

## Comfort in Troubling Times

I find it a joy that I can take this time to direct your thoughts toward the things of the Lord, especially during times such as these; a time of concern, a certain amount of danger for some, the reality of mortality for others. Without question the place for us all to go is the Word of God. We can be thankful in the providence of God, but for those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, who have no hope after death, it is reasonable to fear, it is reasonable to be concerned about death.

How should the family of God react in a world of concern, anxiety and trouble? How can we provide a sense of comfort and protection to those around us? I started recently reading the Psalms, starting at chapter one and proceeding from there through each chapter. I want to encourage you by referencing some of those verses. Remember, this is God speaking to us so let us all take His words to heart.

"The Lord also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble; and those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You." [Ps.9:9-10]

"One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple. For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord." [Ps. 27:4-6]

"Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance." [Ps. 32:6-7]

"I sought the Lord and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces will never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! O fear the Lord, you His saints; for to those who fear Him there is no want. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing." [Ps. 34:4-10]

"The righteous cry, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. But the Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned." [Ps. 34:17-22]

"But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in time of trouble." [Ps. 37:39]

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah" (selah=pause and think) [Ps. 46:1-7]

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." [Ps. 50:15]

"My heart is in anguish within me, and the terrors of death. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. I said, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.' Behold, I would wander far

away, I would lodge in the wilderness. I would hasten to my place of refuge from the stormy wind and tempest." [Ps. 55:4-8]

"Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken." [Ps. 55:22]

That only gets us to Psalm 55! I challenge you to continue through the remaining Psalms and you will find this constant theme of God's promised protection to His people. God repeatedly declares His commitment to the protection and care of those who are His, and in doing so His people can accomplish His will and purpose and continue to live out their days as He has ordained.

Let's look at Matthew chapter 6, verses 25-34. Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus:

"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single cubit to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

The message here? If you're worried, stop. If you're not yet worrying, don't start. Don't be anxious. Don't be concerned about eating, drinking and clothing, because your life consists of much more than these things. When you see the world consumed with the reality of deprivation and hoarding of materials, Jesus is saying, "Look at the birds of the air; your heavenly Father feeds them. Look at how the lilies of the field grow; look at the exquisite weaving of God and how a single flower, beautiful, fragile, exceeds the most beautiful garments of Solomon's kingdom." Which one of us can add 'one cubit' – eighteen inches – to our life (lifespan)? Jesus is saying, "You can't worry yourself into a longer life." The sum of all this is clear: God is your Father, and He takes care of those that are His own.

"You of little faith!" A phrase that is repeated numerous times by Jesus to His disciples (better known as 'the little faith association'). They continually demonstrated the inability to trust God for their lives, consistently expressing their lack of faith. Jesus says, "Don't worry. Don't worry about what you will eat and drink, or how you will be clothed." In verse 32 Jesus says, "That's what the Gentiles do – they worry about all those things." They 'eagerly seek', meaning in the Greek phraseology, 'with all their energy', totally consumed in material gratification for survival. "You're not like Gentiles, you're not pagan, you're not part of the kingdom of darkness, you're not outsiders."

We can't be like the world. Sons of the King do not conduct themselves like the devil's beggar. So ask yourself, "Do I face life like a Christian, like a member of the family of God, the kingdom of light, or like a pagan? When things are difficult and a little bit unsure, how do I react, by fear or doubt as if it all depended on me, or do I react with joy and confidence because I know it's in God's hands?" It's one thing to say you're a child of God, you belong to His kingdom. Hopefully when life turns out to be deadly or terrifyingly fearful, that claim still holds because your trust is evident.

Think upon the Apostle Paul's view of life from 2Cor. 4:18: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." While everybody else is looking for the visible means of support because that's all they have, we're content to rest in the invisible means of support because Matthew 6 verse 32 again repeats the point: "Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

Our Father rules the universe, all the inanimate and animate realities, and He has loaded this planet with amazing wealth, with amazing life. The most powerful thing in the temporal world is life. I'm constantly amazed at the

power of life. Even this current virus, a living virus, has an amazing power that you can't stop; it's a living thing. It's like the weeds that grow up in every crack in your driveway. Life is so powerful. God is the source of all of that life.

All worry either assumes that God is not there or that God does not care, or that God is there and does care but can't do anything about it because He lacks the power. He is either unaware, indifferent, or impotent. But no, verse 32 says, "Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." And verse 33 at the end, "And all these things will be added to you." He knows, which means He has the full awareness, and He has the power to provide. He knows, He has the full awareness, and He has the power to provide everything you need. God does care; God does know; God does provide.

How many times have you sung "Great is Thy Faithfulness"? You probably can't even recall the number of times you have sung that. But it comes basically from a text in Lamentations chapter 3, written by Jeremiah. Listen to what it says: "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail." Verse 23 of Lamentations 3, "They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I have hope in Him." The Lord's mercies are new how often? Every morning. Why would you worry about tomorrow when the Lord's mercies are new every morning?

Conclusion? "Seek His kingdom, seek His righteousness, and all these things shall be added." All physical necessities will be added. Everything you need now, in the present, and everything you would ever need in the future, all these things will be added for you." And Scripture says, "Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those that love Him." Long for God's glory, and He will give you the rest. Obey Him, and He will fill your life with all good things.

Let's consider this prayer together: "Father, we thank You for Your Word; just a reminder from the lips of our Savior Himself. These are not second-hand promises; these are first-hand promises from the Supplier Himself, our Lord Jesus. How thankful we are to hear from Him the affirmation of all that we read in the Psalms about Your promises to supply our needs and to be our dwelling place, our hiding place, our security, our refuge, our strength, our help in time of need. We give thanks that You have redeemed us and made us Your true people. We are the people of promise and we are the people of blessing. We are those who have been made obedient by the work of Your Spirit in our lives, and therefore we are the recipients of all Your heavenly provision, which will sustain us in life physically to live out a full, useful life, and then come into Your presence one day.

Thank You, Lord, that we have nothing to fear and nothing to worry about, and to be reminded that to live is Christ and to die is gain. May it be Lord that we daily live faithfully because we live out all our days by Your sustaining power. Give us a full testimony to the watching world of our unending and ever-increasing trust in You. May we demonstrate in these days to those around us our joy, our peace, our calm, our love, based on the fact that we have a God who is faithful. May we rejoice in that in the name of Christ. Amen.

– Lesson prepared by Chuck Wetzel

(Some portions of this study excerpted from various theological sources)

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