

Low I Am with You Always!

"Low I am with you always" is a play on the words from the great commission, in which Jesus says, "...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20). We got the idea for this thought from Psalm 136:1a, 23, "*O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good...Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever.*" The point I am trying to make is, He who is with us in the "lo" is also with us when we are "low." God promises, "*He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer*" (Psalm 102:17). So often when we are low in spirit, we have a tendency to feel more depressed because we are taught to believe that depression is an act of unbelief. Then well-meaning Christian friends don't help when they remind us what we have already been "beating ourselves up over," that is, if we were truly right with the Lord, we would be buoyant, happy and super positive. Some might say, "Why don't you let that champion inside of you out?" The truth is, we often feel like that champion inside of us is down on the proverbial mat of life and can't get up." It is hard to get up when you feel so defeated. I have some good news for you! God is with you in the low days as well as the high days. God is the One "Who remembered us in our low estate."

1. God is with us in our fears.

A humorous story is told of a dear elderly preacher who had never been too far from home. His children were going to fly him to see them. They purchased the airline ticket, but in a few days he informed them he was sending them the ticket back and he would be arriving by bus. The kids said, "Why are you not flying, Dad?" He replied, "Because I have read in the Bible "low" (lo) I am with you always. I am not about to get high and out of His blessing."

No matter what our fears, we are promised, "*I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears*" (Psalm 34:4). Fear can be paralyzing. So how do we get deliverance from this paralysis? When I was a little boy, I would often wake up in my dark room and in fear run into my parent's bedroom. I would run, jump and land right between them. I had not one ounce of fear when I was there. Their very presence alleviated all my fears. I was almost hoping that one of those make-believe monsters would follow me into their bedroom, just so I could watch Daddy beat him up. Being in close relationship with the Lord is not only enriching and enlightening, but is also fear-conquering! "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you...*" (James 4:8).

Fears are an inward turmoil, as Paul said, "*For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears*" (II Corinthians 7:5). The wording is insightful locating the place of fear, "...*within were fears.*" Jesus is the Great Physician who specializes in internal problems that cannot be touched by human hands. Because of His strengthening presence, we may say with the Psalmist, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*" (Psalm 23:4).

2. God is with us in our disappointments.

We all dream. We dream of what we shall be when we grow up. We dream of feats we may, with God's help, accomplish. We dream of whom we shall marry and of whom we shall be friends. Dream disintegration will begin to work its unkind work unrelentingly through life. Perhaps it was failure to be accepted in that certain school that was going to serve as the launching pad for your success. Perhaps those friends who were going to encourage you in your dreams have betrayed you. What do you do and where do you go from this sad state of affairs?

Consider Joseph in the Old Testament, he dreamed magnificent dreams and had a wonderful relationship with his father. In a sudden jealous move, his brothers, rather than encourage him, sold him to the Ismaelites and finally ended up in Egypt far away from his loving father. He was framed for a crime he did not do and was imprisoned. But even there, "*... the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison*" (Genesis 39:21). And then the Bible says, "*The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper*" (Genesis 39:23). When we understand the Lord is with us, He makes the prison a palace. In contrast, when we do not sense the Lord is with us, even a palace could be a prison.

When the dream becomes a nightmare and the disappointments multiply, which they often do, this is when it is good to know God is with us. In our Lord's darkest hour in Gethsemane, we hear His agony and heart-cry as He says, "*...O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*" (Matthew 26:39). Christ teaches us three valuable lessons from Gethsemane that will equip us for disappointments: (1) Go to the Father when your world is coming apart. (2) Be transparent; tell the Lord exactly what is bothering you. (3) Trust the Father knows and will do what is best; leave it in His hands.

3. God is with us in death.

It was evident that John Wesley was nearing the end of his pilgrimage in this life. He beckoned his friends and loved ones to kneel around him and pray. As they concluded their prayers, John moved his lips unable to utter the words on his heart. The small group moved closer, and with one last burst of strength John cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us!" and then, as if to assert the faithfulness of our promise-keeping Jehovah and comfort the hearts of his weeping friends, he lifted his dying arm in token of victory and raising his feeble voice again repeated the heart-reviving words, "The best of all is, God is with us!"

The words of the twenty-third Psalm are apropos here, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*" (Psalm 23:4). When we isolate those words, "*...I will fear no evil: for thou art with me...*" all excuses for fear seem to evaporate. There is promise of dying grace to every believer. We can see more clearly why Dad used to try to encourage us by saying, "Cheer up, we'll soon be dead." This kind of bravado in the face of life's greatest fear is not put on. I have seen the joy by the bedside of dying saints. Yet, I must admit, to be in the presence of one who knows not God is a terror-filled experience. The worst part of Hell is to be forsaken of the Father's comfort. For those of you who know

Christ, your faith becomes visible, your hope is finally realized and you are encompassed with love beyond comprehension. One positive-thinking Christian I know whenever asked, "How's your day?" always replies, "Just perfect." That's a good answer, but in total honesty, some days are far from perfect. Here is the promise we have for the day we die, "*But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*" (Proverbs 4:18). To be with the Lord in Heaven is going to be literally just perfect, because He is with us in full manifestation. It is the answer to Jesus' prayer, "*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world*" (John 17:24).

-Pastor Pope-