

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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In Times Of Trouble, Be Of Good Cheer

Dear Friend,

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

In preparing to write this month’s letter, my attention has been drawn to the present day ministry of the Holy Ghost as our comforter, particularly in times of trouble. As this theme rolled around inside of me, these words seemed to rise to the top, “Be of good cheer.” A quick word search revealed that the phrase, “Be of good cheer”, occurs at the end of John 16, which is the same chapter that describes the present day ministry of the Holy Ghost as our comforter. Without a doubt, this is the message the Holy Ghost wants us to learn.

Notice the statement Jesus makes in verse 33. “In the world **you shall have tribulation.**” Jesus didn’t say we **might** have tribulation, He said we **shall** have tribulation, guaranteed. We cannot allow ourselves to be lulled into thinking that if we serve the Lord with everything inside of us we will never have any trouble because that simply is not the case. Look at the first three words, “**In the world**”. Like it or not, we are in the world and as long as we are, we shall have tribulation.

In last month’s letter, I described the life of a believer as a journey of discovery climbing the Mountain of Truth. If you’ll recall, we looked at Mark 4 and found satan’s primary focus of attention is on the Word of God that has been sown in the soil of our hearts and his goal is to keep that Word from producing. One way is through “affliction” and “persecution”. If the devil can’t steal the Word before it has a chance to produce he must render it unproductive. How does he do this? As much as I hate to say it, the devil uses the weaknesses that still exist in our own flesh to render the Word of God unfruitful. Ouch! Look at these verses. (Mark 4:16-17)

“And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness; (17) And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the Word’s sake, immediately they are offended.”

The word, “**affliction**”, is underlined because it is the same Greek word that is translated “**tribulation**” in John 16:33. Remember, Jesus guaranteed us in John 16:33 that we would have tribulation and He told us why we would have tribulation in Mark 4:17; for the Word’s sake. As long as we are in this world the enemy will use tribulation to render God’s Word unproductive in our lives. The reason the devil must stop the Word before it bears fruit is because the fruit will enforce the last statement of John 16:33, “**I have overcome the world.**” This spells satan’s utter defeat in every area of life.

To help drive home this point allow me to introduce “Mr. Straight-laced” believer, a very nice church-going, God-loving, believer who has known the Lord for several years. Each day he pulls a scripture out of his little promise box and off he goes to face the world. One day, Mr. Straight-laced believer stumbles upon Mr. Preacher preaching about the mountain of Truth standing in front of every believer waiting to be climbed. Mr. Preacher says, “Are you tired of living a mediocre life that looks no different than the rest of the people in the world?” Mr. Straight-laced thinks, “Yes, I am!” Mr. Preacher says, “God has so much more available for you if you want it.” Mr. Straight-laced thinks to himself, “Bless God, I want more.” Mr. Preacher says, “Come down here to the front and be filled with the Holy Ghost and you will be on your way to a life of adventure as you begin your climb up the mountain of Truth.” Mr. Straight-laced goes to the front and is filled with the Holy Ghost and leaves the service in a cloud of glory feeling like his life will never be the same. In the weeks that follow, Mr. Straight-laced is so hungry to read his Bible that he never wants to put it down. Mr. Preacher told him that if he would pray in tongues while reading the Word that he would be empowering the Holy Ghost to become his Teacher, so that’s exactly what he did. Mr. Straight-laced fell head over heels in love with Jesus and the Word of God and spent hours praying in tongues and reading his Bible. Let me ask you something, can you guess what happened to Mr. Straight-laced next? Some might think, “Oh, Mr. Straight-laced must have developed mountain moving faith and gone on to rock the devil’s kingdom from that day until he went to be with Jesus, and he lived happily ever after.” That would be a beautiful story, but it isn’t reality.

The reality is that after Mr. Straight-laced decided to embark on his journey up the mountain of Truth and fell head over heels in love with Jesus and the Word of God, all hell was unleashed against him, **for the sake of the Word**. The devil had no intention of allowing Mr. Straight-laced to march up the mountain of Truth unopposed because the consequences of that would be catastrophic to the kingdom of darkness. The devil has no chance if the Word produces a harvest in Mr. Straight-laced so he must stop the Word before it ever has an opportunity to produce. What does he use to accomplish this? What he uses are the strongholds inside Mr. Straight-laced, which include the way he thinks about himself, others and God, to twist Mr. Straight-laced up like a pretzel until the last thought in his mind is to go any higher up the mountain of Truth. These strongholds are systems of thought empowered by emotions that convince Mr. Straight-laced that he will never change and all is lost and he might as well just give up and die. It's generally right here that many people start pointing their finger at God and blaming Him for all their troubles. "God, why did you let all this stuff happen to me?" The fact is, the only reason the devil had any entrance at all in Mr. Straight-laced's life was because of whatever strongholds still remained in his flesh that Mr. Straight-laced had not yet put to death. It wasn't God's fault. He never caused the tribulation or persecution nor did He intend for it to happen. Tribulation and persecution came for the sake of the Word. The moment Mr. Straight-laced reached for the Word the battle lines were drawn and the war was on. Anyone who tries to tell you that it was God who led His child into this situation in order to make them stronger is wrong and I would run not walk to the nearest exit away from that belief. That's like saying a parent would send their child to a child abuser to teach them something. I sincerely question anyone's revelation of God as their Father who would present Him in such a light.

We must understand that the tribulation has come, or will come, for the sake of the Word. The strongholds still present in our flesh, yet to be mortified, are what the enemy uses against us to render the Word unproductive. That's right, the devil uses the weaknesses in our own flesh against us. Our biggest battles will never be against principalities over cities or nations, it will be the battles we wage against the strongholds in our own unmortified flesh.

Before long, it looks like Mr. Straight-laced's life is coming apart at the seams. The tribulation and persecution Jesus assured us would come for the Word's sake has come. So what thoughts begin to race through Mr. Straight-laced's mind? "You were better off before, when you were just a nice little Christian and your life looked like everyone else's. You didn't have near the amount of problems as you do now. Don't you want to go back to your old life and be just like everyone else?" Those thoughts come straight from the mind of satan. Certainly, there's not a person who has ever committed themselves to climbing

the mountain of Truth that hasn't toyed with the idea of what life might be like had they never made the decision to climb. If we are not careful, we will begin to entertain those passing thoughts from the enemy until they are permanent thoughts, which sound like this; "Maybe I'll just go back and be a nice little Christian and enjoy my life." Next comes the "truce-making" with the devil in an effort to stop the pain. We think, "If I stop pressing into the things of God, then the devil will stop trying to destroy me." There are no truces with the devil. Don't ever think that he will leave you alone because you stopped pressing into spiritual things. The devil hates every one of us and is obligated to stop us, particularly if there is any potential that we might turn around some day and resume our march up the mountain of Truth. In the light of that, let's understand what brought Mr. Straight-laced to start up the mountain of Truth, as well as, what is going to keep him putting one foot in front of the other.

First of all, something, or rather someone initially drew Mr. Straight-laced to the place where he heard the message Mr. Preacher preached. That someone was the Holy Ghost. Maybe there were people praying for Mr. Straight-laced or maybe there was just a cry from his heart to the Lord asking God, "Is this everything, or is there more?" Whatever the case, something opened the door for the Holy Ghost and he responded by drawing Mr. Straight-laced into the meeting to hear about how the "more" that he was hungering for was the infilling of the Holy Ghost. Then, his climb began.

The next question is, "What will keep a person like Mr. Straight-laced going?" What is it that keeps a person pursuing the things of God once the tribulation and persecution comes? We must realize that every motive of a person's heart is going to be challenged. Wrong motives originating out of a person's soul will either be destroyed through the mortification process or they will remain and continue to be targets the enemy focuses on for our destruction. Only motives that are righteous and pure will truly keep a person climbing the mountain of Truth. Any other motives will either lead to the person's demise or will be what the enemy uses to bring them to a standstill claiming, "This is all there is. No one ever goes any higher."

Why we do what we do must be rooted in the purity of love that we have for our heavenly Father, as well as, the love we have for others. This love is only available to a person who is born again, which is why Jesus told the lawyer in Luke 10:25-28 to, "do this and live."

"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, 'Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' (26) He said unto him, 'What is written in the law, how readest thou?' (27) And he answering said, 'Thou

shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.’ (28) And He said unto him, ‘Thou has answered right. This do and thou shalt live.’ ”

The lawyer had no idea that to fulfill this commandment he would have to have a change in nature, the same change we experienced when we were born again. Now, our only motive for continuing our ascent up the mountain of Truth should be love: love for God and love for our neighbor. Love is the only motive that will withstand the enemy's constant attacks. We must love our Father God, our Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost, as well as, love our neighbor as ourselves and that love will motivate us to keep pressing into God and continue climbing the mountain of Truth.

We must realize that continuing to climb higher requires us to put more of ourselves and our wrong motives to death. I have discovered that as more of those wrong motives die, deep inside a desire seems to become more apparent. That desire is emanating out of my reborn human spirit. It is the desire to go up higher, refusing to stop, refusing to accept anything that is not of God. In addition to being motivated by the purity of love, it is this desire growing out of our reborn spirit that is in perfect harmony with God's desire for us that will keep us moving higher. Pastor Dave Roberson taught us that God's desire for our lives grows up in us like a tree until it is impossible to see anything else. This desire is what will keep us putting one foot in front of the other through the tribulation and persecution because the love of God is being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

Some might think, "Poor Mr. Straight-laced was better off the way he was with just a nice little mediocre Christian life." Here are two things to keep in mind. First, when a believer opts to maintain the same lifestyle as the world, thinking like the world, acting like the world, relying on the same solutions as the world, they immediately subject themselves to the limitations of this natural world. When the economy is bad or sickness and disease comes knocking, their choice to be like everyone else has limited them to the natural solutions this world has to offer. However, forgoing the battle seems so inviting now because we can't appreciate what we are giving up. For those who refuse to accept their responsibility for climbing the mountain of Truth, their experience standing before Jesus will be disappointing, to say the least. He will pull back a curtain, so to speak, and show them the life they were supposed to live. The tears will flow like a river and then He will wipe them all away. How can we truly appreciate, while living in this world, what that disappointment will be like?

The preferred outcome would be to hear these words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Jesus’ eyes meet yours and He nods as if to say; “I watched you. I know the nice little life on earth that you walked away from for the sake of the Gospel. I want you to see all the faces of all the people your life has touched because you refused to take the easy path.” Just to look into His eyes and see His pleasure, as well as, all the faces of the people your life touched for the kingdom will mean everything.

There is so much more to be said about weathering the storms of tribulation and persecution for the sake of the Word, but let’s not overlook the fact that the One who drew us into this walk is the One who has been sent to insure our victory. The Holy Ghost, who Jesus called the Comforter (John 16:7), has been sent to comfort us in times of tribulation. Jesus also said the Holy Ghost would “guide us into all truth.” (John 16:13) Then, the chapter concludes with verse 33 describing the peace we would find in Jesus while simultaneously experiencing the tribulation of the world. It shouldn’t be difficult to see that the ministry of the Holy Ghost as our Comforter and Guide is going to enable us to walk in the peace of God while experiencing tribulation and persecution. We must learn to look to our Comforter to comfort us in times of tribulation for the Word’s sake. That’s what He’s here to do.

Thank God for the Holy Ghost and His ministry as Comforter. He is the Spirit of Truth whose job is to guide us into all Truth, if we let Him. We should learn to acknowledge the Holy Ghost in every area of our lives. Please don’t make the same mistake as I have made at times of assuming that praying in tongues is all we need to do to fellowship with the Holy Ghost. Praying in tongues is wonderful and powerful and 100% necessary, but tongues should not take the place of one on one fellowship with the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost. It’s in these times of fellowship that we can open the door to the Holy Ghost to expose any wrong thinking we might have about the scriptures. He won’t barge into your thoughts and forcefully change your wrong doctrine. I have found by personal experience that the Holy Ghost will sit back quietly and let a person think whatever they want to think, right or wrong, until we give Him the opportunity to correct us. Yes, praying in tongues empowers Him to teach our spirit Truth, but if we try to force a revelation using mental reasoning in place of true revelation, He will let us. He will do everything He can through our praying in tongues to correct us, but keep in mind that He can only reveal as much Truth as our strongholds will allow. In that case, until He is able to reveal more Truth to us, can you see a benefit in asking the Holy Ghost if what you are seeing in the Word is Truth or error? I certainly can. If we choose to believe something, right or wrong, the Holy Ghost won’t stop us. What will keep us safe is to simply talk to the Holy Ghost and ask Him if in fact what we believe to be Truth is Truth. In my case, it

wasn't huge, it was just a couple of instances here and there where I rushed and let reasoning take the place of true revelation knowledge. Had I only asked the Holy Ghost I believe He could have easily corrected me, stronghold or not. My hope is that by sharing my experience others can steer clear of this trap.

The Holy Ghost is so wonderful. Even though we might ignore Him for a time, He is right there waiting for us to acknowledge Him, waiting for the opportunity to help us, correct us, comfort us. Let's open our heart to the Holy Ghost and welcome Him into every area of our life.

When times of tribulation and trouble are all around us we must not give up, we must not give in. Refuse to retreat and refuse to look to man's ways for solutions. We have the Comforter Himself whose job is to guide us into all Truth. Be of good cheer. God is with us, in us, all around us and He has already won the victory. He has come in the person of the Holy Ghost to comfort us in times of distress. Allow Him the opportunity to do what He does best **and be of good cheer in times of trouble**. The Overcomer, Jesus, has already overcome the world and sealed our victory, "**with that Holy Spirit of promise**". (Ephesians 1:13) As the Word takes root and grows in us, the victory Jesus won on our behalf will begin to manifest in our lives as a result of the present day ministry of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost. Thank God for Jesus and Thank God for the Holy Ghost!

Keep climbing!

~ Grace be with you

Mark Jenkins