
When God Sets His Heart on You

By David Wilkerson

December 26, 2006 Dearly Beloved:

MAY THE LORD CAUSE HIS FACE TO SHINE ON YOU.

I want to talk to you about “soul sickness.” It is caused by a flood of troubles coming upon you. Not just one problem, but one after another. King David cried, “Save me, O God, for waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire. I am come into deep waters, floods overflowing. I am weary of my crying” (Psalm 69:1–3).

Troubles came at David so powerfully, he thought he would collapse. He prayed, “Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am so distressed. I am wasting away from grief. My strength faileth, my soul and my belly” (Psalm 31:9).

Some might say, “I've known troubles, but not a flood of them. I can't relate to David's pain. I can't relate to Job's afflictions.” But I am speaking to those who are facing a flood of fears: Fear of losing a job. Fear about finances. Fear about marriage or children. Fear about world conditions.

Chat with your neighbors — listen as they express their heart sickness over the hell breaking out in schools, the politically correct messes foisted on kids, teaching that is so immoral and godless it sickens the soul.

I have been called a doomsday preacher. Some ask to be taken off my mailing list because they say I am too negative. But beloved, I can't help speaking about what I see and hear. Elderly people are living on starvation means. Parents grieve over children being drawn away by drug and alcohol-addicted friends. Many have mounting mortgage payments, troubled marriages, bills piling up. What are you facing in your life?

Let me show you the root cause of soul sickness. When the trouble goes on...and even gets worse...and the soul cries out to God for help...and there seems to be no answer...soul sickness is to know the Lord, to love him, to pray and even to shed tears, and still God does not seem to be there.

David said his trouble got so overwhelming, his “soul was cast down, I cannot even speak” — meaning, “I have cried so much, there are no tears left. All I can see now is despair in the days ahead.”

If you relate to this word at all, I have hopeful news for you. My words to you are simple, uncomplicated Biblical truths that can heal soul sickness:

Most important of all, keep on praying — even when the situation worsens. God is going to answer in his time, in ways you could not imagine. The hardest part of faith is the last half hour, just before the answer comes.

Even as important — do not get mad at God! Not ever! I see this happening to believers worldwide. All unbelief and all impatience imply that God has picked you out of the masses in the world and made you the object of cruelty and harassment. God forbid! He loves you through all your struggles. If he shuts his ear to your cries he would be a fraud — and he is not. He is your loving, forgiving, almighty, caring Father.

Shake off fear, because fear has torment. Rest in his promises. Things may change — your lifestyle may have to be simplified — but all things do work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose.

Look up! God will never fail you!

His bondservant,
DAVID WILKERSON

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December 26, 2006 Job asks, "What is man, that thou [God] shouldst magnify him? And that *thou shouldst set thine heart upon him?* And that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" (Job 7:17–18, my italics).

Hebrews 12:1 tells us that the world is encircled by a cloud of witnesses who are with Christ in glory. My question is, what does this great crowd bear witness to? And who is their witness meant for?

This cloud of witnesses speaks to our generation, by their lives and their words as recorded in Scripture. I believe they have three things to say to us:

1. They are witnesses that *God's heart is still set on saving this lost world*. There is no record in Scripture of God having forsaken this world. He is still at work, pouring out his Spirit on all flesh and moving on men and women in every nation.
2. They witness to us that *God's heart is still set on loving and preserving his church*. Even with rampant apostasies and backslidings, the Lord cherishes his body.
3. They witness to us that *God's heart is still set on every child of his*. The Lord will never leave a single servant of his behind, no matter how far that servant may have fallen.

1. What does this multitude of heavenly witnesses have to say to the present wicked world? We live in a generation that is far more wicked than Noah's. What can this cloud of witnesses say to a human race whose sins exceed even that of Sodom?

Our day is one of great prosperity. Our economy has been blessed, yet our society has become so immoral, violent and anti-God that even secularists bemoan how far we have fallen. Christians everywhere wonder why God has delayed his judgments on such a wicked society. They ask, "Lord, how can you allow such reproach to be heaped on your name? Your Word is literally being ripped out of our midst. How long will it continue? And how can you put up with the flood of sexual perversions? You destroyed Sodom for far less cause. How far will you let it go?"

We who love Christ may not understand why such gross evil is allowed to continue. But the cloud of heavenly witnesses understands. They don't question the mercy and patience that God has shown.

The apostle Paul is among that cloud of witnesses, and he bears witness to God's unlimited love for even "the chiefest of sinners." Paul's life and writings tell us that he cursed the name of Christ. He

was a terrorist, hunting down God's people and dragging them off to be jailed or killed. But he did it all in ignorance.

Paul would say to us that God is being patient with this present generation because there are many who are like he was, people who sin in ignorance. Terrorists are trained from childhood to hate, just as Paul was, and that hatred is all they've ever known. They haven't been exposed to the gospel. I tell you, like Paul, there are many apostles and evangelists who'll come from among the most evil of men.

The apostle Peter is also among this cloud of witnesses, and he too understands why God is so patient. Peter's life and writings remind us that he cursed Jesus, swearing he never knew him. God withholds his judgment because there are multitudes still who curse and deny him, just as Peter did. They're backslidden and in need of mercy. And the Lord won't give up on them, just as he never gave up on Peter. There are many like him whom Christ still prays for.

As I consider this cloud of witnesses, I see the faces of former drug addicts and alcoholics, former prostitutes and homosexuals, former gangsters and pushers, former murderers and wife-beaters, former infidels and pornography addicts — multitudes whom society had given up on. They all repented and died in the arms of Jesus, and now they are witnesses to the mercy and patience of a loving Father.

I believe all of these would say, in one unified witness, that Jesus didn't judge them before they received his mercy. God withheld judgments that should have fallen on them. He delays his wrath, not willing that any be lost in hopelessness or despair. And God has not changed in his attitude of hope for this world.

The depraved world today is abusing God's patience. Since Christ came to this world, humankind has waxed worse and worse, to the point that the cup of iniquity now seems to be overflowing. You may wonder as I do how God can show such incredible mercy, such enduring patience. How can he delay his judgment against sin for so long? Why does he allow evil societies to continue dishonoring his name and provoking him in such perverse ways?

It can't be that God wants to see the wicked descend into greater perversity so he could pour out even greater wrath on them. If that were so, by now we all would be history. No, God isn't waiting to judge so he can avenge his trampled glory.

Some people wonder if that is all God has in mind, to bring judgment on a sinful world. God forbid. Like many Christians, at times I have been all too ready to turn this wicked world over to judgment. Many believers are understandably grieved over the pride and audacity of those who continually mock the Lord. But it is different for our heavenly Father. He doesn't yearn to judge but to redeem.

Peter writes, "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store,

reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition [destruction] of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7). Yes, there is stored up a consuming fire, reserved for an hour when the Lord will release it upon sinful men. But Peter reminds us that God doesn’t measure time the same way we do. A thousand years to him is as a twenty-four-hour day to us: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (3:9).

So, what are we to make of these things? Jesus tells us, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). The same is true for us. If we see that everything in this world will be burned...that it is now the midnight hour...that the fire of judgment is fast approaching...that it is still a day for mercy, forgiveness and salvation...then we’re to do the work we have been commanded: to go into all the world proclaiming Christ.

God still loves this mad, immoral, unthankful world. May he help us to love the lost as he does. And may we pray to have the patience and love he is showing the world right now.

2. God still loves his church, blemishes and all, in spite of a flood of false teachers and foolishness in the pulpit. The true church of Jesus Christ is the apple of the Lord’s eye. Yet from the very beginning, his church has experienced apostasies and false teachers. The earliest churches — those apostolic bodies founded by Paul and the apostles — had the full counsel of God taught to them. Nothing “profitable to growth and steadfastness” was withheld from Christ’s followers. They were given truth, not only in word but in demonstration and power of the Holy Ghost.

Consider the church at Corinth. That congregation was planted by Paul and watered by Apollos, the great evangelist. If ever a body was “fully instructed,” it was the Corinthians. Yet within five or six years — even before Paul wrote his first epistle to them — this same church fell deeply into false doctrine. They had come under a subtle, bewitching attack, so that they received teaching which denied the resurrection of the dead. This implies that Christ’s own sacrificial death and resurrection were annulled.

Paul explained this when he wrote to them: “If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

“Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished” (1 Corinthians 15:12–18). What a blasphemous error had crept into the church.

The Galatian church was also planted by Paul. In these believers’ eyes, Paul was like an angel sent to

them, and they received his doctrine with great joy. They valued the apostle so highly that they claimed to be willing to “pluck out their eyes” for him.

Then suddenly, shockingly, these same grateful believers fell away from the truth Paul had taught about justification. Like the Corinthians, they had wandered from sound teaching and come under a “bewitching spell” cast on them by false teachers. They embraced a heresy that declared justification came by works rather than faith.

Dumbfounded, Paul wrote to them, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently [clearly] set forth, crucified among you?” (Galatians 3:1). He was asking, in essence:

“What is this strange fascination you have, this spiritual witchcraft that has come upon you so suddenly? You were trained by godly men who wept over you as they taught you sound doctrine. Yet, in so short a time you have renounced that doctrine and now embrace a covetous, damning gospel. What has happened to you? What did you do with the pure gospel teaching you received? You’ve thrust it aside to embrace a flattering message that appeals to your flesh.”

I’ve known Christians who for years attended a solid, Bible-based church where they were given the full counsel of God regularly. They were taken into the heavens by anointed preaching, they were shown the realities of hell, and their consciences were pressed by God’s Word. Nothing of the gospel was held back from them, and they matured in faith. They simply couldn’t get enough of the pure Word they heard.

But then someone gave them a teaching tape by some popular preacher, or they went to the preacher’s meeting “out of curiosity.” What they heard sounded so right, and 95 percent of it was indeed truth. But they didn’t discern the 5 percent that was poison — doctrine that appealed to their flesh, subtly undermining the biblical reality of Christ. Soon they were drugged by what they heard, and their minds became hooked on a gospel that tickled their flesh.

Unbelievably, some prosperity preachers are now teaching that Jesus was rich. They twist the Scriptures to say he must have had wealth in order to support his disciples. They claim his riches required a treasurer (Judas) and that no carpenter of that time was without a house he had built for himself. Incredibly, Christians are swallowing this fallacy.

You may wonder how devoted, Bible-believing Christians could suddenly discount years of solid teaching. Where is their discernment? Why don’t they recall the solid food they’ve been taught?

Paul clearly warns that such enticing doctrines would come: “After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29). Peter also cautioned that false teachers would appear on the scene, bringing “damnable heresies” (2 Peter 2:1).

Paul warned Timothy that a time was coming when some of God's people "will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables [so-called mystical truths]" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

History records that this happened just as Paul had predicted. After the apostles died — and the generation that sat under their teaching had passed away — a conspiracy of wicked error flooded the church. Believers were seduced by strange doctrines, and science and philosophy eroded the truth of Christ's gospel.

You may know of such corrupt churches. Entire denominations today debunk the Virgin Birth and deny Christ's divinity. A growing number of bishops and preachers are promoting homosexuality and same-sex marriages. These churches are apostate, twice dead.

Yet these organizations have nothing to do with the true church of Jesus Christ. Of them, Christ will say, "I knew ye not." Some people in these "Ichabod" organizations claim to love the Lord, but if they did they would have nothing to do with that church and would leave rather than partake in any apostasy.

Consider what Paul said of the purity of Christ's church: "Christ...loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle...but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

I ask you: what teacher of Christ's gospel could be so blind as to imagine Christ presenting to the Father a bride dressed in filthy, stained garments? Can you picture Jesus introducing a bride who's adorned with unthinkable abominations? "Here, Father, is my bride, made up of believers whose minds are on the things of this world. They're lovers of money, deceived by merchandising false prophets." No! I don't believe even the devil could accept such a delusion.

Yet God's great concern is not apostate churches. Even apostasies will not be able to kill or destroy the church of Christ. In spite of these problems, God has everything under control, and his mystical, invisible, overcoming church is not dying. Rather, the river of the Holy Spirit is flowing into the "dead sea" of apostate churches, exposing iniquity and lukewarmness. And it's causing life to spring up.

Those who are turning from apostasy may be but a remnant. Nevertheless, Jesus has declared: "The fields are ripe for harvest. And there is still time for laborers to go forth." Nowhere in the Bible does it say that the Holy Spirit has fled the scene, leaving behind a withered harvest. God's Spirit is still at work, convicting, wooing and drawing the lost to Christ, including those in apostasy.

The cloud of heavenly witnesses would say to us not to look for judgment, not to focus on "holding the fort." It is still the day of the Holy Spirit, who is waiting to fill every willing vessel. Pray the Lord of the

harvest will raise up workers!

3. God has his heart set on every member of his body on earth. What does the great cloud of witnesses have to say to you and me? What does Scripture tell us is their message to fellow overcomers in the body of Christ? Simply this: "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers" (1 Peter 3:12).

In the apostles' time, Christ-hating powers tried to shut them down. These powers cursed the Savior and called his resurrection a fraud. They even made laws forbidding people to speak his name and cast them in jail when they did. But even the iron bars couldn't hold the apostles. The Lord sent his angel to release them (see Acts 5:18–32).

Acts tells us, "The high priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine" (5:27–28). But, filled with the Holy Ghost, the apostles immediately went back to the temple, where they continued giving people the words of life. The Spirit had told them to go and preach Jesus with fresh fire and power. They were to ignore those regulations and allow nothing to hinder the pure gospel of the resurrected Christ.

In Europe, a movement is gaining force that seeks to outlaw all preaching about homosexuality or any other sexual promiscuity. It is an attempt to shut Christ out of society first and eventually in churches. (When you deny Jesus' Word, you deny his person.) For many European ministers, speaking out on sexual sin can mean a fine and jail time. Meanwhile, here in the U.S. the tide is also turning to an anti-Christ agenda.

Again, we turn to the great cloud of witnesses. How did Peter and the apostles answer their persecutors? "(They) answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.... And we are his witnesses of these things [the Resurrection and Ascension]; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:29, 32).

The household of Cornelius is also among this cloud of witnesses who have something to say to us. Here is Cornelius' testimony from the biblical record: "Peter came to us preaching Jesus. He said he had personally witnessed the Lord's resurrected body and had even touched him. He told us Christ was shown openly to the people, with over 500 witnessing him after his resurrection" (see Acts 10:34–41).

Peter then told Cornelius' household, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (10:43–44). Because of Peter's preaching, Cornelius' household knew freedom from sin.

Cornelius' testimony says to every child of God today: if you want the Holy Spirit to come upon you,

your family, your ministry, then preach and believe in Christ's forgiveness. And trust it in your personal life. When Peter preached forgiveness, those in Cornelius' household believed it, and the Holy Spirit fell on them.

I don't believe this multitude of heavenly witnesses would speak to us about holding to complicated theologies or doctrines. Consider the voices of other witnesses, speaking to us the simplicity of truth:

- The author of Hebrews witnesses to us that we are to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. We are to keep preaching the victory of the cross, endure the accusations of sinners against us, and lay aside our besetting sin, running with patience the race set before us (see Hebrews 12:1-2).

- King David witnesses to us that we can trust in the Lord's forgiveness, and he won't remove his Holy Spirit from us. David committed murder and was an adulterer and a liar. But he repented, and the Father would not let him go because he had set his heart on David. He gave David a new heart, making him a witness to the Lord's abundant forgiveness. Today, we New Testament believers have a blood covering and mercies that David could only dream of.

- Peter witnesses to us that he sinned against the greatest light a man could ever have. This disciple walked in Jesus' presence, he touched the Lord, he received his calling from Christ personally. Jesus was Peter's friend as well as his Lord. Yet Peter cursed him, sinning against warnings that came from Christ's very lips. Peter wondered if he could ever look in his Savior's face again.

- This man could have lived in guilt and condemnation, but God set his heart on him. Peter was told to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith. Likewise, we are to take our sin and give it up to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. We are to rise up and move on, no matter what sin we may have committed. Jesus has removed our iniquity as far as the east is from the west.

- Paul would tell us not to fear our afflictions. Jesus suffered every day of his ministry, and he died in suffering. And when Christ called Paul to preach the gospel, he showed him how many great afflictions awaited him. Throughout his years in ministry, Paul was indeed afflicted. Yet afflictions prove that God has set his heart on you. "Let no man be moved (or shaken) by these afflictions: for you know we are appointed thereunto" (1 Thessalonians 3:3).

And so we return to Job's witness: "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? And that *thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?* And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" (Job 7:17–18, my italics).

When God sets his heart on you, you will be tried often. But the fact is, the longer and harder your affliction, the more deeply God has set his heart on you, to show you his love and care. That is the witness of Paul's life, and indeed, of Jesus' life. The enemy may come against you, but our Lord has raised up a standard against him. We find absolute rest in Jesus.

All of these voices from that great cloud of witnesses tell us so. Do I hear a witness in your spirit?

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