

DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES

Insights

The Way to a New Life | SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2013



STANDING UNDER PRESSURE



BY DR. DENNIS BURKE



STANDING UNDER PRESSURE

**LIVING NEAR THE COAST IN
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA,
I GREW UP ENJOYING THE SEA.**

I surfed, snorkeled, swam, and spear-fished as often as possible—and I learned what every experienced snorkel and scuba diver understands: how important it is to regulate the pressure on the inner ear as I dive underwater. It only takes a few feet of depth to start feeling the pressure and the pain it causes.

This pressure, produced by the weight of the water, can cause permanent damage by exploding an eardrum. But it is also easy to avoid with a simple technique that equalizes the pressure. By squeezing the nose while blowing out air, a person can pop his ears just as he does when changing altitudes in an airplane. Once the pressure is greater on the inside of his ears than on the outside, he will be able to dive deeper and deeper without any trouble.

Life is a bit like diving underwater. We're faced with so many different kinds of pressure on a daily basis, and the problems we encounter can seem insurmountable if we fail to use the right techniques to counteract them. These issues can create so much stress and trouble in our lives that we begin to feel like we're being squeezed unmercifully.

Look at how the Holy Spirit says we can learn to equalize this pressure: *Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remake you so that your whole attitude of mind is changed.*¹

It is this "remake," which begins within, that will change things.

In Psalm 3, we find an amazing statement made by King David while he was fleeing from his own son Absalom's violent attempt to take over his kingdom. As hundreds of Absalom's men were scouring the countryside to find David and kill him, David wrote:

Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God." But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.²

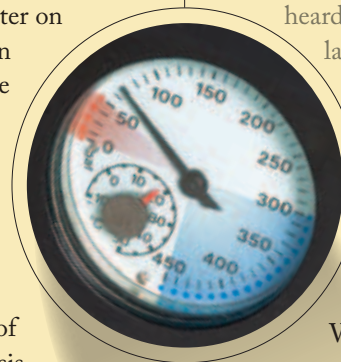
Think about this situation. While people were looking to find and kill David, he was sleeping at night, knowing that the Lord was sustaining and protecting him.

What makes a person so strong that he can remain confident in the face of unthinkable odds?

When trouble raises its ugly head in our lives, there are really only a few options. We can brace ourselves and hope to ride it out. We can run for our lives. Or we can stand up and take it on with every intention of rising above it all.

It takes real courage to stand on God's Word, expecting to receive from Him when you're under pressure. When the conditions of your situation are saying one thing and God's Word has promised something else, it requires deep-rooted strength to choose the Word.

Of course, we know we *should* choose the Word—but that doesn't make it any easier to do it. Pressure from various sources can give us every reason to cave in and quit. And there are different kinds of pressure. Sometimes pressure comes from things happening around us. It may be the loss of a job, a legal matter, or an automobile accident. Other times pressure comes from what is happening in our thoughts and emotions. In those times of pressure—whether we are questioning ourselves or being tested by a



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boss, a spouse, or the circumstances that surround us—it is vital that we take every negative thought captive and reframe the issues.

Every threat to our peace and abundance in Christ has its root cause in the kingdom of darkness. Now, let me be clear, this isn't to say that everything bad that happens in our lives is caused by someone who is demon-possessed. But the devil has a very real strategy against us as believers, designed to undermine our faith and redirect our focus onto other people or the problems we're dealing with. If we're not cautious, we will lose ground spiritually over the things that have taken our thoughts and emotions captive. The Apostle Paul gives us a clear direction about how to do this, saying in Second Corinthians 10:5 (NCV), "We capture every thought and make it give up and obey Christ."

Our ability to reign in life in Christ begins *within* us. It requires personal commitment and courage for us not to allow our emotions to govern us. And in the moments of weakness when we slip, we are to pick ourselves up and reset ourselves solidly on His Word of peace

and victory.

Isaiah 40:29-31 is one of the most power-filled statements in Scripture to fuel this inner strength.

He gives power to the weak,
and to those who have no
might He increases strength.
Even the youths shall faint
and be weary, and the young
men shall utterly fall, but
those who wait on the Lord
shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with
wings like eagles, they shall
run and not be weary, they
shall walk and not faint.

The Holy Spirit will infuse His supernatural strength into us when we are too weak to handle a situation correctly. He will make us mighty people even when we are burned out from long-lasting or painful struggles.

The word "weary" is so telling and typical for many Christians. It includes the state of being exhausted, tired, or just plain worn out.

Many times we wear ourselves out trying to be someone we're not or trying to do something for the wrong motive. Self-sufficient people get very tired trying to supply things they're not designed to supply. Our supply for strength to do God's work His way comes from *Him*.

He supplies more than enough in us when we remain joined to Him.

This is where the concept of waiting becomes so important. Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength (Isaiah 40:31). Waiting on the Lord isn't like waiting on the train or the bus to come. We're not waiting on Him to finally get around to our situation. "To wait" is to look expectantly to Him and to literally bind ourselves closely to Him. It carries the idea of wrapping ourselves so much in Him that it is as though we are braided together with Him. When something is braided, it's difficult to distinguish one part of the braid from another. It's all just one braid.

Waiting on the Lord brings us into such an expectant "looking to Him" that we are renewed and refreshed by His strength that infuses and surrounds every part of us. In fact, when this verse says our strength is renewed, the word for "renew" means also *to exchange* or *to change* something. We literally exchange our weakness for His strength and change as if we are changing clothes. We take off one thing and put on something new.

This way we don't just *receive* God's strength, but we *have* His strength born *within* us and braided *into* us.

This is your time to rise up stronger than ever before! If you've been knocked down by people or circumstances, don't stay in a weakened state. Exchange every weakness for a fresh infusion of divine strength, and let God lift you into the greatest place of peace and joy you've ever known!

A peaceful, joy-filled life in Christ is the precious life Satan is out to destroy. Instead of letting the enemy steal your present peace and future joy, determine to throw off his pressure by the power of the Holy Spirit. Declare, "God's strength is renewed in me! I am putting on His strength and casting off my weakness!" This is your time to rise up and outrun the weariness!

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WHAT ABOUT

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Job?

The Bible gives us insight into how to direct our future so we can attain our God-given destiny. It says in Job, "...Declare a thing, and it will be established for you..."¹ This verse doesn't mean that whatever we spout from our mouths will automatically take place.

There are spiritual laws that govern this principle. If we want to attain the "hope and a future" God has planned for us,² we must declare what He says, even in the face of contrary evidence. That's not always easy, and it definitely goes against the ways of the world. The world is flowing in a pessimistic and destructive direction, and it's getting worse every day.

But I have good news for you. Jesus prayed something very liberating and refreshing for His followers: "...They are no more defined by the world than I am defined by the world."³ Once we realize that we can function in an entirely different manner



A "hedge" is defined as a fence, wall, barrier, or limit. It means God has insulated us with a barrier from Satan's plans and attacks.

from the world, that's when we can tap into a new and powerful way of living.

Our identity is not with this world.

Notice what Jesus said in verses 14-15: "I gave them your word; the godless world hated them because of it, because they didn't join the world's ways, just as I didn't join the world's ways..." The world hates those who

follow God's Word because they simply refuse to participate in the world's ways of doing things, and, as a result, they are the recipients of a blessed lifestyle. In other words, we're not marked by the world's boundaries or characterized by them. The world's pessimistic predictions don't have to control us.

Satan proves that he knew he was powerless against Job's life when he said, 'You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property....'

The *Amplified Bible* elaborates on this in verse 15. Jesus said, "I do not ask that You will take them out of the world, but that You will keep and protect them from the evil one." In other words, when we go through trouble, we don't have to have the same outcome as the world. Notice that Jesus didn't say God was going to remove all trouble from our lives; instead, He said He would keep and protect us from the evil one. We know there will be trouble because Jesus warned us about it when He said, "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."⁴

Whenever we talk about living a lifestyle of victory, someone inevitably asks, "But what about Job? The Bible says the devil asked God to remove the hedge

of protection around him, and God did it." *But is that really what happened?* No, it *isn't* what happened. This is a religious explanation used to claim that God allows bad things to happen. But let's set aside our religious thinking and take a deeper look at those verses so we can settle this issue once and for all.

First, let's define the word "hedge" so we understand exactly what God's promise means. A "hedge" is defined as *a fence, wall, barrier, or limit*. It means God has insulated us with a barrier from Satan's plans and attacks. God's hedge of protection is designed to make us invincible to the attacks of the kingdom of darkness.

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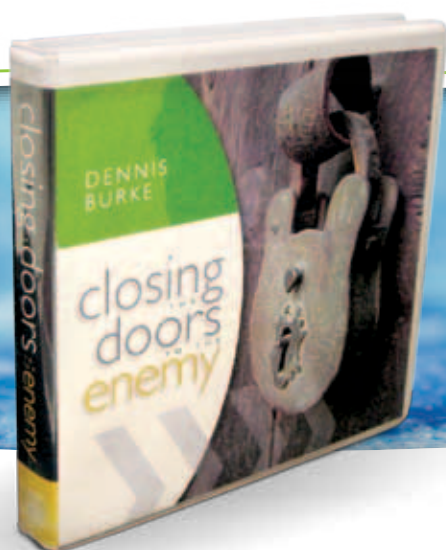
around him and his home and his property...."⁵ Satan couldn't break down the wall of protection so he did what he does best—he *accused*. In effect he said, "God, You're too good to Your people. I can't ruin and wreak havoc in their lives because of Your protection." As if that's such an appalling indictment!

Read verse 10 as the *Message Bible* states it: "Why, no one ever had it so good! You pamper him like a pet, make sure nothing bad ever happens to him or his family or his possessions, bless everything he does—he can't lose!" What a wonderful way to live!

Finally, Satan tries to entice God into removing His wall of protection with this question: "But what do you think would happen if you reached down and took away everything that is his? He'd curse you right to your face, that's what." But God wouldn't remove what He had set in place. Protection is, after all, a *promise* of God and He is a promise keeper! Satan was left on his own, without God's help against Job.

Since Satan couldn't break through the wall of protection and God refused to break His promise of protection, that meant the only one who had the power to destroy the wall of protection that God had placed around Job was Job himself. And that's exactly what he did.

How did Job tear down the protective hedge? If we can find the answer to that question, we can prevent the hedge of protection from being penetrated in our own lives. Job himself answered that question: "What I always feared has happened to me. What I dreaded has come true."⁶ Let's make something clear—Job didn't have just a fleeting thought about disaster. No, he made a habit of thinking about the "what



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if's." He wasn't just a little alarmed—the *King James* translation says Job *greatly* feared.

Great fear is not the result of one thought, one word, or a few negative news broadcasts. Great fear is the result of hearing and hearing on an ongoing basis what the *world* says. Fear is a magnet that attracts disaster and ruin into your life, just as it did for Job. This is why you must refuse to subject yourself to the negative voices that will distract you from the Word. If you give attention to them, they will cause you to worry until fear brings the hedge down.

As Job pondered the "what ifs" over and over in his mind, fear began to grow in his heart, and the door was opened to the kingdom of darkness. Fear is to the kingdom of darkness what faith is to the Kingdom of God. When we give in to fear, it gives impetus to the things we worry and stress over. When Job yielded to fear, he began to experience the destruction the rest of the world always lived with. God's great hedge of protection was removed by what Job feared.

Job was afraid of losing everything—his house, his family, his wealth, and his health. And that's exactly what happened. Fear brought those things to pass in his life. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, but fear is the substance of things dreaded.

What happens when a hedge is removed? According to Ecclesiastes 10:8, "...Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." Isn't that exactly what Job experienced? Isaiah says if the hedge is removed and the wall broken down, that which has been protected shall be trodden down.⁷

But, thank God, Jesus declared that we are no more defined by the world

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than *He* was defined by the world! Jesus made the way for every child of God to live secure with a hedge of protection surrounding him. We don't have to worry about the "what ifs" when we hear negative reports about the economy, healthcare, or any other evil thing the world declares. We can say right out loud: "That may be how the world is defined, but that's not how my household will

live. The Bible says the righteous are encompassed with a shield, and I will *not* remove my hedge of protection by yielding to fear!"

Moses experienced this hedge of protection while leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. When Pharaoh's army pressed them against the Red Sea, there was nowhere to turn. It looked like they were doomed—that is, unless we factor in God's hedge of protection. "The cloud settled between the Egyptian and Israelite camps. As

continued on back

upcoming meetings

dennis & vikki burke



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September 8

Believers Church | 222 N Second St
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September 22-23

Living Word Christian Centre | 5315-91 St
Edmonton AB T6E 6E2 Canada | (780) 462-3737

September 28-29

Word of Faith Fellowship | 264 Lombard Rd
Smith Falls ON K7A 4T6 Canada | (613) 253-9190

October 6-7

Capital City Church | 1123 Old Montreal Rd
Ottawa, ON K4A 3N6 Canada | (613) 833-1700

October 12

Ladies Meeting with Vikki Burke

Kern Christian Center | 4701 Gosford Rd
Bakersfield, CA 93313 | (661) 664-1000

October 13

Kern Christian Center | 4701 Gosford Rd
Bakersfield, CA 93313 | (661) 664-1000

October 27

Real Life Church Clewiston
601 Caribbean Ave | Clewiston, FL 33440
(772) 337-2627

November 1-3

New Life Christian Fellowship | 6755 South
Washington Ave
Titusville, Florida 32780 | (321) 269-7578

November 17

Family Life Church | 905 E. Cloud St
Gainesville, TX 76240 | (940) 665-0473

November 23-24

Word of Life Worship Center | 131 Hwy WW
Sullivan, MO 63080 | (573) 468-7773

It's your responsibility....You must do whatever it takes to keep His hedge of protection up."

darkness fell, the cloud turned to fire, lighting up the night. But the Egyptians and Israelites did not approach each other all night."⁸ God put a pillar of fire between Pharaoh's army and God's people. They were safe and protected from harm.

Isaac experienced God's hedge of protection during a severe famine. While the world around Isaac experienced famine, he obeyed God's instructions to remain in the land—and, as a result, he flourished. He was not defined by the world; instead, he put faith in what God had told him to do, and everything turned out all right! Isaac increased a hundredfold during famine! I'd say that's a good ending!

We may not be able to see God's hedge of protection with our natural eyes, but we can see it with the eyes of our faith. Once we can see it with our faith, then we will see the results of it with our eyes. That's when the world begins to envy us!

Isaac could have torn God's hedge of protection down by entertaining the "what ifs," just like Job did. He could have thought, *What if I obey God and my family starves? What if we lose everything we have? It would be too late to flee for a more prosperous place once our supply is used up.* Isaac was the only one who could destroy God's hedge of protection by entertaining fear-filled thoughts.

If we only follow the ways of the world and listen to its wisdom, we are destined to live like the world. James tells us that the world's wisdom is "earthly, sensual, demonic."⁹ The world's wisdom tries to distract us from following God's promise. If we do that, we will begin to fear until we bring down our hedge of protection.

Proverbs 4:23 commands you to "guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life." This doesn't just mean to guard your heart from what's obviously wicked and perverse, but also from anything that isn't in agreement with God's Word. It's your responsibility—not God's—to guard your heart. You must do whatever it takes to keep His hedge of protection up. Even if you have yielded to worry and fear, you can start building the hedge up again by spending time meditating on what God says. That's when your life will begin to reflect His manifested blessings.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures are taken from the *New Living Translation*.

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