
A Time to Weep and a Time to Fight

By David Wilkerson

November 17, 2008 As I read through the Old Testament, I find my faith greatly encouraged by the example David set. An awful calamity struck this man causing his very life to be threatened by those closest to him. I am awed by David's determination to get a word from God in the midst of his perilous time.

Here is the scene: David and his band of 600 loyal men were on the run from King Saul, who had been trying to kill him. At one point the small army encamped in a town called Ziklag, where they settled their families. From there they went out to do battle, leaving their wives and children safely behind.

After one battle, David and his army were making a three-day trip back home when their village was suddenly raided by the Amalekites. This fierce enemy kidnapped the families of David and his men and burned down the whole town. Imagine the scene as David's army returned: "So (they) came to the city, and behold, it was burnt with fire, and their wives, and sons, and their daughters were taken captive" (1 Samuel 30:3).

These mighty men must have been struck mute as they discovered what had happened. It was so sudden and catastrophic they couldn't take it all in. I picture them walking about stunned and bewildered, crying out in agony, "How could this happen? Why would God allow it?" "Then David and the people that were with him lift up their voice and wept, *until they had no more power to weep*" (30:4, my italics).

This scene from David's life shows us there is most certainly a time to weep when calamity strikes. Scripture describes David's soldiers as "mighty men," implying battle-hardened men who didn't cry. But this calamitous event had brought the strong men to great weeping.

After all, it was no small disaster. It wasn't just the loss of homes, cattle or crops that caused David's mighty men to weep; they would soon get over that. Rather, it was the threat to their beloved wives and children that pierced their very souls. And what followed this scene could have been even more disastrous for David: "David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved" (30:6).

What we are witnessing in the world today is described in Scripture as "the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion" (Isaiah 34:8). I believe that through all the churning and chaotic events going on in the world today, God is bringing down greed, covetousness and pride. I'm convinced he could no longer permit sexual perversions to destroy the soul of an entire generation. And I believe same-sex marriages have become a flash point of God's vengeance.

The period of history that Isaiah describes is one full of weeping, fear and trembling. Yet the Lord gave Isaiah a word of assurance for his people: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; *he will come and save you*" (Isaiah 35:3-4, my italics).

The Lord was saying, in essence: "Strengthen the exhausted. Build up those who are weak among you. Encourage all who are afraid and full of anxiety. Tell them, 'There is no need to be fearful. This is all the Lord's doing. And through it, he is going to preserve his people. *He is doing this to save you.*'"

Beloved, even the most godly among us experience a trembling of heart, a sudden rush of fear, when a terrible crisis comes. At such a time, it isn't a sin to have a sudden moment of deep anxiety. Indeed, when the Lord gave this word to Isaiah, he was making sure that all who felt overwhelmed by the terrifying situation would not be crushed by it. He wanted every weary, troubled heart to hear: "Fear not! Take courage, for the Lord is a Savior to his people."

After enduring a period of weeping, there comes a time to fight. A time comes when all weeping must end. It is then God's people are to rise above their grieving, above every dire foreboding, and *get back their fight*. In the New Testament, Hebrews echoes Isaiah's words: "Strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed" (Hebrews 12:12-13, NAS).

The meaning here is, in effect: "Don't stay down. Get up and fight for your faith. Exercise your trust in the Lord. Don't give in to sore, trembling knees. Instead, keep running. If you succumb to fear and worry, your faith may end up crippled."

Consider the crippling response of David's army to their calamity. After these mighty men had finished weeping, they grew outraged. They blamed David for having allowed the disaster. They were so out of joint, so embittered by their horrible misfortune, they began picking up stones to kill him.

In my opinion, this is exactly what the majority of people are doing right now over the current economic calamity. Many are blinded by their outrage. They're turning left and right asking, "Who is to blame for the calamity? Throw them all in jail!"

I urge every follower of Jesus: Forget about how we got here. Forget about who is responsible. Most of all, forget about your own personal what ifs: "If only I had done this or that, my finances would be okay." If you hang onto such thoughts, your fear will turn into rage or some other crippling, destructive spirit. No! The Lord intends a different direction for all your energies. His Word tells us, "Now is the time to fight for your faith!"

Consider David's response to his calamity: *he encouraged himself*. "David encouraged himself in the Lord" (1 Samuel 30:6). Instead of giving in to fear, David decided to fight his fears. I believe he did this by remembering all of God's past deliverances in his life. In his young life, David had killed a bear, slain a lion and brought down the giant Goliath. Now he recounted those battles and the many others he had won. Every victory had been brought about because of his unwavering faith.

David was saying, "I need a word from the Lord." He knew no one could encourage him — not his priest, Abiathar, not the very wise captains under his charge, indeed no counselor at all. David had to have a word himself directly from the One who had delivered him from every calamity he had faced.

Beloved, the same is true for you and me today. There simply is nobody on earth who can lift your soul out of despair. No one can keep your spirit encouraged through the duration of your crisis. *We all have to get our own word from the Lord*. Like David, we are called to strengthen ourselves by recalling God's deliverances in our lives. And we must also remember those times when God has proven fruitful in past generations.

Our encouragement to each other can only go so far. If the sermons you hear by your pastor are anointed, they will produce life in you. The preaching of God's Word will always encourage his saints. Likewise, corporate worship will lift you for a season. But how quickly we forget that uplift after a

Sunday service is over. As Monday and Tuesday pass and the news begins to turn bad, we often fall back into fits of anxiety and fear.

In normal times, I am able to draw advice from my godly wife, Gwen. She is always there to give me a good word, just what I need. I feel toward her the way David did when he said to Abigail, "See, I have hearkened to thy voice" (1 Samuel 25:35). But things can be different in calamitous times. When our faith is being threatened — indeed, when our very lives are being threatened — the counsel of spouses, pastors and wise friends can only take us so far.

Today we are living in fearful times such as few of us have ever known. The truth is, only a personal word from the Lord can lead us through such times with the enduring hope we need. And God has always been faithful to provide a word to his people throughout history.

In the Old Testament we read this phrase again and again: "The word of the Lord came..." Scripture says of Abraham: "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram" (Genesis 15:1). We read of Joshua: "According unto the word of the Lord which he (gave) Joshua" (Joshua 8:27). And so it was with David and the prophets also. We read of them, "The word of the Lord came unto..."

As for God's people today, we have the abiding Holy Spirit to speak a word from heaven to us. Through him, the comforting, healing, guiding word of the Lord is available to all who trust in him.

Consider the 600 soldiers who followed David. They heard the word that God gave their leader. But that word had to be made real to each of those soldiers individually. It had to be something spoken by God to their own spirits so they also could begin to fight back.

Likewise today, I believe the challenge for every believer is to stay in the Scriptures until the Holy Spirit makes God's promises seem to jump off the pages *to them personally*. We can know when that happens because we will hear the still, small voice of the Spirit whispering: "This promise is yours. It is God's Word given just to you, to see you through these hard times."

I am convinced you can't fight the battle of faith without hearing the assuring voice of the Lord to *you*.

David encouraged himself, got back his fight and immediately acted in faith. When David got back his fighting spirit, he sent for something known as the ephod. This was a kind of garment that included two stones kept in the priest's breastplate. On occasion God spoke through the ephod. And David was determined to get a word of direction from the Lord.

"David said to Abiathar the priest...I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. *And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.* And David inquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them?" (1 Samuel 30:7-8, my italics).

Consider what David did here. After he had wept, and after he had regained his fight, this man went directly to his knees. The Lord gave him the word of direction he needed: "He answered him, *Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all*" (30:8, my italics). God's direction to David was, "Go forth. You will be victorious." In other words: "Fight on!"

In the very next verse we read, "So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him" (30:9). David quickly acted on the word God had given him. Yet, I wonder, how did David know where

to go? What direction did he know to take so he could recover all?

I believe there was a word behind David whispering, “This is the way, walk in it.” And, beloved, the same is true for us today. Many churches sing the uplifting gospel song, “He Will Make a Way,” and our Lord does just that. You see, he had a plan in place for each of us before our present calamity fell. And his plan is still at work even now through all the turmoil we face.

I’m convinced the word that David replayed over and over in his mind was, “*You will recover all.*” David knew full well he wouldn’t recover his house in Ziklag. None of his soldiers would recover their homes, their gardens, their possessions. Those things were all gone. No, the “all” they were going to recover was *the safety and security of their families.*

Do you see the parallels to our own time? These men weren’t about to recover a past lifestyle. They weren’t about to return to the same quiet, placid days that had been so peaceful before. Those “good old days” were now history.

But that wasn’t what mattered to David and his 600 mighty men. All they cared about was that their families — everything that truly mattered — were going to be safe. They may have had to live in tents with their wives and children after that. But God had assured them they were going to be secure.

God didn’t tell David how he was going to deliver him and his family. Beloved, the Lord isn’t going to explain to us how he will provide for our loved ones. He won’t show us how he’s going to keep us safe in the worst of times. His ways are so unusual, so unimaginable, we would never be able to figure them out in a lifetime.

As for David, his deliverance came through an unlikely source: a dying young Egyptian. This servant boy was half-dead when David found him in a wilderness and fed him and gave him water. As David asked the young man, “Who are you?” I think God whispered, “David, he is your deliverance.” How unlikely, how miraculous are his ways! It was this nearly dead Egyptian boy who would point the way for David’s army to find the enemy encampment. In short, God used a nameless boy to lead his people to recover all.

In closing, let me take you again to Isaiah 35:4: “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.”

While the world is under vengeance — when all things seem to be spinning completely out of control — God is in the process of saving us. He is using even the chaos of world events to bring about his salvation. He is faithful to save and to keep his people, through every calamity.

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