
Love Your Way to Freedom

By David Wilkerson

May 1, 1983 A beautiful young couple, both spiritual children of mine, recently fell into sin and were forced to resign their ministry. For nearly a week they hid away in a secluded motel room, weeping, anguished and despairing of life. They felt abandoned by God, betrayed by friends, and useless to themselves and the kingdom of God.

The young minister had nearly convinced himself that suicide was the only way out. He was overcome with guilt and grief - wondering if God could ever forgive him for bringing reproach on His name. By the time they called me, they were completely swallowed up by despair. I could hardly control my emotions when she asked, "David, do you still love us? We failed God - we failed you, and my husband is wanting to take his life. But if you can assure him you still love him, it will save his life."

Love him? Love them? Oh, how my heart ached for them. I had always loved them, but now in their hurt I loved them even more. They are now with me, being restored to spiritual and physical health.

Yet my love for them could not heal them. They were still wounded inwardly. Even though they knew in their hearts that God had to move against them because of sin and continued disobedience, still it hurt them deeply to be suddenly cast aside - unemployed, unneeded, unwelcome. Friends, who sincerely thought they were defending God's holiness, asked them never to come back.

The suddenness of it all, the harshness, the apparent lack of compassion, left them full of bitterness and resentment. The Holy Spirit revealed to me that the young minister's sin of returning to heroin was not the problem. Drug abuse was the fruit of something much more grievous in the sight of God - and that was bitterness.

All the counseling in the world cannot help a person held in the grip of bitterness. Prayer cannot break it. Bible study cannot in itself cure it. The root of bitterness must first be recognized, then plucked out. And this young fallen minister knew he could never be restored until all his hatred and resentment was gone.

The word that came to me for him was simply this - "Son, you can love your way back to freedom." I implored him to fall on his knees - immediately - and call on God for supernatural power to love and forgive everyone he was bitter against. The Holy Spirit lovingly warned that he must quickly forgive, and learn to love those he considered enemies - or lose his ministry and his marriage. Unless the bitterness was plucked out, on the spot, he could end up divorced, back on the streets as a helpless junkie.

What a joy to see him fall on his knees, with his dear wife at his side, and cry out to God for supernatural power to love and forgive all whom he had grudges against. It had built up in him over a period of seven years, and now it came gushing out in torrents of tearful repentance and godly sorrow. He hugged me, as the joy of the Lord flooded back into his being. Their marriage experienced a tremendous healing as the wall of bitterness crumbled.

But still the healing was not complete. The freedom was not yet full and final. Restitution had to be made. Willingly, he called everyone he had ever been bitter against. In true humility, he asked their forgiveness and told them he would for this time on love and pray for them. With each call, his spirit was quickened. He was amazed by their response. They still wanted his friendship. They freely forgave and offered their continued love and support.

The healing continues, as both of them learn to love their way back to freedom. What an unnecessary burden they had carried for so long. And all that time, glorious, sweet freedom and victory could have been theirs - had they only understood the power of love.

I have learned some important lessons observing God's healing work in the lives of this restored couple. I can see more clearly now why Paul, the apostle, spoke so eloquently about being "rooted and grounded in love." Also, how love is the goal of the Law and the commandments. Christ himself told us that all the Law and the prophets hinge on loving God completely, and our neighbor as ourselves. More importantly:

We must love our way back to obedience! Sooner or later this generation must come to realize that most of our troubles are brought upon ourselves as a result of our own disobedience. We are blind to the grief our sins bring to the heart of God. Our view of sin is too flippant and light, and we still don't understand that our disobedience is a result of not truly loving Christ.

Jesus makes it so clear that we could obey Him if we loved him. It is because our love for Christ has grown cold that we go on sinning and disobeying. When we do get caught in the web of our sins, we are more concerned about our reputation than how much we have wounded the Savior. Instead of grieving over the way our disobedience broke His heart, we worry about what others will think of us. How selfish.

The Holy Spirit has been helping me love my way to freedom by showing me critical realities I must deal with.

I - Misery and trouble are most often the fruits of disobedience. Think of all the hurting people in the land. Marriages are crumbling, causing terrible misery and pain to so many involved. Multitudes are living under a cloud of guilt and despair. There are Christians today whose lives are flooded with trouble and sorrow. Never have there been such heartbreak, emptiness, loneliness, and rejection. Only God knows how many Christians cry themselves to sleep, or who can't sleep due to depression, anxiety, loneliness, and despair.

Even the ministry is hurting. Pastors and evangelists are suffering "burnout". They confess to feelings of weariness and spiritual dryness. Faber describes their dilemma best. He said of certain ministers - "They run around, they run down, then they want to run away."

Thank God, many of them are returning to the prayer closet, back to obedience and holiness. But for others, their troubles and hurts are so great they would run from it all, if they could.

What's causing all this misery and trouble? Is it just the times we are living in, or is it something much deeper?

There are two reasons for the prevailing flood of misery and trouble. It is possible Satan is "dumping" on those most holy and precious in God's kingdom. The scripture warns, "...the adulteress (Satan) hunts the precious life..." (Prov. 6:26)

A Christian's holiness and purity can attract Satan and cause him to persecute and rail against them. He can taunt the righteous, and raise up persecutors to afflict them. Satan rose up against devout Job and the God-consumed apostle, Paul. Yes, it is possible to suffer for righteousness sake.

But most often it is just the opposite. Our disobedience forces God to raise up adversaries to teach us the terrible wages of sin. God in His love for us must take drastic action to keep us from destroying ourselves. God never acts through vengeance, but always through love. But oh, how severe it can be at times! And, we had better understand this truth, or end up given over to our sins.

Any student of the Old Testament can readily see how quickly God tribulates those who persist in disobedience. King Solomon had decades of peace and prosperity while obeying God. Then he disobeys, falls into sin, and the Lord suddenly raises up adversaries against him. One of the wisest, most prosperous men of all times disobeys and brings on himself misery and grief.

- "And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord..." (1 Kings 11:6)
- "And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the Lord...and kept not which the Lord commanded..." (1 Kings 11:9,10)
- "...the Lord said...forasmuch as you kept not my covenant...I will surely rend the kingdom from you, and will give it to another..." (1 Kings 11:11)
- "And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad, the Edomite..." (1 Kings 11:14)
- "...And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah...and he was an adversary all the (rest of the) days of Solomon..." (1 Kings 11:23,25)

Think of it! When Solomon obeys God, walking humbly and holy before him - all is well. There is peace, there are no enemies that can rise up and touch him. Then his heart is seduced, he sins, he settles into a lifestyle of indulgence and disobedience - and suddenly, adversaries appear. Wicked enemies, who abhorred God's people, began to persecute and hassle Solomon and all who were around him.

Take note - "God stirred them up", arousing them to come against his disobedient servant. When Solomon did that which was right, God made all his enemies to be at peace with him. He never repented apparently. He had become too confirmed in his disobedient ways, and spent the rest of his life fighting off all the enemies God brought against him.

So it was with Jeroboam, Rehoboam, Abijam, Nadab, Baasha, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Jehoram - and many other disobedient, wicked kings who "provoked the Lord God of Israel with their vanities (disobedient ways)" (1 Kings 16:13).

When the kings were obedient and righteous, God prospered their kingdoms and gave them only peace and rest. Yet without exception, all who disobeyed lived in constant fear and were always terrified by powerful enemies.

I have read and reread the tragic stories of all those kings who "did evil in the eyes of the Lord", and a holy fear gripped my heart. I know it to be a fact that much of my own hurt and trouble over the past years was caused by my own disobedience. There were things I knew God had dealt with in me - things I knew were wrong - things I should have surrendered and forsaken - yet I continued in disobedience, thinking I had no power to resist. And, I suffered the terrible consequences of a weak heart, fear, spiritual dryness, anxiety and trouble on every side. God seemed to be saying, "Since you will not surrender willingly, and forsake all that grieves Me, then I must chastise you, in love, so that you will understand my severity against sin, and yield...even if it be through godly fear."

The young couple who lost their ministry went along happily for years, blessed, prospered, and

respected. They sinned and quickly brought down upon themselves tragedy and sorrow.

Note: The Bible says it rains on the just and the unjust. You may be unemployed or troubled otherwise - a victim of hard times. Still, loving trust and obedience will soon turn your trouble into victory. God's very reputation is at stake - He cannot lie!

II - Obedience opens the floodgates of all the glory and spiritual riches of Christ! It was said of Christ that He endured and was obedient to His heavenly Father, not because of fear, but because of the joy that was set before Him. He laid aside all weights, He ran the race with patience, He endured shame, He never fainted or wearied in His mind, because He saw the glorious rewards of obedience. Unspeakable Joy! Holy peace! Rest! Freedom! Fullness! Revelation!!

Saints of God - shouldn't we be getting weary of all the trouble and hurt - enough so that we would begin to hunger after the glorious riches promised in Christ? Oh, beloved, fear is not the best motive toward obedience - Love is! Divine threats were finally ignored by the children of Israel. Even God's audible voice, His frightful thunder and awesome presence, could not keep disobedient Israelites from dancing around the golden calf. Only a deep, abiding love for God could have kept them from disobeying.

It is sweet surrender to the will of God that opens the heavens to us. It is the yielding of every sin, every act of disobedience, that allows us the revelation of who Christ really is. The scripture says, "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" (1 John 3:6)

Could it be possible that we, through living in disobedience, no longer know Him? Could it be that we go on indulging our lusts because we have never had a revelation of Christ, His hatred of sin, His absolute holiness, His glory and mercy? In plain language, "He who lives in disobedience has never truly seen Christ or every really known Him."

Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will show myself to him..." (John 14:21)

What greater reward for loving obedience could we want other than having Christ reveal Himself to us? What a simple formula for such a great revelation. "Love Me enough to obey Me - I will then love you and show you who I am!" Read all you can about Him, study His nature, His historical background - but you will never get to know Him until you do such a simple, basic thing as obeying Him completely in all things.

Jesus said of Nathanael, "...behold and Israelite in whom there is no deceit...the heavens shall be opened to you..." (John 1:47-51).

The very moment we surrender, and commit ourselves to absolute obedience, a marvelous healing power is released in our inner man. No more dread of God, or hell, or retribution. No more fear of what men can do to us. Instead of hurt, pain, trouble and anguish - the Spirit of God begins to flood us with new light, new hope, great joy, glorious peace and abounding faith.

We are ready to look God and the world in the eye and cry aloud - I am clean! His blood cleansed me. His cross crucified my old nature. I choose now to obey! I choose to forsake all idols and by faith pull down all satanic strongholds. I want God's best - the revelation of Himself.

Conclusion: I am convinced that most Christians know exactly where their problem lies. They know what God had been saying to them. They know what they should and must do. God long ago put his finger on their disobedience, and commanded them to forsake sin and yield.

The spirit's message to the church in this midnight hour is - OBEDIENCE! Through obedience He wants us to come into fullness, peace, and rest. And only through love can we obey and find such freedom.

On May 3, 1982, at 3:30 in the morning the Holy Spirit gave me the following message. It is from my diary, but it may be for you also (from Psalms 19:7-14).

1. Obey God at all costs, surrender all dreams and plans (v. 7).
2. His testimonies (warnings) are sure (v. 7).
3. By these you are being warned (v. 11).
4. Your sins are errors God cannot permit (v. 12).
5. You can be cleansed from all secret sins (v. 12).
6. Sin must no longer have dominion over you (v. 13).
7. Obedience will bring you a great reward (v. 11).
8. All you do and say will then be upright and acceptable to God (v. 13, 14).
9. He will become your strength (v. 14).
10. God will enlighten your eyes, making you wise in His ways (v. 8).

We are not justified by obedience, but only by grace. Obedience is not merit, but a loving response to God's mercy. Obedience simply prepares us to receive the full revelation of all that Christ can be in and through us. It is something we do to show our love and gratitude for Christ's atoning work.

A commitment to total obedience has wrought a great healing in me. The spiritual rewards have been so glorious, I want everyone to experience this loving way to freedom.

"But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good (obeys)..." (Romans 2:8-10).