
Are You a Merciful Person?

By David Wilkerson

July 2, 2007 Dearly Beloved:

YOUR BATTLE IS THE LORD'S. (See 2 Chronicles 30:15.)

The purpose of this letter is to remind you that the battle you are facing is not yours, but God's. If you are a child of God, you can be certain that Satan will "rage against you."

In 2 Chronicles 20, a great multitude came against God's people. King Jehoshaphat and his people set their hearts to seek the Lord and they fasted. The king cried to the Lord a prayer that most of us have prayed at one time in our spiritual journey: "We have no might against these that come against us, neither do we know what to do; but our eyes are upon you" (20:12). "The Spirit of God came in the midst of the congregation...saying, Be not afraid nor dismayed...for the battle is not yours, but God's" (20:14-15).

Isaiah warned satanic forces, "Who have you reproached and blasphemed? And against whom have you exalted your voice?...even against the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 37:23).

God told his people, and he tells us, "The battle is not against you. It is Satan's rage against me — against the Lord who abides in you." God said to Satan, "I know where you abide, and where you come and go, and your rage against me" (37:28).

Where is your battle? In your marriage? Your business or job? Your finances? Your health? Does your battle get more intense day after day? If you have a heart for Jesus and a desire to cleave to him, you will face the rage of hell. But it is still not your battle.

You can end your battle quickly if you choose — by simply quitting and giving in to your fears and doubts. Satan will not bother those who give up their confidence in the Lord.

Yes, the battle is the Lord's, but we have a part — and that is to trust and believe in the face of hopelessness and what seems to be impossibilities. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" (Isaiah 40:27).

Faith demands that I turn all my problems — all my critical situations, all my fears, all my anxieties — into the hand of the Lord. When I know I have done all I can do, and I know my battle is beyond my power, I must turn it all over into his hands.

Our Lord knows the raging of Satan, and I must truly believe he will act. He will bring us through floods and fires, and put to chase all spiritual enemies. Here is God's Word concerning what he will do: "Because of your rage against me...and it has come into my ears, therefore I will put a hook in your nose, and my bridle in your lips, and I will turn you back by the way you came" (Isaiah 37:29).

If you will hold fast to your faith — trust him, rest in his promises, reject all lies of Satan coming at your mind — then expect him to come by his Spirit into your situation and bring an expected end to your particular battle. God will move heaven and earth to deliver you and make a way. The way out is to trust — trust — trust! "He makes wars to cease" (Psalm 46:9).

A very special thanks to all who have prayed for us and who have been led by the Holy Spirit to send

support for our outreaches to so many worldwide. God is meeting those needs as we pray and believe. He always blesses ministries that trust him to meet all needs

In Christ,
DAVID WILKERSON

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Newsletter: Are You a Merciful Person?

July 2, 2007 "Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord" (Psalm 119:156). "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all; and *his tender mercies are over all his works*" (145:8-9, my italics).

I want to ask you a question I've been asking myself lately: Are you a merciful person? Most of us would answer, "I think I am merciful. To the best of my ability, I sympathize with those who suffer. I feel the pain of my hurting brothers and sisters in Christ, and I try to help them. I do my best to assist my neighbors in need. And when people hurt me, I forgive them and don't hold a grudge."

I believe all true Christians have a good measure of mercy for the lost and hurting. I thank God for that. But the sad truth is, God's Word exposes in many of us deep roots of bias and very limited concepts of mercy.

Most religions that claim to fear God have a creed or doctrine that says, "God's tender, loving mercies extend to all of humankind." As followers of Jesus, we talk so much about his tender mercies to the wide world. But here is the truth:

□ *Most evangelical denominations do not even extend God's tender, loving mercies to each other, or to those who have split off from them and started another group.*

Over the past five years I have visited some fifty countries conducting ministers' conferences. All over the world I have seen bickering, disunited church systems that are neither tender nor merciful. I think of some leaders of Baptist, Pentecostal, charismatic and other church groups that have been so unloving to others. Too often they refuse to fellowship or even speak to one another.

A denomination in one country wouldn't let our advance team even enter their office doors. They said they refused to work with us as long as we were cooperating with other ministries who were alienated from them.

□ *A vast number of white churches do not even extend God's tender, loving mercies to their black brothers and sisters, or to Hispanics or Puerto Ricans or other ethnic groups.*

Tragically, this prejudice is just as true in some ethnic churches as well. The congregation becomes uncomfortable when whites show up. In some places, the unspoken attitude is, "This isn't your place. You're not welcome here." This happens not just in the south, but in cities in the north, east and west. I know it is true here in New York.

□ *Even among some devoted believers, there exists a biased, limited mercy that doesn't extend to certain kinds of sinners.*

There are many people to whom large numbers of Christians limit God's mercy. I think of prostitutes

who work in godless brothels. I think of people in Africa and other continents dying by the thousands with AIDS. I think of homosexuals who endure endless heart-aches and mental anguish, the trials of their lives, and who drink themselves into oblivion to try to cover their pain.

Yes, I believe homosexuality is a sin and that it's condemned in Scripture. Yes, I believe the wages of sin in this world are bringing about disease and death. But I cannot believe God shuts out his tender mercies to any sinner who cries out to him for Christ's mercy and love.

From what I read in Scripture, I can't accept that my Savior would ever turn down the desperate cry of a prostitute, a homosexual, a drug addict or alcoholic who has hit rock bottom. His mercies are unlimited: there is no end to them. Therefore, as his church — Christ's representative body on the earth — we cannot cut off anyone who cries out for mercy and deliverance.

□ *There are biases in our hearts running like deep rivers, and over the years they have carved out borders of prejudice.*

We may not even be aware of these inner biases until suddenly they're in our face, confronting us with the truth about our hearts. As you consider this in your own life, I ask you again: Are you a merciful person, tender and loving? I picture many readers saying, "Yes." Yet, ask those around you — your family, your co-workers, your friends and neighbors, your friends of a different color — and see how they respond.

Tell me, where is the church's voice in all of this? Hear me well: the old, prejudiced, opinionated, divided organizations we've called the church are now like "Shiloh," "Ichabod" — "The glory has departed!" The Holy Spirit will have nothing to do with those old wineskins. They long ago lost any anointing that remained from their original calling.

Let that old, dead system ordain and marry gays, let them trample the divinity of Christ, let them go their way apart from God. They preach a "tolerance" that is altogether different from what Scripture calls God's tender mercies. Theirs isn't tolerance but blindness, and it has drained their organizations of all gospel power. They have no future in God's plans for these last days.

May such churches and ministries repent. The Lord's mercy is always extended, but he has left completely those that continue to refuse his truth.

There is a triumphant church rising up even now, coming out of great trials of faith. This last-days church is emerging from fiery furnaces and long days of affliction. So, you ask, what does God plan to do?

What I see happening is the Holy Spirit at work bringing a people into utter brokenness. He's leading them to a revelation of weakness in their own flesh, in order to show himself strong. I see him bringing his people to the end of themselves, crushing their stubborn wills, until their mindset becomes only,

“His will be done.” I see him leading his beloved ones into places of trial so difficult only a miracle can deliver them. And through it all, they are becoming wholly dependent on the Lord for everything.

Does this describe your situation? Perhaps you’ve been walking with Jesus for years, and you’ve never faced a test like the one in front of you right now. Things are coming at you that seem overwhelming, things that only God can do something about. And you realize only he can bring you through.

Right now, Islamics are preparing for a final jihad, to “take over the world” for Allah. Islamic training camps are rising up worldwide with a message of hate, characterized by merciless beheadings.

Yet the Lord also has a people in training, a people he’s going to use to face down the wrath of this world. How will he accomplish this? He is training and equipping them in his loving kindness and peace. Our God is a God of love, and he won’t use bombs, guns or suicide squads, but an overcoming people who are fearless in the Lord of tender mercies.

All over the world, God’s people are experiencing suffering, afflictions and torture more than ever in their lifetime. And of this I am sure: there is a divine, eternal purpose in the intensity of these spiritual and physical battles now being endured in the true body of Christ. *“His tender mercies are over all his works”* (Psalm 145:9, my italics).

God revealed his last-days plan through the cross of Jesus. Our Lord has had a plan all along. God himself came down and took on the form and condition of man, living among sinful men. He endured their hatred, experienced their rejection, faced unthinkable reproach, and through it all he never fought back.

Jesus never established armies of vengeful, hate-filled jihadists. He used no carnal weapons. Instead, he pulled down strongholds by his mighty loving kindness. Our Lord had but one battle plan: tender, merciful love. Indeed, love drives all of his works on earth. He is the full expression of God’s love: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Jesus allowed his enemies to abuse him, mock him, even kill him bodily. And when he rose from the grave, he did so as the anointed head of a new kind of church, a new kind of people. Here now was a many-member body that would consist of all races and peoples: Jews, Gentiles, Mohammedans, Buddhists, any who would acknowledge Christ as Lord. They would be brought into one man, one body, forming a new humankind. And on the final day, they all will be raised up in one man, Jesus.

Beloved, if you are in Christ, then you are a part of this body. And you’re also a part of the last-days work of the Lord. You see, this one new man is God’s interest on the earth today. As Christ was on earth, so will be all who are in his body. And just as Jesus was the revelation of the Father’s tender love for lost humankind, likewise today all who are in Christ are to manifest this same tender love.

The apostle Paul said we all are partakers of suffering (see 2 Corinthians 1:7). Paul says that the sufferings Christ's body is enduring are so intense they are "above strength [beyond endurance], insomuch that we despaired even of life...We had the sentence of death in ourselves" (1:8-9). Why is this so?

It is to become partakers in the consolation of the Lord's tender love and mercy. It is to experience comfort, hope and encouragement in these hard times, so we can offer comfort to suffering others who have lost all hope. The darker these days become, the more the world is going to need this kind of consolation, hope and love. People will need to see there are others who have been in the battle of their lives and were brought through. That is the testimony of the last-days church.

The fact is, with just one stroke God could end every battle, take down every world leader, destroy all works of the devil. He has at his command legions of angels to accomplish this. At one time he assigned a powerful angel to destroy in just a few hours' time 185,000 enemy troops who came against Israel. He called upon two angels to wipe out Sodom overnight. And he could do the same today. These same angels are still on call.

Jesus' disciples knew this, and they wanted him to call down fire from heaven upon unbelieving Samaritans. But Christ told them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of [or, is gripping you]" (Luke 9:55).

I ask you: in these fearful days, do you know what spirit you are of? What are today's headlines doing to your heart? Are you descending into the political mud-bath taking place in the media every day? Are you growing harder, more skeptical, more suspicious, even vengeful? Or is your heart becoming softer, more tender?

Is it possible for a righteous, praying, Bible-loving person to harbor unmerciful, hard thoughts? As I ask this question, I'm referring to all believers, as well as to anyone who may be in ministry, anyone who may prophesy, anyone who is full of zeal for the Lord, anyone who preaches holiness, anyone who is anointed by the Holy Spirit to do a work of God. Can such a person continue their godly works with an untouched area of hardness? Is it really possible to appear to be Christ-like and not have a soft heart?

Yes, it is true of many Christians. And it is an issue so important in God's eyes, he gave us an entire book in the Bible that deals with the matter. The book is Jonah, and everything I have been talking about in this message is addressed in it.

Most Bible scholars agree that Jonah is the author of this book. It is a godly man's unvarnished confession about his own heart issues. At the time, Jonah was an honored and revered prophet in Israel. We read of his encouraging prophecy that God was going to save Israel from bitter affliction by its enemies.

But Jonah also shows himself in this book to be a bigoted, selfish, disobedient servant of God. As the

author, Jonah makes no attempt to whitewash his experiences. The book is his attempt to warn every believer of their own biases and prejudices concerning the mercy of God.

You see, as a Jew, Jonah was raised to hate the nation of Nineveh. This arch-enemy to Israel was somewhat like Iran is to the U.S. today. Nineveh was bent on destroying Israel and stood as a constant threat to Israel's existence. It was also a society where unspeakable wickedness abounded. Jonah was trained to see Nineveh as a wicked, vile city, an enemy to his own nation.

Then Jonah was instructed by God, "Go to Nineveh and cry against its wickedness." The prophet was to warn the Ninevites that they had forty days from the time of his prophecy before judgment would arrive.

But Jonah didn't want to warn Nineveh. He argued with the Lord: "I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil [or, the wrath prophesied]" (Jonah 4:2).

By his action, Jonah was saying, "Lord, why should I preach to these people? They are our enemy. If anything, they should be destroyed. Yet, I know if these Ninevites repent at all, you're going to let them off. I'll end up looking like a fool! No one in Israel will ever listen to me again. And the Ninevites will laugh me out of their city. I'll become a world-renowned reproach. The word of my folly will reach every port."

So instead of preaching, Jonah went on the run. He boarded a ship that was headed in the opposite direction of Nineveh. It was an act that revealed his own bias and prejudice concerning God's mercy. Simply put, Jonah wasn't willing to see God's tender mercies extended to his enemy.

Many Christians today are just like Jonah in this way. This man believed in God's mercy toward his own country, Israel, as did other prophets. They all cried, "Lord, come and bless our land. Send your tender mercies upon Israel." Jonah did not extend the same loving mercy to the Ninevites. He couldn't see God's tender mercies for any nation that was set against Israel.

When the ship carrying Jonah came upon vicious, stormy weather, the prophet requested that the crew throw him into the sea. We're all familiar with the story at this point: "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah" (Jonah 1:17). A huge fish must have been trailing the ship and swallowed Jonah. For three days and nights, Jonah was in the belly of the whale, crying "out of the belly of hell" (2:2). He confessed, "This is God's doing. He has cast me into this place!"

Some readers might say, "I'm not like Jonah. I'm in a crisis, too, hurting as I never have in my lifetime. Day after day, I cry out of the belly of my own hell. I'm flooded by fears, and tempests compass me about. But I am no Jonah. I'm not running from God. I'm an obedient servant. And I will never say, 'God is doing this to me.'"

We may think of our testings as God's chastenings or as trials of our faith. Yet the fact remains, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalm 34:19). And we can be sure the Lord allows these things in his omniscient love for us: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6). Whatever we are going through, there is a divine purpose for it, and it is all happening according to God's tender mercies.

The older I get and the longer I walk with the Lord, the more sufferings I experience. Like Jonah, I believe I am seeing more clearly what God is trying to work out in me. It is the very same thing he was trying to accomplish in Jonah in the belly of his hell. Indeed, it's the same thing God is seeking to accomplish in all of our trials.

That is, the Lord was trying to soften Jonah's heart and make him wholly dependent on God. He wanted to have at his call a prophet who would hate sin and warn of God's coming wrath, yet who would be tender and merciful to all who repented. In short, God is seeking to pluck out of his last-days people all that remains of hardness and self-dependency.

So God decided to take Jonah into a situation in which no other person or power could help him. It was a place beyond the love or mercy of friends, family or prophets — a place of seeming death. In short, Jonah had to be stripped of all human hope. That's what the prophet describes when he writes, "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me" (Jonah 2:3). He's saying, in essence, "This is all beyond me. It's way over my head. Only a miracle can save me."

Then, once Jonah had come to such a place, God would pour out on him his most tender mercies. And he would renew his servant's calling and anoint him afresh.

You see, there has to be something of God's tender mercy in any servant who speaks prophetically. That is one of the lessons God wanted Jonah to learn. If any servant of God is going to make a prophetic utterance involving judgment, that word must come from a place of brokenness and tears. And it has to be delivered from a heart that says, in truth, "I would rather be made a fool in the world's eyes than for this word to come to pass."

For years I have been speaking of 1,000 fires coming to New York City. If this word truly is from God, then something of his mercy must be present in my heart as I deliver it. First, I have to be willing to believe it will never happen, because of God's tender mercies. And second, I have to be willing to be ridiculed, so God's mercy can be exalted.

As we pick up Jonah's story, we find him now preaching on the streets of Nineveh, in obedience to God. He cries out to those wicked people, "You have only forty days left. Then your city will be overthrown in judgment."

Soon after he prophesied, a wave of repentance swept over Nineveh. The Ninevites "(cried) mightily unto God...And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the

evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:8, 10). God spared Nineveh. He called off the destruction because they repented.

How did Jonah react to this turn of events? "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord...Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me" (4:1-3). Jonah was now in despair. What had happened? How could he react with anger over such an incredible manifestation of God's mercy?

You would think after all he had been through, Jonah might have prayed for Nineveh: "Lord, you showed me your tender mercies. You loved me when I was rebellious. Can't you do the same for this wicked city? Can't you spare the many children here? Won't you show them all the same mercy you had on me?"

But that's not what happened. Jonah had gone through all his trials without his heart being softened at all. And it happened because Jonah abused God's tender mercies toward himself. He took God's mercy for granted. He didn't allow it to register in his heart and thus to soften him toward others.

In writing this book, Jonah didn't hide the hideousness of his spiteful actions. His story is a confession, as if to say: "Can you believe I could still be so hard, so unfeeling and unforgiving, after all the unmerited loving kindness God showed to me? Take warning: do not forget God's mercies to you. I got angry at God because those who stood against me weren't being judged. I thought, 'They're getting away with it.'"

Has this attitude ever been in your heart? Has someone mistreated you, and you raged inside because you didn't see that person paying a price? Now, ask yourself: how many tender mercies have been extended to you? How many sins in your life has the Lord covered with his mercy and forgiveness? I tremble to think I could receive such incredible, tender mercies and not be merciful in turn.

Jonah didn't end his book with a victorious testimony. He closed by showing himself under a loving rebuke from the Lord, for his lack of tenderness toward others. Jonah was saying to the world, "I didn't learn my lesson. But I am still a work in progress."

We all are works in progress. And I'm convinced God wants to speak this lesson from Jonah to his people in these last days. Right now, every evil, fearful thing taking place on earth is designed by Satan to harden people's hearts. And God's great concern for his people through it all is this "heart issue" that Jonah addresses. While Islam and other religions grow increasingly hardened of heart, God is at work by his Spirit mellowing and strengthening the true body of Christ through pain.

That is a testimony to a cold, grieving world. We are able to say: "I have proven the Christ I serve to be merciful and kind. He has loved me through everything."

His love and mercy can be yours as well, no matter how deep your sin, no matter how hopeless things seem. He has tender mercies for you, to bring you through. □

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