
Words of Comfort and Hope

By David Wilkerson

May 4, 2009 Jesus was ministering to a great multitude when the people began getting hungry. He took his disciple Philip aside and asked him an important question. “He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do” (John 6:5–6).

Jesus was saying, “Philip, these thousands of people are hungry. Tell me, how are we going to feed them? What do you think we should do?” How incredibly loving of Christ. He knew all along what he would do; the verse tells us so. Yet he was trying to teach Philip something important. And the lesson he wanted to impart has great significance to us today.

Right now the world is teetering on a precipice as at no other time in history. The present upheaval comes at a time when Christians everywhere are facing trials as never before. Multitudes sit up half the night trying to figure out their problems: “Maybe this will work — no, no. Maybe that will solve it — no, that won’t work either. What am I going to do?”

When Jesus posed his question to Philip, the disciples didn’t have just a bread problem. They had a bakery problem, a money problem, a distribution problem, a transportation problem, and a time problem. Add it all up, and they had problems they couldn’t even imagine. Their situation was absolutely impossible.

Beloved, consider this: In the midst of your impossible situation, Jesus comes to you asking, “What are we going to do about this?” He knows exactly what he is going to do. He has a plan. Yet he also wants to know how you, his servant, will face your difficulties.

The correct answer from Philip would have been, “Jesus, you are God. Nothing is impossible with you. So I’m giving this problem to you right now. It is no longer mine but yours.”

More than anything, Jesus wanted Philip to remember the words he had already spoken to him about God’s faithfulness. I believe Christ wants the same for his people today. He has given us powerful words of comfort and hope for just such a time of crisis. And we are to remind ourselves of these truths as we face our time of great need.

1. God reminds us, “I am power, and I am also compassion.” “I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way” (Matthew 15:32). Jesus is making a statement here to believers in every generation. He’s telling us, “I will do more for my people than heal them. I’m going to make sure they have enough bread to eat. I am concerned about everything concerning their lives.

“I want you to realize I am more than just power. I am also compassion. If you see me only as a healer or a miracle worker, you will only fear me. But if you also see me as compassionate, a giver of good gifts, you will love me and trust my Word.”

I am writing this message to every Christian who is on the brink of exhaustion, about to faint, overwhelmed by your present situation. You have been a faithful servant, feeding others, confident that God can do the impossible for his people. Yet you have lingering doubts about God’s willingness to intervene in *your* present struggle.

Think of those in the body of Christ whom you have given words of faith and hope, people facing seemingly hopeless situations. You've urged them, "Hang on! God is a miracle worker, and his promises are true. Don't lose hope, because he's going to answer your cry."

I have offered such encouragement many times. Yet recently the Holy Spirit asked me, "David, do you *really* believe in miracles?" My answer was, "Yes, Lord, of course I do. I believe in every miracle I've read in Scripture." Yet this answer is not good enough. God's question to all of his people right now is, "Do you believe I can work a miracle *for you*?" And not just one miracle, but a miracle for every crisis, every situation we face.

We need more than bygone miracles we've read about in history. We need up-to-date, personal miracles designed for our present crisis, a circumstance we have never faced before. Tell me, as you face your present difficulty, do you really believe the Lord will work it out? Do you trust he'll work a miracle for you in a way you cannot conceive?

That is the question Jesus was asking Philip. It is a question that demands real faith — the kind of faith that quiets the heart and causes "wars to cease." Only that kind of faith will assure us we can rest in the Father's care, trusting him to come through for us in his way and time.

2. Our faith in troubled times obtains for us the testimony of "a good report." "[By their faith] the elders obtained a good report" (Hebrews 11:2). The Greek word for "obtained" here means "to bear witness, to become a testimony." Our ancestors in the Lord had a settled, anchored faith. And their unwavering faith became a testimony to the world of God's faithfulness in the midst of troubled times.

Think of what our ancestors endured: floods, mockery, bonds, imprisonment, fire, torture, warfare, lions' dens. Through it all, their trust in the Lord never wavered. How? *They had an inner witness that God was pleased with them.* Our forefathers knew God was smiling at them, saying, "Well done! You have believed and trusted in me."

"Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). Whenever we hold our faith position through hard times, we receive the same affirmation from the Holy Spirit: "Well done. You are God's beloved testimony."

As you rest in him through storms, holding your faith position, you are obtaining a "good report." And you are serving as a beacon of hope to those around you. Those who watch your life — at home, at work, on your block — are learning that hope is available to them. As they observe you in your hour of crisis, they realize, "There stands someone who hasn't lost his faith in God. He has no fear whatsoever. What enables him to trust through such upheaval?"

Our God has supplied us with everything needed to sustain our faith, even as calamities increase. We have been given the witness of the Holy Spirit, who abides in us, and God's fully revealed Word in the Scriptures. These will sustain us, obtaining for us the testimony of a good report even as the world shakes.

3. We have been given a great weapon against fear. When fear becomes overwhelming, we must remind ourselves of how great our God is. We are to recall all his great deliverances for those who have trusted in him, and claim the same majestic power for our present trial. Fear can't get a

stranglehold on any servant who has a vision of God's greatness and majesty.

Nehemiah understood this well. He paced back and forth as Jerusalem was surrounded by a fierce coalition of nations ready to attack. A weary remnant was working around the clock to restore Jerusalem's walls against these adversaries. These worn-out workers had to toil with a hammer in one hand and a sword in the other. As the hours ticked away, fear began to set in.

How were they able to resist succumbing to fear? Nehemiah reminded them of how great and mighty their God is: "I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight" (Nehemiah 4:14).

This is exactly how Moses dealt with fear in Israel. He instructed the people: "If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt.... Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible" (Deuteronomy 7:17-18, 21).

Moses was saying, "You're going to face many great enemies who are more powerful than you. You'll wonder how you can ever gain victory against such odds. But you have to remember the awesome might of your God. Remind yourselves of what he did to your enemies in the past, and how faithful he was to deliver you." "He is thy praise...that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen" (Deuteronomy 10:21).

If your faith is shaken, remind yourself of how mighty your God is. Recount his many deliverances in your life. You will find any grip of fear being broken by a vision of his majesty.

4. We have a weapon against every nagging voice of despair. Amid the present upheaval, multitudes have been robbed of faith by personal trials that never seem to end. Once-vibrant belief has turned into feelings of helplessness and despair. Many wonder in their pain, "Why doesn't God answer my prayers? Have I done something wrong? I don't understand why my trial goes on and on. Is the Lord mad at me?"

Some have contacted our ministry, saying, "I have no one to talk to, no one to share my burden with. I need someone I can pour my heart out to." It is in our nature to want another human being, with a face, eyes and ears, to listen to us and advise us.

When Job was overwhelmed by his trials, he cried out in grief, "Oh that one would hear me!" (Job 31:35). He said this while surrounded by so-called friends, men who had no sympathy for his troubles. In fact, these men were messengers of despair. So Job turned to the Lord alone: "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.... Mine eye poureth out tears unto God" (Job 16:19-20).

King David was constantly surrounded by people, with a large family and many companions at his side. Yet we hear a similar cry from him: "To whom shall I go?" David urged God's people to do as Job did: "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62:8).

Beloved, these examples are an invitation to you from the Lord. He is urging you to find a private place where you can pour out to him the troubles of your soul. Both Job and David "poured out their

complaints” to him in the midst of their trials, and so can you. You can speak to Jesus about your present trial, telling him how overwhelmed and even discouraged you are.

For centuries God has answered the cries of all who have trusted in his promises. He will hear your cry as well, with love and sympathy, never despising your cry. And he will renew your strength for every battle.

5. We are to resign ourselves to God’s care in everything. Jesus warned of perilous times like the present one: “Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity...men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Luke 21:25–26). Christ was telling us, “Without hope in me, multitudes are literally going to die of fright.”

Yet for those who trust in God’s promises to preserve his people, there is glorious freedom from all fear. How is this so? True freedom consists of *totally resigning one’s life into the hands of the Lord*.

Resigning ourselves into God’s care is an act of faith. It means putting ourselves completely under his power, wisdom and mercy. And it means being led according to his will. If we will do these things, God promises to be totally responsible for us — to feed, clothe and shelter us, and to guard our hearts from all evil.

Jesus provided the ultimate example of holy resignation when he went to the cross. Just before he gave up his spirit, he cried aloud, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Christ literally placed the keeping of his life and eternal future in the custody of his Father. In doing so, he placed the souls of each of his sheep into the Father’s hands.

If we are being asked to trust our lives to someone, we have to know that this Someone has the power to keep us from all danger, threats and violence. Paul testifies, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

6. We are to live continually in the fear and awe of the Lord. The prophets warn that when God shakes the nations, we will be greatly tempted to fear.

- Ezekiel asked, “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?” (Ezekiel 22:14).

- When God warned Noah of his coming judgments and told him to build an ark, Noah was “moved with fear” (Hebrews 11:7).

- Even courageous David admitted, “My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments” (Psalm 119:120).

- When Habakkuk saw disastrous days ahead, he cried out, “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might

rest in the day of trouble” (Habakkuk 3:16).

Note that the fear in each of these godly men wasn't a fleshly fear, but a *reverential awe of the Lord*. These saints weren't afraid of the enemy of their souls, but they did fear God's righteous judgments. That is because they understood the awesome power behind the approaching calamities. They didn't fear the outcome of the storm, but rather God's holiness.

Each of us will experience overwhelming fear in the coming times of upheaval. But our fear must come from a holy reverence for the Lord, never from a fleshly anxiety about our fate. All over the world, people are filled with fleshly fear, as they see their nations' economies deteriorating. They're afraid an economic flood will sweep away everything they've labored for. Such is the cry of unbelievers who have no hope. It ought not to be the cry of the godly.

If you are a child of God, your heavenly Father will not endure such unbelief in you. Isaiah warned: “Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker...and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor” (Isaiah 51:12–13). “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread [awe]” (8:13).

We are to let God be our fear and awe. That kind of fear leads not to death but to life.

7. We are to delight ourselves in the Lord. Our abiding peace will always depend on our resignation into God's hands, no matter what our circumstance. The Psalmist instructs, “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psalm 37:4).

If you have fully resigned yourself into God's hands, he will empower you to endure any hardship. His desire is that you go about your daily business without fear or anxiety, trusting in his care. And your resignation to him will have a very practical effect in your life: *The more resigned you are to God's care, the more indifferent you will be to the conditions around you.*

If you are resigned to his keeping power, you won't be scared by any frightful news. You won't constantly be trying to figure out the next step. It is because you have entrusted your life, family and future into his safe and loving hands. Our great Shepherd knows perfectly how to protect and preserve his flock because he leads us in love.

In closing, I return to the question Jesus posed to Philip: “What do you think we should do?” May our response be this: “Lord, you are the miracle worker. I surrender all my doubts and fears to you. I entrust this entire situation, my whole life, into your care. I know you won't allow me to faint. In fact, I realize you already know what you'll do about my problem. I trust in your power.” Amen!

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