

Right Song, Wrong Side

David Wilkerson first offered this timely message in the July 1991 issue of Charisma. In light of his tragic death, we're reposting it as a testament to his remarkably prophetic voice.

The great need of this hour is for Christians to learn to sing the song of deliverance on the testing side of trouble.

The children of Israel were in a hopeless predicament. The Red Sea was before them; the mountains were to the left and right; Pharaoh and his iron chariots were closing in from the rear. God's people seemed helplessly trapped, just waiting to be cut down. Yet God purposely had led them into this precarious spot.

It was panic time in the camp of Israel. Men shook with fear, and women and children wept as they huddled around relatives. Moses was mobbed by irate family leaders who cried: "Surely this is the end. Weren't there enough graves in Egypt to bury us there? You had to drag us out here to die. We told you in Egypt to let us alone. It was better to be slaves there than to die in this miserable wilderness" (see Ex. 14:11).

No one in Israel could have known what a great deliverance God was about to bring for them. Suddenly the winds parted the sea, and the people walked through the parted waves on dry ground. When Pharaoh and his powerful army tried to follow, the waters closed and drowned them all.

What a sight it must have been. The people of God looked back from the other side and saw their mighty enemy destroyed like tin soldiers. Then a song went up in the camp as, once again, they realized God had delivered them from impossible circumstances.

Scripture records their reaction—and the song they sang: "Israel saw the great work which the Lord did in Egypt; so the

people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses. Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song unto the Lord, and spoke, saying:

“‘I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He had thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him’” (Ex. 14:31-15:2, NKJV).

Christians lift up their voices to sing this glorious song of victory in many churches today. But note the following words in this passage: “Israel saw that great work which the Lord did ... *Then* Moses and the children of Israel sang this song” (emphasis added).

They sang the right song—but they sang it on the wrong side. Israel’s song was not sung in true faith because they sang it only on the other side of the Red Sea—the side of victory and not of testing.

The Testing Side of Trouble

There are two sides to all our trials and temptations: the testing side and the breakthrough side; the side of darkness and hopelessness, and the side of victory and deliverance. Any doubter can sing after the testing has passed and the victory has come. But it’s on the testing side that the Lord wants us to learn to sing His praises. He deserves our worship in the darkest moment.

You can imagine the scene in Israel after their victory: Miriam dancing with all the maidens, tambourines shaking, everyone singing and shouting praises to God. How secure and powerful they must have felt. But the victory was hollow—because Israel had already failed the test that day. Before the waters parted, the people had moaned and groaned and complained and cried.

God’s purposes in allowing us to stumble into hopeless cries

is to test us—to build in us a foundation of trust in Him. How else will His people be able to trust Him for all the battles that lie ahead? Every crisis you face right now is an opportunity to learn to trust God—to build a foundation for everything that comes at you for the rest of your life.

This test at the Red Sea was an opportunity for Israel to put a mirror to their heart and see the doubt inside—so they might turn to God in faith. If only they had remembered the miracles they'd witnessed in Egypt, they could have encouraged one another by lifting up a song of praise—the same song they eventually sang on the wrong side. It could have spread throughout the camp and ignited their faith.

That would have established a foundation for an abiding faith in God—a faith so fire-tested and unshakable that it would have seen them through the hardships of the wilderness and the battles of Canaan. It would have established them as the people of God on earth, as the light unto the nations.

But Israel did not sing. They lost all confidence in the love of their heavenly Father—and accused God of neglecting them.

A dear brother in the Lord recently unburdened his heart to me about a deep, dark trial he has endured for some time now. About a year ago he gave up a well-paying job because he saw that in the near future he would have to compromise to remain there. For months he sent out numerous resumes, but nothing has opened up for him.

There has been a time of severe testing for him, and he has received all sorts of advice from well-meaning Christian friends. Some tell him there must be sin in his life—that's why God hasn't opened a door. Others say, "If you just have enough faith..."

But this brother said something that stuck me deep within: "I don't want God to just give me another job, deliver me from my troubles and allow me to continue on without having learned

anything of Him. People all around are watching me—and I want them to see a testimony to God. I want to come through tested and tried. Otherwise, all I've learned about trusting the Lord is nothing but empty theory. Unless it works in hard times, it's useless."

God's Perspective

Some would say: "But it's not natural to sing songs of deliverance in such pain. It's only human to worry—especially when you're unemployed, your children are in trouble and all kinds of problems are facing you."

God doesn't see it that way. His perspective is vastly different from ours. God told Moses: "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward" (Ex. 14:15). Was He heartless to say that? Does this mean He doesn't care about our human passions and hurts?

No! Years later, looking back over their wilderness experience, Moses told the people of Israel: "You saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went" (Deut. 1:31). God is a loving, caring Father.

When you're hurting, there's nothing wrong with going to the Lord and crying, "Help." God understands when you're heartbroken and things look black. David said, "In my distress I ... cried out to my God (Ps. 18:6).

But the time comes when the Holy Spirit meets you in the prayer closet and says, as He did to Moses, "Why are you still crying? When will faith rise up in your heart?"

God knows the way He will use to deliver you. In fact, He has a million ways. You just can't see them when your back is to the wall.

For the children of Israel, the wall was the Red Sea. They were stuck—right where God wanted them.

They received God's deliverance that day—and they sang afterward. But their song was shallow, without foundation. Here is the proof that it was shallow: Three days later they were back to their old ways of doubt and fear.

All they did in their hour of crisis was suppress their fear. They pushed it down inside and slapped on a coating of praise. They never dealt a deathblow to doubt. Yet that was the whole purpose behind the crisis.

The World Requires of Us a Song

There is a song to sing— and it must be sung on the right side. And you can be sure that if the world knows you're a Christian, they will demand it of you.

The psalmist said: "Those who carried us away captive required of us a song, and those who plundered us required of us mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Ps. 137:3-4).

When Israel fell into the Babylonian bondage, their captors required of them a song. Yet the people of God were in the hardest place of their lifetime. There was no life in them anymore—nothing but depression, despair, hopelessness.

Multitudes of Christians are in the same position today. You may be trapped by your circumstances. The devil is chasing you, coming at you 90 mph with an old temptation. You're on the edge of giving up, thinking: *I can't make it. In spite of all my crying and praying, it looks like I'll be this way as long as I live. That old bondage is going to hound me forever.*

I don't believe the Babylonian's demand was made only in mockery. I believe it was also a pitiful plea. The Babylonians' gods had left them empty and dry. They had no hope. But they had heard Israel's singing to their God—a God who had seen them through impossible circumstances. They said: These people have a God who can open a sea for them. His fire comes down from heaven. He stands against their enemies.

There's got to be something to this God of theirs."

Like all the world, they wanted to see a people who endured the same problems they endured and faced the same battles they faced—yet who could sing and shout and hold their faith in the darkest of hours. The Babylonians demanded a song because something in every person's heart cries out, "Where on the face of the earth is there something that can make you sing even when you've lost everything?"

The Babylonians needed a testimony. And it is important that the children of God—wherever they are at whatever time—sing the song of Zion: "God, I believe You, no matter what's happening."

The world will not respond to just another testimony. Church programs often leave people dead and dry. Even healings nowadays have little impact because the world has seen so much of "miracle medicine"—heart transplants, limb transplants, eye transplants.

No, the world is shouting to us: "You can show us a miracle. It's not the Red Sea opening up that impresses us. It's not seeing the blind given sight or the lame healed. It's that you can look at the darkest hour of your life—a situation that's hopeless to all human reasoning—and yet you smile with joy, singing praises to God."

That's the miracle the world wants to see.

Given Over to Murmuring

If
you don't deal with your doubts, you'll be given over to a
spirit of
murmuring and complaining. You'll live and die that way. Your
doubts
cannot be simply be suppressed. They have to be pulled out by
the roots.

Let's

look at Israel just three days after their deliverance from Egypt. They

had been singing, testifying to the power of a mighty God and boasting

that He was leading and protecting them. Then they arrived at Marah,

which means "bitterness." This pool of bitter water has to be another

testing place for them.

God

allows crisis after crisis until we finally get the lesson. If we keep

refusing to learn it, a time comes when He gives us over to our own

bitterness and murmuring. That's exactly what happened to Israel: "They

went three days in the wilderness and found no water ... And the people

murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'" (Ex. 15:22-24).

On Sunday, they were having a great time—singing, dancing and praising. Now it's Wednesday— and they're already in trouble. Another crisis, they're falling apart.

How could a people lose their confidence so quickly? Because they never had any. They never had the foundation built under them. So again they failed the test. They had learned absolutely nothing from their previous crisis—and again they missed an opportunity to shine forth the greatness of their God.

From that day on, Israel was beyond learning anything from God. They even began to take His goodness for granted. They had no food, so He sent them manna from heaven. He dropped quails out of the sky, piling them up three feet high outside

of the camp. But not a word of thanksgiving was heard. Instead, the people turned to greed, hoarding all that God gave them. Israel became stiff-necked.

What a shame it is to go from crisis to crisis and learn nothing in the process. It carries with it a curse—you will be given over to a spirit of murmuring.

Our Last Chance

Israel had witnessed God's miracle at the Red Sea. They'd seen the healing of waters at Marah. They saw the water flow from the rock at Horeb. And they saw manna and quail appear from heaven.

Some months later, they were poised and ready to go into the promised land. God gave them one final opportunity to come to the ground of trust and faith in Him.

Israel had sent 12 spies into Canaan—and 10 came back with an evil report: "It truly flows with milk and honey ... Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large ... We are not able to go up against the people" (Num. 13:27-31).

The report caused utter chaos in the camp of Israel. Every pent-up doubt and fear came churning out in anger at God. When Joshua stood up and said, "God is with us," they all wanted to stone him (see Ex. 14:6-10).

The 10 spies' unbelieving report came right out of hell: "It's useless, hopeless. Why even try to go over there when the situation looks impossible?" And that is exactly what the devil wants you to think about your problems: *There's no way out of this.*

Yet you know God already has a plan. You just can't see it. All you see is that wall ahead of you. But God sees infinitely more than you do. To Him, there is no wall there. It's an easy thing for Him to go right through it. There are no

complications involved for Him because He doesn't recognize the power of the enemy.

For Israel, this was a final chance to arise and sing, to show God their trust. It was time for someone to stand up and say: "We thought we were dead at the Red Sea—and He delivered us. We thought it was the end for us at the bitter waters of Marah—and He delivered us. We thought we were dying of hunger in the wilderness—and he delivered us. He has brought us safely thus far. Let us testify to the world that our God is able."

Yet no one did. Israel failed its final test. Where was the victory, the song? There was none. Israel only wept and complained: "All the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt! ... Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should become victims?'" (Num. 14:1-2).

Finally, God's patience ended. Listen to what He said to the confirmed murmerers: "Your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness" (Num. 14:31-32).

Deal Your Doubts a Deathblow

The world is full of Christians today who will not hold on to God's holy Word. They think it is an innocent thing to sit in the house of God and murmur and complain, as if God doesn't hear. God does hear our murmurings. They are accusations that He does not care, insinuations that He has let us down.

Israel spent the next 40 years in turmoil—full of backbiting, complaining, bitterness. What a miserable existence they led—still claiming to be the children of God, still claiming to be

holy. But that was their testimony—not God's.

There's no deliverance for a man or woman who complains continually before God. If you're unemployed, you'll stay unemployed the rest of your life. Or if you do get a job, it'll be a yoke around your neck. You must come to a place where you learn to trust Him.

Where do you start? By looking right into the mirror of God's Word. First Corinthians 10:10 warns against murmuring. Consider your words and actions over the last 30 days: Have you been murmuring or complaining?

You may answer, "Yes, but I haven't been murmuring to God." Yes, you have. No matter where or to whom you complain, it's all directed to God.

Every place I turn in my Bible, I see that God says, "Trust Me, and I'll see you through,. Commit your ways to Me."

Take your doubts to the cross and say, "Jesus, heal my unbelief. Take it out." Turn to God and say, "Lord, I've done everything I know how to do in my situation. I know there's nothing I can do to fix the problem anyway. I'm going to trust You—and wait for Your victory."

If you learn this lesson now, the next time a crisis comes you'll sing and shout with praises to your Deliverer. Oh, the victory will be there—but more importantly, you'll have dealt a deathblow to all bout, fear and unbelief. Give Him all your problems right now—in faith and trust—and He will give you the right song on the right side.