
Steadfast and Confident to the End

By David Wilkerson

May 12, 2008 "Christ...a son over his own house; whose house we are, *if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*. Wherefore as the Holy Ghost said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years....

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*" (Hebrews 3:6-9, 12-14, my italics).

I believe with other watchmen that the days Jesus foretold were coming are now upon us. All over the world, people's hearts are failing with fear as they watch the terrifying things coming upon the earth.

Yet, in the midst of all this anxiety and fear, we who trust in the Lord hear his Word telling us, "Be steadfast and confident to the end."

The fact is this: whenever there is mounting fear, God calls for greater steadfastness. Whenever there is great terror and falling away, he calls for greater confidence. Whenever there is gloom and despair, he calls us to increase our gladness and rejoicing.

That is the nature of our heavenly Father. He has made provision for his people to hold fast and retain their joy in the severest of troubled times.

Yet there is a condition attached to this provision. It is a big *if*:

"We are made partakers of Christ, *if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.... Christ ...whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*" (Hebrews 3:14, 6, my italics).

Why are we given this cautionary word? It is because there are powerful forces at work today against every believer who would hold fast to his confident faith.

Think of all that the Lord's church is facing today. Right now, there is an all-out attack on Christ and his Word. Backslidden theologians are redefining Jesus, attacking his divinity, heaping ridicule on the Bible, raising doubts about the authenticity of Scripture.

The present generation also faces vile, raging temptations that were unknown to past generations. Godly men and women who at one time were watchful are now becoming hooked into all kinds of addictions. They have been assaulted and overcome, as Satan unleashes his evil principalities in a war against the steadfast faith of every follower of Jesus.

All around us in the world today, there is terrorism, senseless violence, mounting financial crises and panic. The effect upon the church has been one of great apostasy among once-steadfast believers. Satan's powers of darkness have been sent expressly to wage battles that will wear down the confidence of God's saints.

This assault from hell is about to become so devastating, so terrifying, we are going to need

supernatural power to sustain us. Human will and intelligence will be no match for the demonic manifestations we're going to face.

Honestly, I don't believe there is a Christian alive who can remain steadfast and confident in the days ahead, without a fresh outpouring from the Holy Spirit. None of us can hold fast in such trying times unless we know and appropriate the works of God's Spirit.

That's why I am convinced the time has come to seek a deeper revelation about the ministry of God's Spirit. We know so little about why he was sent, about who he is and what he does for us. What will be the Holy Spirit's ministry in these last days?

Here are things we need to know about the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is the mutual love of God the Father and Christ his Son. The love of the Father toward us, embodied in his Son, has been committed to the ministering work of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit has been sent to humankind to reveal the majesty and glory of this everlasting love.

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.... I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit" (Romans 5:5, 15:30). The Holy Spirit *is* the eternal love of Father and Son. All of his works, all of his ministry, are ordained to express and manifest that love.

Just as Jesus accepted his mission willingly, so did the Holy Spirit. He was given by the Father to Christ, who in turn sent the Spirit to us on a love mission. Therefore, every work the Spirit does — every comfort and consolation he brings, every revelation, every chastening, every wooing and warning — all proceed from love. It proceeds first from the Father's love, and Christ's love, but also the Spirit's own love, for the Holy Spirit truly loves everyone he lives in.

All of this may sound elementary to some readers. But frankly, in these days of increasing turmoil, here is truth that must be fixed in our hearts. To hold fast through the days ahead, our faith must lay hold of the following: *If we are not secure in God's love for us, we cannot grow in steadfastness and confidence. And we will not be able to rejoice when the furious storms are upon us.*

The prophet Isaiah likens the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit to the love and comfort of a mother. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 66:13).

In the natural, there is no greater conception of love than that of a tender, caring mother. She is always there for her children, with a nurturing, comforting word in times of distress.

With this maternal image, the Holy Spirit shows us how he fulfills his mission. He is saying to us through Isaiah, in essence:

"As followers of Jesus, you already know something about love. Now let me show you how tender and longsuffering the love of the Father and his Son is toward you. To understand it, think of a godly, tender mother's love. This is how I work in you, how I minister to you."

Think of it: a mother will stay with her sick child until the cure comes. She will even endure a child's rejection of her love. That child may fall into sin, disregarding all his mother's words of guidance and

correction. He may become overwhelmed with despondency or unbelief, or become proud, stubborn and rebellious. Yet, through it all, his mother never gives up on him.

I know there are many godly mothers reading this who have endured the heartbreak of a child who fell in with the wrong crowd. Now that child is caught up in an addiction, and the mother can't seem to reach him anymore. He seems to have no faith in God. Even when he repents, promising to change, it never lasts.

I know that mother cries silently in the night. Her heart grieves. Yet in spite of the tremendous anguish, her mother-heart is still overcome with love, still reaching out, still caring, still giving. Her love for her child never ends.

Moses reminded Israel, "The Lord found you in a howling wilderness." "He kept (you) as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings" (Deuteronomy 32:10-11).

Consider this image of a mother eagle. Jesus refers to a similar image when he speaks of being "a hen (who) gathereth her chickens under her wings" (Matthew 23:37). In times of storm, such a mother hides her young safely and lovingly under her wings.

We are talking here about the tenderest, most trustworthy love known to human beings. If you were to go into any courthouse and peer into one courtroom after another, you would see young men on trial for every conceivable crime. Who would be watching from the courtroom seats? Mostly mothers.

Go to any prison on visiting days. Who do you see lining up to visit an incarcerated son or daughter? Mothers, heavy-hearted with grief — mothers who spent hours getting there. Mothers who continue to love their children though the world has disowned them. Mothers who hold no grudge against their children, who still have good thoughts toward them. Mothers who seem to have an unlimited capacity to love and forgive.

Many years ago, an old preacher wrote, "I don't know if the Prodigal Son had a mother, but if he did, I assure you: while the father stood on the roof looking for his son to come home, that mother was shut in her room, praying and weeping. Later, when everyone was dancing at the son's return, you would find that mother whispering hope and healing into her son's ear." "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

We may not understand why God allows our afflictions to continue...why those we love endure pain and trouble for so long...why so many of our prayers do not seem to receive a response...why so many of our questions go unanswered. But God is not obligated to answer all our questions. Indeed, we may not know any answers until we get to glory.

Yet there is one thing I will never question: that is my Father's love for me, revealed by the Holy Spirit who dwells in me.

Paul tells us, "Grieve not the Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30). I believe we grieve the Holy Spirit when we fail to accept his mission of love to us.

Too many in the church think of the Spirit as a kind of "hard man." In their minds, he continually stands over them with a rod of correction in his hand. Yet, if I see the Holy Spirit only as a father who

wears a scowl of anger because of my failures, or as a disappointed mother who has stopped caring, I will never survive. I won't hold steadfast. I will lose my confidence.

The Holy Spirit's mission is just the opposite. It is to "*revive* the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15, my italics).

If the Spirit were to deal with us only according to our sins and failures, no one could stand. We are told in the next verse, "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the Spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made" (57:16).

We may be tempted to fall into despair over our sins and failures. But the Spirit comes with love, for the very purpose of rescuing us from despair.

Here is a second promise of Isaiah 66:13: "Ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." What a prophecy! This verse speaks of comfort in the church, of every member of Christ's body lovingly nourishing one another. It is an image of God's people comforting each other's hurts and entering into their sufferings.

This image is confirmed by Paul in the New Testament: "Blessed be...the God of all comfort; who comforteth us *in* all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are *in* any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, my italics).

Note that nothing is said here about deliverance from the battle. We are told only that the Holy Spirit gives us comfort to endure and stay steadfast *in* our trial: "comfort...*in* trouble."

This comfort, provided by the Spirit in the midst of our troubles, is not simply a temporary lifting of the burden. It is not a sigh of relief, a shutting out of troubling thoughts or fears. Rather, it is comfort that comes to us *in* our troubles — and it is supernatural. It is a miraculous work, a heaven-sent healing of mind, soul and spirit. Such comfort is the exclusive ministry of the Holy Spirit, and it is accomplished by faith as we trust in his love for us.

Scripture tells us, "You will comfort those in Zion. You will have a word of healing for those who are in despair and fear." Dear saint, I ask you: what do you have to give others in trouble? What has the Holy Spirit done in you that can bring healing to hurting friends and family?

It is not a question of means or charity. Kind words of sympathy are not enough. A grocery basket is not the entire answer. All of these things are good and are scriptural, but none of them in themselves is able to heal hearts.

"You will comfort in Zion" — but with what? And how?

The Holy Spirit promises a creative miracle. In answer to our faith, God's Spirit promises to create something in us that will bring comfort in every conceivable trouble and fearful circumstance. He will put in us a word that can heal, comfort and encourage others.

The Spirit has said through Isaiah, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him" (Isaiah 57:18).

The fact is, our troubled spirits need to be healed. And we cannot heal ourselves. This is a work that

must be done by the miraculous power of God's Spirit, who says in this verse, "I will heal you."

I have tasted such an incredible creative miracle. I saw its promise in God's Word, and I laid hold of that promise. And when I experienced the foretaste, the earnest of this healing miracle, I wanted the fullness of what I had seen.

Here is the creative miracle, described in the very next verse: "I create the fruit of thy lips; peace, peace" (Isaiah 57:19). This is one of the most encouraging promises in God's Word. The Lord says he will drive out from us the spirit of fear and implant in us his supernatural spirit of peace. Isaiah repeats the word "peace" here to emphasize it is a continual peace.

Simply put, the Holy Spirit promises, "I will *create* in you peace." Once we experience this peace, it will become a creative word that flows out of our lips to others. Yet we must be in peace ourselves before we can tell of it to others.

There comes a time in each of our lives when we become totally exhausted by all the problems swirling around us — problems that are personal, or that may involve family, friends, our job, our finances. We become exhausted from all the heartbreaking "bad news" telephone calls that come, crises that seem to be spinning out of control.

That is the hour when we need to turn to the Holy Spirit, broken and contrite, and lay hold of his promise of the gift of peace.

You may ask: "How can I lay hold of peace, when I can only stand by as cancer eats away at my loved one?"

"How can I have peace, when my financial situation seems hopeless?"

"How can I have peace, when physical pain gnaws at me daily?"

"How can I have peace, when I have lost my job and the future looks threatening?"

The truth is, you have no other place to look for peace.

Maybe you've read all the promises in God's Word and can't seem to apply them to any effect. Things still bring you down. But Jesus has said to you, "My peace I give unto you." His peace is *created in you* by the Holy Spirit, who is the very spirit of peace.

It is written that the Holy Spirit will be in us a river of life, always flowing. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Isaiah describes it as a "river of peace" (see Isaiah 48:18). Imagine it: peace that flows as a river does, continually, consistently, constantly.

How do we lay hold of this healing peace? How do we appropriate this miraculous, omnipotent creation of peace?

First, we must admit that all our fears, all our despairing and wavering, are caused by unbelief. We do not fully trust the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

The Spirit of God fills all things. And he is the absolute fullness of divine love: all-caring, like a mother;

greater in power than all principalities in hell; knowing all things. Yet, even though we know this, we often sit in the Spirit's presence murmuring and complaining, thinking the way abandoned children do.

I tell you, no believer can be healed of the spirit of fear — no believer can find peace — until he or she commits all things into the Spirit's loving hands. We have to give up all to his will, trusting that "he who lives in me is greater than he that is in the world" (see 1 John 4:4).

Let me sum it all up in one sentence:

When you abandon yourself wholly into the arms of the Holy Spirit, he creates peace in you. God creates peace — he causes it to happen — and he creates it in *you*.

I'm not just talking about peace with God. The peace he creates in you is peace of mind, a peace that springs up and flows within, healing, stabilizing, building confidence.

When you have such peace, you stop trying to play God. You stop trying to solve your problems and everyone else's. You stop playing over in your mind what might happen, what fearful thing might come to pass.

Instead, you bring every thought into captivity. And you are able to do this because you stand in the peace God has created in you. You begin to trust and accept his love. And you start believing the promises of his Word.

"The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38). The Holy Spirit is given to all who believe. And there is a greater measure of the Spirit available to all who would pray for it by faith.

Beloved, I urge you: ask the Spirit for a greater measure of faith concerning his love for you. Ask him to create in you a greater flow of God's peace. His peace will come supernaturally, miraculously, when you have yielded all to him.

Then the Lord will bring forth his peace as the fruit of your lips. True peace can't be faked; the world recognizes it when it is in someone. And the Holy Spirit will make his peace in your life known to those around you. It won't be your peace that speaks to them, but the Spirit's. It will move them, causing them to ask you for prayer, prayer that will touch them and bring healing.

As the gathering clouds cause fear in the world, may God's people walk according to this word from Paul: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15). Amen!

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