>And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre.

<sup>30</sup>**But God** raised him from the dead:

Because of that "But God...", He was able to overcome death for us too. When all was lost, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, without God and without hope in this world, He sent His son.

Romans 5:6-11:

<sup>6</sup> For when we were yet without strength [we couldn't do it, we couldn't save ourselves, we couldn't find a way out of our predicament], in due time [at the exact right time] Christ died for the ungodly.

<sup>7</sup> For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

<sup>8</sup> **But God** commendeth [demonstrated, He proved] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

That love God has for us is the key to all the "But Gods...", that's why they all happened, that's why they all work. If we're ever tempted to think that God doesn't love us or that life is a mess, we just need to remember how He saved us.

<sup>9</sup> Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

God has not only changed our todays but He's set in motion a glorious future for us, He's given us a hope.

<sup>10</sup> For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

<sup>11</sup> And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

In Ephesians 2:4 we have the key to all the "But Gods..."

Ephesians 2:4-6:

<sup>4</sup>**But God**, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **[and that's the key to all the 'But Gods...']**

<sup>5</sup>Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

<sup>6</sup>And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

It doesn't get much bigger than that. In Hebrews 2 it says that we've been subject to bondage, to slavery, our whole lifetime, through fear of death [Hebrews 2:15]. And if the greatest fear has been defeated, we never need to allow ourselves to be enslaved again by any situation in our lives: whether at our job, with our families, or with our health. Because God overcame sin for us by the accomplishments of Jesus Christ, that made available deliverance from death and also deliverance from sickness, which is death in part. In light of recent events, the "But God..." in Philippians 2:27 takes on added significance for us. Writing about Epaphroditus, Paul says:

Philippians 2:27:

For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: **but God** had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

And of course here in Philippians 4 we have the equivalent in our Administration of God telling Moses "I will become whatever you need me to become."

Philippians 4:19:

<sup>19</sup>**But my God** shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

For everything that we *have* faced, *are facing* now, or *will ever* face, there's a "but God..." for that:

- We're tempted, but God is faithful and He always has a way out by His Word;
- People may cheat us or treat us unfairly, but God can still prosper us everything we do;
- There may be people who intend evil against us, but God can turn it to good;
- We may feel alone and others may not be there when we most need them, but God is with us and He'll never, never leave us nor ever, ever EVER forsake us;
- We may be afraid at times, but God will surely deliver us; He'll be our awesome strong champion, and when we allow Him to fight our battles, it's others that will be ashamed and disgraced, not us;
- We're not smart enough or strong enough to deliver ourselves, nor can we buy our way out of our situations, but when we glory in God, He can go to work;
- Many times we don't know what to do, what to think, but God is the rock of our hearts and He will hold our right hand and guide us by His counsel;
- We may be sick, but God is merciful and He's a God of healing and deliverance;
- We may even face death, but God has raised Jesus Christ and we have eternal life.

Our God becomes whatever we need Him to become and He supplies all our needs by His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Let's close in 2 Samuel 22.

2 Samuel 22:2-7:

<sup>2</sup>And he said, The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;

<sup>3</sup>The God of my rock; in him will I trust: *he is* my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.

<sup>4</sup>I will call on the LORD, *who is* worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

<sup>5</sup>When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid;

<sup>6</sup>The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me;

<sup>7</sup>In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry *did enter* into his ears.

Our God, our Father, hears and responds when we call on Him, when we cry to Him. There's a lot of pressure in life sometimes and there's really no way around that other than to die (which *is* a solution, but has some other minor problems associated with it.) Here's an interesting way to look at it. As we sit here, the air pressure that's pressing on our bodies (that's just the weight of the earth's atmosphere above us) is 16 pounds per square inch. That's the equivalent of the weight of a bowling ball on every square inch of our bodies. Why aren't we simply crushed into a pile of goo? Because every cell in our bodies is exerting an equal counterpressure in the other direction, and that's what allows us to breathe and to move and to live.

We have to make God the counterpressure in our lives – particularly in our minds. It's our putting on the multitude of His thoughts in our minds, our believing His Word, our prayers, our operation of the manifestations of holy spirit, that enable us to stand and withstand the pressure. And not just survive, but live abundantly, live victoriously, manifest God's deliverance.

2 Samuel 22:17-20:

<sup>17</sup>He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters;...

If we feel like the waves are getting higher and higher, or even like we're drowning, God can pluck us out. And if we're facing an enemy stronger than we are...

<sup>18</sup>He delivered me from my strong enemy, *and* from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me.

<sup>19</sup>They prevented [they confronted, they attacked] me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay [He was the thing I leaned on, that held me up so I didn't fall].

<sup>20</sup>He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

I could breathe again, move again, live again. That's our delivering God. When we're strong in the Lord, whatever the need is, there's a "but God..." for that.