

An Uplifting Message of Comfort For Those Who Are Down



David Wilkerson April 1, 1980

All you happy, healthy, top of the world Christians living under blue skies, and who are, right now, enjoying the sunshine of life - this message is not for you.

This message is only for those who are down; for those children of God driven down by despair, loneliness, grief, pain, suffering. It is also a message for those who are down because they have no other human being to lean on. Although they lean on the Lord, the human need to love and be needed is not satisfied

But most of all, this message is for those who can't seem to shake off feelings of despair because they don't understand what they are going through. I know of some very saintly Christians who are experiencing a trial so heavy and painful, they wonder at times if God is letting them hurt more than they are able to bear. Their heartbreak almost crushes them and they wonder why their prayers for deliverance are not speedily answered.

I have known of great men and women of faith who have experienced a trial so dark and deep that life itself seemed almost not worth living. A godly minister friend of mine, who was going through the most difficult trial of his life, told me, "David, recently I have been so cast down, so weary and tired, so fed up and discouraged - I began to understand why some people who are not Christians want to kill themselves. Suicide never once enters my mind; but there are times that, if it were not for my Savior, I could not go on. I would rather die than go on like things are! Now I know why so many people turn to drugs and alcohol - they have to get stoned to go on. I know God will bring me out; but right now, I hate to get out of bed. Still, I trust God."

I can almost hear someone say. "if that godly minister friend of yours was standing on the promises and living by faith, he would be always happy and prosperous. He should be praising God, smiling, and rejoicing. What a doubter he must be. What a negative mind he must have.

I know the New Testament provides us with better promises than the Old. I know Christ will never allow us to be tempted more than we are able to bear. I know God wants all of His children to enter into the rest of faith and not worry and fret. I know there is complete victory, joy, and peace to all who rest in His Word.

The fact is, however, that God still permits testing times, in which the soul is permitted to go through a fiery trial - which, according to God's word, is to try us. God actually allows severe testings in our lives to prove our love for Himself. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trials which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Peter 4:12)

All the prophets predicted that saints of God would be tried by fire - just as gold is refined by fire. Jeremiah said, "God...shall melt them...and try them..." (Jeremiah 9:7). Daniel predicted that in the end times, saints would be tried severely to purge them and make them ready (Daniel 11:35), Zechariah prophesied the coming of the testing fire "to refine them as silver is refined...as gold is tried..." (Zechariah 13:9).

The New Testament suggests that fiery trials are to be accepted - as common to all men. Even the great apostle Paul spoke of being "cast down, perplexed, and in despair" (2 Corinthians 4:8). And even though he sounded a note of victory through all the trials and testings, nevertheless, he did experience despair.

There are times in which you can know in your heart that you are serving God with all that is in you - you are sure of your love for His Word. You believe all the promises; you know He is faithful and you confess it so; and you know you are willing to do anything God asks of you. You cannot think of anything standing between you and the Heavenly Father. You know you have prayed in faith - and still you are down. The darkness does not lift. The burden still presses you down. There is no sign of your prayers being answered. You still cry out, "How long, O Lord? How long must this trial go on? When will I ever come out of this fire?"

The Patriarchs and Prophets Were Also Down At Times

Are there any examples in the Bible of suffering and affliction among godly people that would relate to us in our trials? Yes! In fact, James encourages us to "take for an example of suffering and affliction - the prophets." Then he focuses on the suffering of Job.

"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy" (James 5:11).

Here is a righteous man of God, so down he longed for death. He was so crushed by grief and sorrow, he lost his will to live. His sons were taken from him with a sudden cruel blow. He lost his wealth, his influence, and his good name. His friends, such as they were, forsook him and sat in Judgment as his accusers. Those he had helped turned against him. Those he loved no longer responded to his needs. Rather than help him, those around him accused him of bringing all the trouble on himself. Not even his own flesh and blood understood what he was going through. Not one person really cared.

Looking into the future, all Job could see was pain, tears, loneliness, and emptiness. There was not one silver lining in all the dark clouds hanging over him. Besides all the battles with being alone in his struggles, a physical infirmity fell upon him. His body also became an enemy. Spiritually, physically, financially - in every way. Job was down.

The loneliness Job experienced must have been horrifying. And the despair hung on so long, with no relief in sight, that Job started to get bitter. He despised the day of his birth, as if to say, "God, you brought me into the world - for this? Was I born to live in turmoil, pain, and trouble?" He questioned why God was so long in answering him.

But Job's greatest despair came from a dilemma he could not understand at all.

"Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?" (Job 3:23).

The perplexing dilemma is this: Why does God make Himself so real to me, yet keep me hedged in with trouble? God keeps revealing His Word to me; He is so real to me in prayer; I see the light of His glory and faithfulness - yet, the way in front of me is still dark. Why all the light shed on my soul - and I'm still confused, still hidden away, closed in by trouble? Job was actually saying, "God, everything is closing in on me; I see no way out - so why do You keep sending me all these promises of deliverance?" In other words, "I've got the message; I see the truth; I know what You are saying - but where is my solution?"

Trouble and Trial Often Follow Great Blessings

It often happens that a believer's worst trials come right after the most glorious revelation and spiritual growth. As a child of God, you can be thrust into a long, drawn out trial immediately after you have taken leaps and bounds in spiritual growth. God seems to have been preparing you to go through a severe testing time. So you yield to His chastening rod. The troubled days that follow force you to rely only on God. You know you are in the furnace; you know that only His supernatural strength is carrying you through it all - and you are wanting to learn all the lessons God wants to teach you. Just as you are about to give up in despair, the Comforter comes and gives a short season of rest to your weary soul. You are refreshed and encouraged. You begin to look ahead and think. "I'm coming out of it! Deliverance is just around the corner! A few more days or weeks. and everything will be just fine."

But the days roll by and, instead of your burden lifting, it gets heavier. Just as you thought the battle was over - it worsens! Plans go awry. Things that you hoped would happen - don't. Promises are broken. The much longed for victory does not materialize.

A Mighty Prophet Gets Down

The prophet Jeremiah went through just such a trial. He had hoped for deliverance, but, instead, was cast deeper

into the pit of despair. He cried out, "He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy...He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone; He hath made my path crooked..." (Lamentations 3:7,9)

How clearly this prophet describes the feelings of a child of God who finds himself cast down to the very depths: that hedged in feeling; burdens that feel like chains getting heavier; walls of stone in every direction an uncertain road ahead; a crooked path.

Keep in mind this is the same Jeremiah whom Christ so often quoted. How could a prophet of God, who thundered against kings and nations fall into such deep turmoil and despair? Great kings and captains of mighty armies hung on his every word. This is the same prophet who kept kings Johanan and Hashaiah and all their armies waiting for ten days while he sought God for their direction.

"And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, and he called the kings and captains, and said... thus saith the Lord..." (Jeremiah 42:1,9).

Again and again the Lord had spoken to this humble prophet. He had experienced glorious revelations and mighty anointings of the Holy Spirit. He knew what it was to come out of the secret prayer closet with clear direction from the Lord. But now, he is down, way down. Lonely, feeling rejected, thinking God had stopped answering his cry - he now allows that old root of bitterness to spring up, and, as a result, he grew restless and troubled. He lost his spiritual composure, crying:

"He hath filled me with bitterness and he hath removed my soul far off from peace..." (Lamentations 3:15,17).

Jeremiah lost sight of God's hand in his life. He could no longer sense God being in anything that was now happening to him. He thought he was now on his own; that all God's leadings had gone sour; that maybe after all, the light in him was really darkness.

"...he hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light..." (Lamentations 3:2).

How sad, yet how very common to all people of God - Jeremiah hit the very bottom. He could get no lower. Listen to his pitiful hopelessness: "My hope and strength is gone...all that is left is misery and affliction...nothing left but ashes..." (Lamentations 3:16-21).

I wonder how many of my reader friends can relate to the agony of Jeremiah when he was down? Are you, too, at that point in your trial that you cry out, "God, I'm at the end of myself! I can't take anymore! I'm so miserable I could die! I can't get any lower than I am right now! I can't understand it! When will this darkness pass?"

Do you wonder if the day will ever come when you will be happy and carefree again? Do you worry that your trial has already lasted too long, and you are not going to be able to hold out if it continues? Do your hopes and dreams keep falling apart - as if you seem condemned to a life of misery and trouble? Thank God - there is an answer to it all in the Word. We have been given a message of comfort for all who are cast down.

The Way Up

So far, we have focused our attention on the problem. Now, let us consider the way to victory over all despair. We can begin with the prophet we have been referring to as our example of suffering, because he also sets the example in faith and hope.

In his very darkest hour, Jeremiah discovered a glorious truth that brought new hope and assurance to his mind. It was something he already knew about God, but it didn't touch his soul until he came to the end of himself. He discovered that at the very bottom - there was God! The further down he went, the more God was to be discovered. Down was not into some dark, hidden, fearful abyss - but down is going deeper into God. God was not to be discovered "UP THERE" in some blissful soaring into untroubled skies, but in the shadows of grief and despair. When Jeremiah hit bottom, he bumped into God! He fell hard against the faithfulness of a compassionate God. Listen to his discovery:

"God is a God of compassion... His compassions for me cannot fail... they are new every morning... great is his faithfulness..." (Lamentations 3:22,23).

Little by little, Jeremiah began to realize some great truths that can only be discovered by those who are down.

1. When I am at the very lowest point; when troubles flow over my heart like water, and I say, "I am cut off" - God draws near and whispers, "Do not fear!" (Lamentations 3:54-57).
2. When God seems to have "covered Himself as a cloud, so that my prayers could not pass through" - He will still see my oppression and will judge my case" (Lamentations 3:44,59).
3. If the Lord allows grief and sorrow, He will at the same time, uphold me with abundant compassion and love (Lamentations 3:32).
4. God hurts when I hurt; He wants my troubles to end! (Lamentations 3:33).
5. God is not against me, trying to crush me under His foot when I'm down like a prisoner in trouble (Lamentations 3:34).
6. God is not trying to sabotage any of my plans; He is not causing my confusion; He is not working against me (Lamentations 3:35).
7. Even in my despair and bitterness, when I hated to face a new day - His compassion failed not. His mercies were waiting for me - new each morning (Lamentations 3:22, 23).
8. Because God is always faithful, He will do right by me. God will not cast me off. God will save me (Lamentations 3:25, 26).
9. When I am at my lowest, I have no where to turn but to God; so I will lift up my heart and my hands, and thank Him for His faithfulness! (Lamentations 3:40. 41).
10. Being down has so spent my strength and hope. I am left empty and humbled - so now, I can depend totally on His mercies! (Lamentations 3:18, 20. 21).

What it all means is simply this: Get your eyes off your problems and afflictions, and remind yourself that God is still faithful and that His compassion and tender love is yours for the taking.

Rebuke your unbelief and say to your soul, "Wait just one minute - -God is still God! He is still on His throne, hearing and answering prayer. God is going to act on my behalf not one minute too soon or too late.. He is not trying to hurt me; He loves me. God is overflowing with love toward me; He cares about me. Right now, even though I am down and hurting, He is not far off. He sees every move I make; He bottles every tear; He will take quick action and do what must be done - on time! God is bigger than my problem! God is too holy to fail me. His promises have not and cannot fail. So I will quietly wait on my Lord to bring me out into a safe place. Until then, He is with me in the darkest hour. I am not alone - He has promised to never leave or forsake me! In my sorrow - He will comfort me! Even in death - He will not forsake me!"

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