Can We Still be Prophets of Hope?

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May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will abound in hope and overflow with confidence in His promises.” – Romans 15:13 (AMP)

We face a new day — one many of us have never faced before — with new challenges, new difficulties, and new questions about what “ministry” is and what it looks like. How do we move forward? How do we continue to minister to our flock? How do we bring hope to these difficult days, when we appear, as perhaps never before, to be so hopeless?

HOPE: “A desire of some good, accompanied with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable. hope differs from wish and desire in this, that it implies some expectation of obtaining the good desired, or the possibility of possessing it. hope therefore always gives pleasure or joy; whereas wish and desire may produce or be accompanied with pain and anxiety” (Webster’s Dictionary, 1828).

Can we still be prophets of hope in this generation? Can we offer more than a “wish” or a “desire”? Can our words, our lives, our message bring to bear this life-giving hope that God is still on His throne, that He will not abandon or forsake his children, that “this” too shall pass? I believe the answer is YES!

An Answer in Scripture

The children of Israel, God’s people, once again unveil for us in their story of struggle hope for our present situation. Joshua has led them over the Jordan river, and there is a time of consecration and celebration. Then, the manna from heaven stops, and from now on people would need to find their own food. Their only chance of survival meant moving forward, onward, but just over the horizon loomed the “problem” Jericho — something most of them had never seen, never faced, never even dreamt about. There was seemingly no way past this walled city, just as it may seem to us sometimes that our problem, our crisis, our new situation is undefeatable, undeniable, and unbearable.

“While Joshua was there near Jericho: He looked up and saw right in front of him a man standing, holding his drawn sword. Joshua stepped up to him and said, ‘Whose side are you on — ours or our enemies?’ He said, ‘Neither. I’m commander of God’s army. I’ve just arrived.’ Joshua fell, face to the ground, and worshiped. He asked, ‘What orders does my Master have for his servant?’ God’s army commander ordered Joshua, ‘Take your sandals off your feet. The place you are standing is holy.’ Joshua did it” (Joshua 5:13-15, MSG).

The answer to their dilemma, and to ours, is full surrender to a “New Commander.” Suddenly, our whole situation has changed. A new dynamic is brought to bear on the problem at hand — not through struggle, but rather through surrender. Can we be prophets of hope? Yes — if we listen to our New Commander!

Our Message of Hope

Noah Webster, in his original 1828 unabridged edition of his dictionary, describes a “prophet” as “a person illuminated, inspired or instructed by God to announce future events.” We can, in full surrender and consecration, hear from heaven and share — and I mean SHARE — in action and attitude, on social media, from our soap-box, this message of HOPE that comes from receiving a “New Commander.” This message includes....

New Plans

Whoever heard of attacking a city or a problem by walking around it a bunch of times? God is calling us as leaders, as pastors, to do some things we have never done or tried before. Relax, listen, and do as He asks! Note Joshua’s first response to specific instruction from the commander of God’s army: “Joshua did it.”

Can we still be prophets of hope? The answer, I believe, lies in our willingness to obey and our bravery in trying “new things.” Most of us never
thought we would be “televangelists,” but here we are on the air! Step into it and do the best you can, but see it as a new means of bringing the same message of hope. Winston Churchill once said, “To each there comes in their lifetime a special moment when they are figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered the chance to do a very special thing, unique to them and fitted to their talents. What a tragedy if that moment finds them unprepared or unqualified for that which could have been their finest hour.”

New Power

If there was one thing the Israelites needed, it was power! Have you noticed that new problems and challenges bring with them this uncanny ability to sap our strength, our resources, our supply chain? This heaven-sent messenger identifies himself as “the commander of the Lord’s army.” Pastor, do you know who has your back? You are not alone. Try saying this verse out-loud — and I mean LOUD — to yourself before you livestream this week: “I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens and empowers me [to fulfill His purpose — I am self-sufficient in Christ’s sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.]” (Philippians 4:13, AMP).

“A True encounter with Christ liberates something within us, a power we did not know we had, a capacity to grow and change,” said American theologian and activist Thomas Merton. When we choose to enter His presence with praise, He enters our problems with power! This is not the moment to shrink from our calling, but rather to stand strong in the power of His presence and might. In the words of an old hymn, “Stand up! Stand up for Jesus! Ye soldiers of the cross; Lift high His royal banner, It must not suffer loss: From victory unto victory His army shall He lead, Till every foe is vanquished And Christ is Lord indeed.” We must not yield to fear or panic; our Commander is watching, and our call is still clear.

New Confidence

Whenever we doubt our source of power, we give power to our fear, to our worst predictions. “Confidence,” as Webster defines, is a “trustin, or reliance; an assurance of mind or firm belief in the integrity, stability or veracity of another, or in the truth and reality of a fact.” God has said it — I believe it!

Walk around the city (your problem) once a day for six days. The priests (pastors) will walk ahead (we must lead the way, show the way). “Do not shout; do not even talk,” Joshua commanded. “Not a single word from any of you [it is not our words or our wisdom that will deliver; remember confidence is often silent, but insecurities can be loud] until I tell you to shout. Then shout!” The “shout” of confidence, the voice of faith, the cry of praise, must come from our lips, and this problem — any problem — can be conquered.

“It seems now that if trials and troubles should come, if I could but hold my hand upon this precious text, [“He is unique and unchangeable, and who can turn Him?” (Job 23:13, AMP)] I would laugh at them all. ‘Who can turn him?’ — I would shout — ‘Who can turn him?’ Come on, earth and hell; come on, for ‘who can turn him?’ Come on, ye boisterous troubles, come on, ye innumerable temptations, come on, slanderer and liar, ‘who can turn him?’” – C.H. Spurgeon ■