

Freedom From Fear



David Wilkerson August 1, 2011

As the economies of the nations shake and crumble, fear is mounting worldwide. We are seeing Jesus' words come to pass: "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 has given us a warning here: "Without hope in me, multitudes will die of fright at the things they see coming."

For Jesus' followers, however—those who trust in God's promises to preserve his church—there is glorious freedom from all fear. In fact, all who come under the Lordship of Christ never need to fear again, if they will lay hold of the following secret:

True freedom from fear 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, to be led and preserved according to his will alone. If we do so, the God of the universe 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 this kind of holy resignation when he went to the cross. Just before he gave up his spirit, our Lord cried aloud, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Christ placed the keeping of his life and his eternal future into the custody of his Father. In doing so, he placed the souls of every one of his sheep into the Father's hands as well.

You may wonder, "Didn't Jesus say he himself had the power both to lay down his life and to raise it up again? [see John 10:18]. Why did he have to resign his life into God's hands for it to be preserved?" The answer is clear: It was to set an example for all of us to follow.

God has the power, wisdom, willingness and love to preserve his beloved people.

If we're being asked to trust our lives to someone, we have to know that person has the power to keep us from all danger, threats and violence. Otherwise, our trust is in vain. Simply put, our God has the wisdom and power to guide us—and countless others—through various crises and difficulties. And he accomplishes it all in love.

If you know the Lord at all, then you know this is his character. He is almighty, infinitely wise, a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Indeed, he is the very essence of love. Paul says, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Paul is telling us, "I've put my life in the Lord's hands. And I am persuaded he won't embezzle my trust. He will faithfully keep his word to preserve me because he's able and willing to do so. That has been my experience with him time after time."

Today, as the storm clouds gather over the nations, we have a choice. We can either resign our lives into the

Lord's hands, or we can be responsible for keeping and preserving ourselves—a task that's impossible when God is shaking everything!

Actually, it doesn't matter what kind of times we're living in. Our peace and contentment will always depend on our resignation into God's hands. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4).

If you've fully resigned yourself into God's hands, then you're able to endure any and all hardships. And you know that no matter what calamity befalls you it can't be fatal, because you are clay in your Father's hands. Once you've resigned your life into the hands of Almighty God, he wants you to be able to go about your daily business without fear or anxiety. And, indeed, your resignation to him has a very practical effect in your life.

You see, the more resigned you are to God's keeping power, the more indifferent you'll be to the conditions around you. You won't constantly try to figure out the next step. You won't be scared by any frightful news swirling around you. You won't be overwhelmed as you think about the days ahead—because you've entrusted your life, family and future into your Lord's safe and loving hands.

How worried do you think literal sheep are as they follow their shepherd into open pastures? They're not concerned at all, because they're totally resigned to their shepherd's leading. Likewise, we are the sheep of Christ, who is our Great Shepherd. Why should we ever be disquieted about our lives or futures? He knows perfectly how to protect and preserve his flock because he leads us in love.

How is our resignation into God's hands accomplished?

We see in the Bible that whenever someone approached this walk of self-resignation, he did so only with great seriousness of thought. It's easy for Christians to say, "The Lord's will be done," in a general way. But it means something else to resign ourselves into God's hands in a trying circumstance.

In my own life I've had to learn to trust God one problem at a time. After all, how could I say I trust the Lord with everything if I haven't trusted him with just one thing? Merely saying the words, "I trust the Lord completely," isn't sufficient. I have to prove it over and over again in my life in many areas.

Also, our resignation into his hands can't be forced. It must be a free and willing surrender. There are several biblical examples of people who failed at this. Consider Egypt's Pharaoh: Only when he could no longer hold out against God's plagues did he resign to let Israel take their wilderness journey.

Many Christians today say, "I resign, I commit, I trust"—but only after they see there's no other way out of their situation. True resignation—the kind that pleases God—is done freely and willingly, prior to coming to our wit's end. We are to act in covenant with the Lord, as Abraham did—giving God our life as a blank check and letting the Lord fill it all in.

Such resignation is by nature a daily, ongoing work. It can't be done just once. Our proud flesh always desires to keep control over our lives. It constantly tries to convince us we can keep ourselves by our own wits. And so, at the very moment we resign ourselves wholly to the Lord, our flesh rears its stubborn will—and we quickly see how determined our heart is to go its own way.

Casting ourselves on the Lord in full dependency is one of the hardest things we do in this life.

This is an impossible task that can only be done by faith. Yet once we make this holy resignation to the Lord, our faith in him will carry us through every hardship, discouragement and impossibility.

And we desperately need him to carry us. You see, when we make this commitment of resigning ourselves to him, we trip a loud alarm in hell. Once a resigned Christian yields all control, placing every matter into Jesus' hands, Satan rises up to oppose him with ferocity.

Consider what happened to Paul. As long as he went on his pharisaical way, apart from the Lord's will, he felt no opposition from the enemy. But when he placed his life wholly in God's custody he was buffeted and attacked relentlessly.

Beloved, the same will happen to you when you yield all to Jesus. You'll be fiercely opposed by every power of darkness. Satan will erect mountains of frightful conditions before you, trying to drive you to unbelief. He'll flood you with doubts and fears that had never crossed your mind before. His strategy is to turn your gaze onto "how bad things are going to get," rather than onto God's promises to see you through every crisis.

I've felt this struggle many times throughout my years in ministry. When hard times have come, doubts and accusations have risen up: "What are you going to do now? How will you be kept through this crisis? What's your plan for survival?"

Satan will do anything to keep our focus away from Jesus. Yet God's Word warns us ahead of time that all who commit to follow him will experience this kind of temptation.

When the storm hits, fear will inevitably come upon you.

The prophets warn us that when we see God shaking the nations, our natural man will fear greatly. 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, Noah was "moved with fear" (Hebrews 11:7). Even bold, courageous David said, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments" (Psalm 119:120). When the prophet 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).

Let me point out something important about these passages. *The fear that came upon 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. They understood the awesome power behind the approaching calamities. Their fear wasn't the outcome of the storm but God's holiness, before which no one can stand.

The same applies to every Christian living today. We all will experience overwhelming fear in coming times of disaster. But our fear must come from a holy reverence for the Lord, never from a fleshly anxiety about our fate. God despises all sinful fear in us—the fear of losing material things, wealth, our standard of living. That is the cry of unbelievers who have no hope. But it ought not to be the cry of the godly.

Your loving heavenly Father will not endure such unbelief in you. Isaiah warned, "Who art thou, that thou shouldest 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" (8:13).

Let God be your fear and awe.

This is the kind of fear that leads not to death but to life.

It's true that God's prophets have sounded warnings in every generation. But history proves God has always sent his judgments in due time. John Owen, the great Puritan preacher, spoke the following message to his congregation on April 9, 1680:

"You know that for many years, without failing, I have been warning you continually of an approaching calamitous time, and considering the sins that have been the causes of it... I have told you that judgment will begin in the house of God; that God seems to have hardened our hearts from his fear...and that none knows what the power of his wrath will be. In all these things I have foretold you of perilous, distressing, calamitous times...these all now lie at the door, and are entering in upon us."

Scoffers who read Owen's words today may say, "Here's a doomsday preacher who tried to put a scare in his society 300 years ago. But the world has continued in spite of everything he said. Things have gone on just as they always did."

What these scoffers don't realize is that God did send his awful judgments on that society. John Owen lived to weep over a flaming holocaust that engulfed London. In fact, he saw the fulfillment of every one of his powerful prophecies: wars, destruction, a shattered economy, nationwide depression, diseases that wiped out multitudes.

Yet before he ever saw a single one of these calamities take place, Owen faithfully cried out from his pulpit: "I am going to show you how we ought to deport ourselves in and under the distressing calamities that are coming upon us, and may reach, it may be, up to the very neck."

Beloved, we're living in just such a time as Owen's. In times like these there can be only one response from God's people: "The just shall live by faith." Owen admonished his people with tears, "Get you an ark. Prepare an ark for the safety of you and your families."

He added, "That ark is Jesus Christ. There is no other way, no other ark—for Isaiah, the prophet, said of our Lord, 'A man [Christ] shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadows of a great rock in a weary land.' That is our ark—blessed are they that trust only in him...I know of no safety, no deliverance, in the trials and afflictions coming upon the earth, but in believing Christ as our only refuge."

Lord, give us spiritual eyes to see your protective wall of fire about your church, keeping and preserving all who resign themselves into your hands.

We may see dangers on all sides, including a devil and his principalities who want to drown our faith in doubts. But we also have a fiery guard of angels surrounding us. And we have a God who puts himself under oath to carry us through any disaster we face.

I ask you: Do you want to face the coming storm with quiet confidence and peace of mind? Then die today to all your own ways and means of protecting yourself. Commit the keeping of your life wholly to God's care. He is your good, loving Shepherd—and he is faithful to see you through all. Amen!

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