

When Humpty Falls

By Don Kimbro

A favorite nursery rhyme is the familiar tale of an egg that takes an unfortunate tumble. Most of us — over forty anyway — know it by heart:

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty
had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the
king's men couldn't put Humpty together again.*

According to those who know about such things, this piece of wisdom is a relic thousands of years old. Versions have appeared in eight European languages. In its primitive stages, however, Humpty Dumpty was a riddle. It asked the question, what, when broken, can never be repaired, not even by strong or wise individuals? As any child knows, it's an egg. Regardless of how hard we try, a broken egg can never be put back together again. We simply have to live with the mess.

Today we have a Humpty Dumpty story in America — we have taken a great fall in the tragic and ruthless terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. In a sense, it's a broken egg story but one that could have a different ending. In the nursery rhyme, "All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again" — but God can — if as a nation we will ask him and trust in him to do so.

Many of the news commentators reporting this horrific event have made some very astute observations about our nation's attackers. One said very frankly, "Americans are going to have to get used to the idea that many people in the world just don't like us — in fact — they hate us. They don't like our life-style, they don't like our freedoms, they don't like our wealth and they don't like our religion — and they'll do anything to destroy us." We have witnessed that dramatically in our nation.

Many of us no doubt watched, when our nation's Congress held a prayer vigil in the Rotunda of the Capitol. Strong prayers were lifted up asking "almighty God" to restore this land and help us during these difficult times. As the cameras panned the gathering, some held their stoic demeanor, apparently unaffected by the appeals to God — but others were deeply touched, brushing away tears of sorrow and perhaps repentance. All over America and the world prayer meetings were held, asking our heavenly Father to help us and lift us up and not give up on America.



God has promised that our cries do not fall on deaf ears: *"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the Lord is against evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles"* (Psm. 34:16-17).

Great comfort at times and events like these can be found throughout the scriptures, one of those being the epistle of First Peter — which not only addresses the issue of being hated by others but also tells us what God will do for his people after they have taken a great fall, when they face unprecedented personal suffering, affliction and uncertainty about the future. He promises complete and absolute restoration when we put our trust in him.

When Peter wrote his epistle the early church was scattered, not by choice, all over the Roman Empire and suffering great persecution and suffering. Nero was the Emperor and his atrocities were almost equal to the World Trade Center terrorists acts in numbers of people killed. Christians were tied up in animal skins and hunted down by wild dogs for sport. They were rolled in pitch, impaled on a stake and torched to provide light to the emperor's gardens — and who has not heard of tossing the Christians to the lions for recreational fun in the Roman coliseums?

God's people, Peter reminds us, will always be, "Rejected by men" but we are to remember that we are "chosen by God" and "precious to Him" (1 Ptr. 2:4). As a testimony to him and in those circumstances, we are admonished to "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God" (1 Ptr. 2:12).

Peter also warns the church "not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. (1 Ptr. 4:12-13).

When the scenario is the bleakest, when it appears that there is no hope for deliverance, God presents his people with the steps that will lead us to that place of complete and total restoration — no matter how bad the damage, no matter how far the fall. What "all the king's horses and all the king's men" find impossible to do - God does. "With man this is impossible," Jesus said, "but with God all things are possible" (Mt. 19:26).

Speaking directly to the church Peter continues, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Ptr. 5:6-7). "Make yourselves lowly" is this command expressed literally. Allow yourselves to be humbled. We are such a proud people — so bent on doing things ourselves by our own strength and in our own time. But how can we right this terrible wrong? We can't.

We can make ourselves lowly, however, by praying to God and asking for help. Prayer admits that we can't do it by ourselves. We surrender ourselves to the help that only God can provide. He wants us to give him all of our cares, worries and concerns, knowing that he not only is aware of every one of them but cares about their solution, as well.

Peter continues, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Ptr. 5:8-9). The word for "self-controlled" literally means, "Be sober" or "sober up!" Life is not always a beach, as I used to think during my youthful days in Florida. There is a serious side that requires responsible action and decision. We don't have to panic when terror or calamity comes our way but we should be watching and be ready for it when we see the signs. I heard one reporter ask a government official a question about increased security in and around Washington. Would this keep them from their normal going and coming? He responded by saying that "Yes, it will be different. Now

when I walk out the door, I'll look both ways and be more aware of my surroundings." Being "alert" refers to staying awake at the switch. Shake off sleep, keep your eyes open.

Peter reminds us that we have a real enemy, the devil. He's like a terrorist who hides in the shadows looking for an opportunity to attack and "to kill, steal and destroy" (Jn. 10:10). We should be aware of this and through our faith in God, stand firm, even when suffering and affliction come our way. We are no match for the devil, but neither is the devil a match for God. Through Christ, we can resist everything the devil brings our way.

Our nation's goal right now is to find the people responsible for this horrific attack. But make no mistake about it, Christians know who the real enemy is, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12).

Peter closes this passage with one of the most beautiful and reassuring promises in all of scripture, "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Ptr. 5:10). God has given us the steps to finding peace and comfort in him in any and all circumstances, including what our nation and its people are facing in this hour. But if we will humble ourselves and turn to God in prayer (2 Chron. 7:14), acknowledging that without him we cannot possibly overcome and — casting all of our cares at his feet — God will give us strength to be victorious and stand firm against the enemy of our souls. Satan is a defeated foe. The war has already been won by the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30).

God promises that the suffering we endure is only for a short season, "*a little while.*" It will not be forever. It will only be long enough for God to accomplish his plan and purposes and that good will prevail (Rom. 8:28).

But that's not all there is to this marvelous promise. We know that God has myriads of angels, "ten thousand times ten thousand" (Rev. 5:11), at his command. They stand ready to fight his battles in the heavenlies and "to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:14). But in this case, we see that God himself promises to come to our rescue because it is his people who are suffering. God promises that he will personally respond to not only save — but to completely restore that which has been lost while bringing renewed strength and firmly establishing us once again in our rightful position and inheritance in him. That's where our hope lies today in America during this time of national tragedy. May God bless America. "To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Ptr. 5:11).

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