
Fully Persuaded

By David Wilkerson

May 25, 2009 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, my italics).

Here are the words of a dying man. The apostle Paul was addressing his pupil, the young minister-in-training, Timothy. Later in the same letter, Paul confides to Timothy these difficult words: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (4:6-7).

Although Paul directed these words to Timothy, his message speaks to every servant of Christ who is facing a great affliction. Consider the context: At the height of his own excruciating trials — at the very point of death — Paul was fully persuaded of God’s love for him. Moreover, he was convinced of the Lord’s ability to “keep that which I have committed unto him” in spite of all evidence to the contrary.

Beloved, Paul’s counsel here is meant for all who are buffeted daily by satanic forces, engaged in fierce spiritual warfare, enduring great hardships as good soldiers. How was Paul able to speak so confidently of God’s faithfulness through his every trial? What exactly was he persuaded of about the Lord that gave birth to such faith?

Paul never does spell out the things he had “committed unto (God) against that day.” We can only speculate as to what those things were. Yet, like Paul, we too must be fully persuaded of God’s faithfulness to keep those things we have committed to him. Indeed, to face our trials in these trying days, there are several things we must be fully persuaded of about our Lord.

1. We must be fully persuaded that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39).

Before making this bold declaration, Paul first asked this question: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (8:35, 37).

It is clear from Paul’s question that he recognized Satan’s mission in these last days: to hinder God’s people from walking in his great love. Sadly, multitudes in the church today are blind to this deceptive work of the enemy. Many live completely unaware that he has successfully blocked them from knowing and enjoying God’s love for them.

Don’t misunderstand: We are never to fear our adversary. But if we are not alert to Satan’s subtle attacks on our faith, we will continue to live defeated lives. Paul knew how important it is to expose the devil’s wiles. Only as we identify these attacks on our faith can we say with Paul, “For I am persuaded, that nothing — no lie, no deception, no accusation — can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.”

We have to know that Satan is determined to shut down every Holy Spirit-directed ministry and to lay

low every Spirit-led overcoming child of God in these last days. He targets not just those in the pulpit but every believer whose faith is effective against his kingdom of darkness.

In the last few years I have had a growing inner sense that the sufferings and afflictions of God's elect today are beyond anything endured in the history of Christ's church. God's righteous ones have always known many afflictions. Hebrews 11 testifies to this. And now, Scripture says, Satan is raging against the church because he knows time is running out: "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:12).

The return of the Lord Jesus is at the very door. And so, with great wrath, the enemy of our souls has come to attempt to deceive even God's elect. Right now legions of Satan's buffeting messengers are making every attempt to discourage and destroy God's chosen ones. Paul testifies of the fierce attacks in his own life, stating, "Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

In the last century, T. Austin-Sparks wrote of the devil's last-day warfare. This godly minister saw "many things being limited, held down, paralyzed by Satan. (Multitudes of Christians are) not able to function, to fulfill their ministry...by reason of the hindering of Satan."

Like Paul before him, Austin-Sparks warned God's people to be aware of the devil's attacks. And he urged believers to intercede for God to bring Satan down from his high place of "accusing the brethren."

I believe such intercession is in the heart of every believer who has experienced Satan's hindering work. Such saints know firsthand the battles our enemy wages against all who lead lives according to Christ's holy calling.

I have come to believe that Satan's special targets are God's intercessors. What is an intercessor? Simply put, it is someone who takes on the needs and burdens of others in prayer. Such a servant never stops interceding for Christ's church or for anyone whom the Lord lays on his heart.

In every age, God had stationed intercessors on the very front lines to do battle against Satan's principalities and powers. Today these spiritual soldiers can be found in every nation. And there is a reason they are called "prayer warriors." Many who write to our ministry describe the intense spiritual warfare in their own lives.

A 91-year-old intercessor wrote the following: "I feel burned out, having served [the Lord for so long] with everything coming at me. I'm weak in body after years of suffering — all the cares and trials of others constantly before me... Since I was 4 years old, I have loved and prayed for others. I've been an intercessor all these years... I take back the ground Satan tries to take from me by praying in the Spirit...and I receive new strength."

For an entire lifetime, this saint has taken seriously Jude's exhortation: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 20–21). The message to those in spiritual battle is clear: "Build yourself up in *faith*. Keep yourself in *God's love*."

Note that Jude qualifies his words with an admonition to pray in the Holy Ghost. It is absolutely impossible to build up our faith through human strength or ability. Without the Holy Spirit, we simply aren't able to keep ourselves in the knowledge and assurance of God's love for us. We are just no

match for the powers of darkness. We can't even take up the shield of faith to quench hell's fiery darts by simply setting our minds to do so. We need God's Spirit to empower us in all things.

In these trying days, memorizing Scripture verses in itself isn't enough. I knew a man whose knowledge of God's Word was so vast he was called "The Walking Bible." This man could quote entire books from Scripture. But during a great trial in his life he abandoned his faith. As Paul testifies, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Tragically, too many Christians who claim to be Spirit-filled simply don't turn to the Holy Spirit in their sufferings. They know little of his peace and comfort, when his very role is to provide us these things. Such believers have not learned to be wholly dependent on the Spirit, perhaps because they have never been fully persuaded of their need for him.

One problem is that many Christians impose a hierarchy on the Trinity, convincing ourselves, "God the Father is first, Jesus Christ is second, and the Holy Spirit is third." Nothing could be further from the truth. The Holy Spirit is himself the very essence of God, and he is to be worshiped as well as obeyed.

After twenty-two years of pastoring a congregation, I have come to a conclusion about the Holy Spirit's role in our lives. In short, I have learned never to try counseling a hurting believer without first praying for the Holy Spirit to pull down all satanic opposition. Every follower of Jesus has to recognize the devil's attempts to hinder him from knowing God's promises. Only then am I able to pray with that person for the Holy Spirit to open his heart to receive God's love for him.

I may be able to quote a vast number of Scriptures that apply to that person's situation. And I can lovingly, compassionately sympathize with him in his pain and do everything I can to lift his spirits. But he has to know for himself the assurance of love and comfort that only the Holy Spirit can provide.

Everyone who has ever loved Jesus has had to cry out to the Spirit for assurance, in order to be fully persuaded. The same holds true especially for God's church in this last-days warfare. Every saint must know from the Spirit that God is not mad at him, that the Lord has not abandoned him, and that Jesus is touched by all his feelings, pains and hurts.

2. We must be fully persuaded that God faithfully rewards those who diligently seek him. "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).

There are times when many of us struggle to grasp faith. We all desire to claim God's promises, not only for our comfort and blessing but so that we may please him. We want a faith that brings God glory.

Because of this, we often become troubled when our prayers aren't answered. We start to question our faith, wondering, "Is my trust in the Lord too weak? Am I slow to believe? Why do the heavens seem closed to my prayers? Have I wavered somehow? Am I not fervent enough? Is there an evil root of unbelief lodged somewhere in my heart?"

We are forever trying so hard to believe, so hard to please the Lord with a proper kind of faith, that we thwart our own faith with judgment. Now, after more than sixty years of service to God, I want to tell you what proper faith has become to me:

- It means holding fast to God's promises when there is no physical evidence that his promises are being fulfilled.

- It means trusting the Holy Spirit to keep my soul at rest, convinced God is working out all things for my good.

- It means resting in this declaration from Paul: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Paul's famous verse about "all things working together for good" will try our faith again and again in our lifetime. So often to the naked eye, our circumstances appear to be turning out badly. Yet at every moment during our trial there is an eternal reality at work. God is moving all things toward his plan for us.

We know this was true of the patriarch Joseph. This man endured decades of endless trials that seemed to spell nothing but tragedy, until finally "the time that (God's) word came" (Psalm 105:19). Up to that point, however, "The word of the Lord *tried him*" (same verse, my italics).

So, can you say with Joseph and the apostle Paul that "all things are working for good"? Is your soul at rest that somehow in God's providence he has been working out his plan on your behalf?

Do you believe that somewhere in your pain — in your never-ending suffering, your loss of precious dreams, hopes and goals — God has all along been taking you somewhere deeper in him? That, in his incomprehensible love, he has been leading you toward a reward, to be received in this lifetime as well as for eternity?

The Lord tells us in Hebrews, "You must believe I am your rewarder." And the author of that book exhorts, "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36).

God never promises more in his Word than he can perform. This is something Abraham grasped from the very beginning of his faith. Paul says of Abraham, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being *fully persuaded* that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20–21, my italics).

By his faith, Abraham "gave glory to God."

Like Abraham, we give God glory when we fully embrace his every promise. When all of life is going well, it is easy for us to testify, "God can do anything!" We can easily assure others that God will answer their prayers. We can confidently declare that the Lord always keeps his Word.

But when everything around us begins to conspire against God's promises being fulfilled — when all physical evidence seems more like God's wrath than his reward — the Holy Spirit rises up in us with true words of comfort:

“Hold on. Trust him! You are not separated from God’s love. He is at work in every hour of your situation. So, don’t waver or stagger. Instead, rise up and fight the good fight of faith.”

I leave you with this powerful passage from the apostle Paul. He reminds us of God’s unending faithfulness in every circumstance, at every moment of our trial:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35–39).

Amen!

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