
God's People Will Not Be Ashamed in the Time of Calamity

By David Wilkerson

December 8, 2008 Dearly Beloved:

“PASTOR DAVID, YOU SPEAK SO MUCH ABOUT HARD TIMES COMING. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I'VE BEEN LIVING HARD TIMES FOR YEARS.”

These words came to me by mail from a frustrated prisoner who has been reading my messages for a number of years. He was not condemning me; he simply said he was just very tired of years of hard times and prayed for some good news.

He is right about the hard times so many have endured for years. We minister to inner-city believers who have known only trouble and difficulty for most of their lives — struggling to find a decent apartment, trying to feed children with no father, needing a miracle every week just to survive. We continue to help supplying needs of widows and the fatherless, yet the battle they face is daunting.

These struggling souls are not concerned about Wall Street or about multimillionaires losing fortunes. Their focus is not on the economy or stocks and bonds. They live one day at a time, trusting the Lord to help them pay the electric bill.

I think of the pastor who called me yesterday. Wearily, he told me of his wife's battle with cancer that is spreading throughout her body. His focus was not on the possibility of a recession or worldwide depression. All his thoughts and prayers are focused on his dear wife for “just a healing word from God.”

What blesses me most are the uplifting letters we receive from those whose faith has held steady or is growing in the midst of their very hard times. They have been severely tested and at times have wondered if they would make it through the storm. But they still trust the Lord completely.

Beloved, the Lord's coming draws near, and soon we will all stand before his throne. All I have to give him of any value is my faith. Unwavering faith is the most precious gift we can give him — both now and at his throne.

“He [the trusting believer] shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid...” (Psalm 112:7–8).

A closing word: Every day, when we open our mail in the office, we are amazed. God is sustaining our ministry to nations, and every need is being met. We give God all praise. We thank all who keep supporting these important missions outreaches. Thank you for caring.

We love reading your comments. We do pray over all prayer requests. God love you.

In Christ,
DAVID WILKERSON

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Newsletter: God's People Will Not Be Ashamed in the Time of Calamity

December 8, 2008 When I began working on this message, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the entire world had come under a great cloud of fear. People in all nations are now paralyzed by world events. Immediately, my thoughts turned to our parishioners at Times Square Church. They show no such fear. Instead, while we all have a great soberness about these times, we also have a deep, abiding joy.

I was led to Psalm 37, written by David: "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil [calamitous] time:* and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied" (Psalm 37:18-19, my italics). Here is an amazing prophecy for God's people, and it is being fulfilled before our eyes.

In short, Psalm 37 tells us the Lord rises up to action against societies whose sins have outraged heaven. David prophesies, "The arms [power] of the wicked shall be broken" (37:17). Yet this same Psalm is also one of great hope. It contains an incredible promise to those who put their trust fully in the Lord.

First, there comes a time when God can no longer endure the greed, covetousness and wicked fraud that evil men perpetrate on the poor and needy. David's prophecy speaks of a sudden loss of financial power: "The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away" (Psalm 37:20). The inference here is that fire will suddenly consume the wealth of the powerful. Riches will quickly spatter into smoke like fat in flames.

Talk about a picture of what has happened to America's economy. In two weeks' time, more than \$4 trillion of American wealth vanished. Now we are being told trillions more will go up in smoke. Stock markets all over the world have gone into shock over the news, with brokers weeping and wailing.

I won't go into the reasons why I believe God had to act. But I can say this: We know our God is not asleep. There comes a time Isaiah describes as "the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion" (Isaiah 34:8). "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face... I will not keep silence, but will recompense" (Isaiah 65:2-3, 6).

What we see happening to our economy is not only God's vengeance. It has to do with the very honor and glory of Almighty God. He will not stand by as his ways are maligned by the wicked. Ezekiel writes, "The time has come, the day has arrived. Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller mourn; for wrath is against all their multitude.... They have blown the trumpet and made everything ready, but no one is going to the battle; for my wrath is against all their multitude" (Ezekiel 7:12, 14). In the midst of wickedness, God has sounded the trumpet of alarm, but the warning has been ignored.

Paul also describes our time when he writes, “In the last days perilous times shall come.... Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:1, 13). Think of the huge mortgage companies that seduced and deceived the poor, the unlearned and the unemployed. These unwitting people were lured to sign up for mortgages they could never pay, and when payday came they were left without homes. Reputable banks failed because of the deception, but their executives bailed out with “golden parachutes” of multiple millions.

I read about one such executive throwing an expensive party, dancing the night away with liquor flowing, knowing full well his company was going down. He and others partied wildly despite knowing that hundreds of thousands of people would lose their homes. It is a clear fulfillment of the prophecy in Zephaniah 1:9, “(They) leap on the threshold [of the poor], which fill their masters’ houses.”

How long did we think God would put up with such madness, such mockery of his name? The Lord has the final word on the matter, and he says, “In the same day also will I punish (them)” (1:9). In short: “I will put them to shame.” “Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows [wealth] shall be broken” (Psalm 37:15). Even now, as I write this, two billionaires are being bailed out because their wealth vanished overnight.

At the same time the Lord is recompensing the ungodly, he will reward those who trust in him. Here is the theme of my message: “The Lord upholdeth the righteous.... *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time [of calamity]*” (Psalm 37:17, 19, my italics). You may ask, “What does this mean exactly?” It means simply this: God is faithful not just in his recompense of woes, but also in his promises. David is saying, in effect, “Look around you and see how God keeps his Word. His warnings are now being manifested in your headlines, his actions all over your media. I ask you, will not God also keep his Word to preserve his chosen ones?”

Think of it: No matter what happens in the world — no matter how fearful the news becomes, how severely the world shakes, how economies may teeter toward collapse — God’s people will not be left ashamed. Indeed, the Lord will act on our faith to fulfill his Word to us. We may suffer, but he will come through for all who fully trust in him. The world will never be able to say, “Your God didn’t keep his Word.”

Make no mistake, we are going to face impossibilities in the days ahead. But our Lord says he is God of the impossible, providing miracles when there is no human answer. In fact, he willingly puts his reputation in the hands of his people, calling us to commit him to his Word. You may think, “But God can defend his own name. He doesn’t need me.” Not so! God has chosen his people to be his testimony to a numb, unmoved world. And he is calling us to openly commit him to do what he promises.

You see, in the world’s eyes God is always on trial. Unbelievers are watching every time we face impossible situations, saying, “This person sings about God making a way to deliver him. Now we’ll see if his God answers him. Will he make it through or will he end up in shame?”

Skeptics in Jesus' day said similar things at the Crucifixion: "This man boasted his Father would raise him from the dead. Now we'll see. Will it be resurrection or shame?" Jesus wasn't deaf to those taunts. But he knew something they didn't: His Father would never allow him to be put to shame. God would not fail to deliver him *for his own name's sake*.

There are times when it looks as if God hasn't shown up — when his people will be left in shame and despair — but the full story hasn't been told. (The Cross was one of those times.) What we don't realize in the midst of the crisis is that God's own honor is at stake. And throughout the Bible he had a people whose flint-like faith proved his faithfulness in the most difficult times. These servants unashamedly committed the Lord to act, putting his honor at stake while trusting him to deliver.

1. Consider Moses' example at the Red Sea. Here was a humanly impossible situation. Israel was on the run from the Egyptian army, hemmed in on one side by the sea and by mountains on the other. It was here Moses committed God to his promises. He had already prophesied God would lead Israel into the Promised Land. Now the Lord's reputation was at stake for all to see.

I can hear the reports getting back that Pharaoh had Israel trapped. All of Egypt expected to see the Israelites brought back in chains. Parades would be planned to celebrate Pharaoh's victory, with golden idols exalted over the God of Israel. What was Moses' reaction to this crisis? Facing the vast sea before him, he cried, "Move forward!" Moses so believed in God's care, trusting his word to lead Israel into his promise, he declared, "I know the Lord is faithful. And I'm going to act on his word."

Think about the consequences of such faith. If the Red Sea didn't open up miraculously, Moses would be thought a fool. The Israelites would go back into bondage, and God would never again be trusted. Yet we all know what happened: As Moses stretched out his hand, the waters divided, and the people walked across on dry ground. I tell you, no one who fully trusts in God will ever be put to shame. He will deliver on his promise *for his own name's sake*.

2. Consider Joshua. For six days Israel had marched around the impenetrable city of Jericho, saying, "These walls are coming down." To the people inside Jericho, this sounded absolutely foolish. They must have laughed in derision. Then finally, on the seventh day, God's people were commanded to march not just once but seven times. At this point, even the Israelites must have felt foolish. They might have thought, "Nothing happened the first six days. Now this seems desperate. We'll be shamed if these walls don't fall."

But such thoughts never entered Joshua's mind. He said, "I know what I heard from the Lord, and I know he is able." He committed God to his promise, putting his glory on the line. We know what happened: "The people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass...that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city" (Joshua 6:20). When God's children commit him to his Word, he will never let them be shamed.

3. Consider the Hebrew children. Daniel and the three Hebrew children refused to bow in worship before Nebuchadnezzar's 90-foot gold idol. They stood resolute even when condemned to die in a fiery furnace. As the wicked king taunted, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Daniel 3:15), the young men committed the Lord to his promises:

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. [We don't hesitate in our response.] If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace... But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (3:16-18). They were so confident God would honor his name, they willingly faced certain death.

Prominent leaders from throughout the land gathered for the execution: princes, governors, judges, rulers from surrounding provinces. And Nebuchadnezzar ordered the fire stoked seven times hotter than usual, a heat so fierce it killed the servants tending the furnace. The crowds were aghast, exclaiming, "These men can't survive. They'll drop dead before they get near that furnace. No God can deliver from this kind of fate." Again, the Lord's name was on the line. If he didn't intervene, his name would be defamed throughout the nations.

But the Lord never puts to shame those who fully trust him. Scripture says Jesus himself showed up in that furnace to protect and comfort his servants. And out of the fire walked the four Hebrew children, without even a whiff of smoke on them.

4. Consider King Hezekiah. Scripture says Hezekiah was God-fearing: "He clave to the Lord" (2 Kings 18:6). During Hezekiah's reign, Jerusalem was besieged by the Assyrians, the great world power of the day. This vast army had already captured Samaria and the cities of Judah, and now they surrounded Jerusalem. Their captain stood taunting, "We have overpowered the gods of all nations. How do you expect your God to deliver you?"

Once again, the Lord himself was on trial. His faithfulness was being questioned before the whole empire, before Israel's enemies, even before God's people. What if he didn't act? What if, in the morning, a barrage of arrows came cascading over the city walls? The heathen would gloat and God's Word would be meaningless.

As the crisis mounted, Isaiah stood by watching it all. He had received a word from the Lord, and he trusted in it fully. Now he committed God to that word, putting the Lord's reputation on the line. He prayed, in essence, "God, my honor doesn't matter. If you don't deliver, I can always hide in the wilderness. It's *your* honor that is at stake."

With that, Isaiah calmly told Hezekiah to tell the Assyrian captain: "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, *for mine own sake*" (2 Kings 19:32-34, my italics).

God will never let his trusting people be put to shame, and that night he delivered a powerful miracle. Scripture says 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died mysteriously, causing a huge panic, and the mighty army fled. Once again, God defended his people *for his own sake*.

5. Consider Peter and John in the New Testament. As the two disciples walked toward the temple, they came upon a beggar who had been lame from birth. Peter and John had probably passed this man many times before, but this time they stopped. The throngs in the marketplace heard Peter tell the beggar, "Look on us.... In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:4, 6).

Peter was calling on the Lord to act, with God's own glory at stake. The crowds must have said to each other, "What a foolish preacher. He's asking a man who's been crippled all his life to stand up and walk." I believe those people were ready to laugh Peter and John to scorn.

Then a strange feeling started in the lame man's feet. First he wiggled his ankle. Then the feeling moved upward into his calves and his thighs. He began to crouch, then slowly he pushed himself upright and stood. To the crowd's amazement, the man began to leap and dance.

I ask you: what if God hadn't acted? That was never a concern to Peter, who gladly committed his God to deliver. The Lord will never put those who trust him to shame!

We today are also called to place God's honor, glory and reputation on the line. Think about these biblical episodes. In each one, everything that Christ came to earth and died for was at stake. Yet all through the Old and New Testaments, God's plan, purpose and people survived. And in every case, God called his children not only to trust him but to believe him to work miracles. Tell me, would the Lord ask any less of our generation?

Consider the testimony we have put forth about our glorious Lord. We have said he will provide, calling him Jehovah Jireh. We have declared his promises to supply for his children. Now, once more, his name and honor are at stake. If we will commit him to act, he promises: "I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought (Israel) out" (Ezekiel 20:14). He's saying, in essence, "When I delivered Israel, it wasn't in some hidden corner. I worked miracles for them before the whole world. Now I want to do the same in your generation."

Dear saint, are you facing a situation you have not yet committed to God? Are you being called to put your faith out on a limb in the distant unknown? Have you resolved, "Only a miracle from the Lord can deliver me"? We may not figure out how God will work his deliverance; no one in the Bible did. But we do know this: just one of his angels can put 185,000 men to flight. The Lord will never let his people be ashamed!

Right now, he is telling us just as he told Israel, "I called you out of your sins. And I have set you within sight of everyone around you, that I may glorify my name. It was I who called you out. And I will deliver you in the sight of the ungodly, for my name's sake." So, will you now walk in what you

preach and claim to believe? Will you commit God to his Word for his name to be glorified before multitudes?

May we all adopt the prayer of David for these times: "Do thou for me, O God the Lord, *for thy name's sake*: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me" (Psalm 109:21, my italics). God will never put his trusting people to shame. He will keep his Word to you because his own honor is at stake.

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