

Strength for the Hard Thing: That's Daddy!

By Steve Burchett



Perhaps you've been there — all alone, maybe even afraid. The outlook seems so bleak, the path forward so dark and uncertain. Suddenly, somebody comes along and just their presence brightens the path ahead and gives you strength. Such relief!

Joshua was faced with an overwhelming situation as he was about to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised

Land. Moses was now dead, so this monumental, lonely leadership task fell to Joshua. At this moment, the Lord charged him, “Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1:6, 9).

Strength and Courage?

But where would Joshua get strength and courage to guide God's people into a land full of people who hated the one true God? It would come from God's rock solid promises (vv. 2-4, 6), his trustworthy word (vv. 7-8), and his powerful presence (vv. 5, 9). It's that last source that I want to highlight. The Lord told Joshua, “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you” (v. 5). And then he concluded his words to Moses, “Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (v. 9).

I have a warm, loving relationship with my father-in-law. He's a dear brother in Christ. However, early on in my marriage to his daughter, a headlight in one of our cars needed to be replaced. It shouldn't have been a difficult task, but he was there peering over my shoulder as I changed out the old bulb for the new. I got nervous. “Why are my hands sweaty?” I thought to myself. I knew the answer: my father-in-law was with me, but I wasn't so sure that he was for me! (Looking back, he was just trying to be the biggest support he could possibly be.)

The Lord was telling Joshua that, even though Moses was gone, he was not; he was right there with him, he was so very much for him, and he wasn't going anywhere. “So fear no man. Don't be frightened or dismayed. Everywhere you go, I'll be there. Every time you come face-to-face with a giant who wants to hurt you or destroy you, you can be strong and courageous because I will be there actively providing for you with my unsurpassed power.”

Daddy!

The great American frontiersman Daniel Boone had a 14 year-old daughter named Jemima. She and her friends Elizabeth and Frances Callaway were captured one Sunday in 1776 by some Native Americans. Three days later, Daniel Boone and the men with him found the kidnappers and the girls. Once they fired the first shot at the Native Americans, Jemima, sitting on a log with the Callaway girls, leaped up and shouted, “That's Daddy!” (Boone, Robert Morgan, 209). It was like she was saying, “He's here! We're going to be okay!” And so they were.

Joshua's heavenly “Daddy” was promising his felt presence and never-ending love and provision: “I will not leave you or forsake you.” This same hope and experience is true today for every believer in Jesus who, you might remember, was called “Immanuel,” which means “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). The author of Hebrews even quoted a portion of Joshua 1:5 when he wrote: “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (13:5). He continues (quoting Psalm 118:6), “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

Remember His Love

When trouble comes, or the Lord's will seems nearly impossible, we don't have to wait for “Daddy” to arrive. He's already with us, and he loves us. It's just as Martyn Lloyd-Jones once told Faith Cook. It was 1980, and Lloyd-Jones was in his final year of his life. He was speaking at a conference and heard that his dear friend, pastor Paul Cook (Faith's husband), was in an extremely downcast place mentally. The conference was close to the Cook's home, so Lloyd-Jones went for a visit. After discussing Paul's condition with Faith, he prayed for several minutes. As he left, he gently took Faith's hand and said, “Remember the love of God.” As he headed back to the conference, he probably had no idea how helpful those words were. Faith Cook testified, “These words, perhaps more than any others, carried me through all the distress of the months that followed” (Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith 1939-1981*, 735-6).

Does the path ahead seem unbearable? “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Put simply: Remember the love of our always present, omnipotent God.

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