
The Making of a Man of God

By David Wilkerson

February 1, 2010 Dearly Beloved:

“I’M SORRY, I’M SORRY! I’M REALLY SORRY!”

“Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

I believe in repentance for sin. I believe in godly sorrow for sin. I believe in the absolute forgiveness of all sins confessed and forsaken. Most Christians believe we can come humbly to the throne of God with our burden of sin and pray, “Lord, forgive me. I’m sorry — I repent.” And we go our way seemingly assured we really are forgiven.

Yet too often many believers keep replaying past sins and failures and fall back into condemnation and guilt. That is when they go to the Lord and start confessing the same sins over and again, as if the first heartfelt confession did not take. With all the feelings and tears they can muster, they cry, “Lord, I’m so very sorry! Please forgive me.”

I hear from Christians who tell me they can’t believe they’re truly forgiven because their sin was so hideous, so awful, a sin against so much light. They cannot accept forgiveness. So they live with constant sorrow.

This kind of “sorry” demeans the grace and mercy of Christ. It is putting trust in a fleshly frame of mind rather than the finished work of Christ’s cleansing blood. The first time you said, “I’m sorry, Lord — I repent. I believe in the power of Christ’s blood to cleanse me” — you were wholly, immediately forgiven. Your sins were cast into the depths of the sea, never to be reminded of them again.

It is time to trust the Lord’s total victory of the Cross and not our own measure of sorrow. It is time to quit looking back and instead begin to glory and rest in unmerited forgiveness. God delights in his children; he is not mad at you.

Like David, our sinful past ought to humble us and create in us contriteness. David’s sin was always before his eyes, but his soul rested in God’s mercy and tender loving kindness.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psalm 32:1–2).

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In Christ, DAVID WILKERSON

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Newsletter: The Making of a Man of God

February 1, 2010 I want to talk to you about three men whom God used mightily — and how he used failure to produce godliness in them.

Today we hear so much talk about success and how people obtain it. Success in biblical terms is vastly different. As we consider those whom God used to stir their generations, we discover that the elements he used to shape them were torment, pain, sorrow and failure.

Consider godly Job. Here was a man who failed in his *motives*. Job was proud of his own goodness, saying, “I have never harmed anyone. I have lived righteously.” Indeed, as we read through this book, we wonder how God could have such high regard for so proud a man. Even though Job was godly, avoiding evil, he was clearly convinced of his own righteousness.

Next, consider David. Here was a man who failed in his *morals*, yet he still became a great man of God. Generations have been baffled by David’s actions. How could a man so bold in godliness fail in such blatant immorality? This king ended up groveling in the dust. How could someone who fell so far end up as Scripture says “a man after God’s own heart”?

Finally, consider Peter. Here was a man who failed in his *mission*. Peter had a vision and a calling; indeed, he was the one person Christ entrusted with the keys to his kingdom. Yet this same man ended up weeping on a hillside, having cursed and rejected the Christ he loved. In spite of so great a failure, Peter became a reconstructed man who served as God’s spokesman at Pentecost, when the New Testament church was birthed.

What are the forces that go into the making of a man or woman of God? What do all followers of Jesus have in common? If we want God’s touch in our lives, what inner struggles do we all face? And what are the forces and pressures that God uses to produce righteousness in us? We dare not pray, “Use me, Jesus,” or, “Lord, put your hand on me,” unless we are willing to face what will surely come.

I have read many biographies of missionaries, ranging from contemporary times to ancient history. You would think these precious people, so used of God, would have stories of constant love, power and joy. Not so. Their stories are marked by heartache, discouragement, even treachery like Jacob’s. Theirs are stories not of adventure but of tears. We read of worn down saints who cry themselves to sleep at night, despairing souls who cry out, “I am so inclined to sin! I’m inconsistent, always up and down. How can God ever use me?”

If we are genuine in our desire to know the forces that produce godliness, we must go to the Garden of Calvary — in short, to Jesus, our example. All the forces that were arrayed against Job were also there at Gethsemane, arrayed against Christ. Likewise, the fierce tempter who sought out David’s heart on the rooftop is the same tempter who sought out Jesus on the temple pinnacle to destroy him. And all the forces of torment that plagued Peter’s soul were also at Gethsemane, battling with our Savior.

Understand clearly: Christ was touched by all the feelings of our infirmities. There is no trial we face that he did not face.

To be a servant of God we must at some point be served a cup of pain. To every true man or woman of God there will come a cup of pain. Consider Christ's prayer in the garden: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

Jesus' entire ministry had been doing the will of his Father. Indeed, for three years everything he did pointed toward Calvary. Now, at Gethsemane, whatever was in the cup Jesus drank caused him to sweat great drops of blood. He cried out in effect, "Oh, God, if it is possible at all, relieve me of this burden. It's too heavy for me. I would rather let it pass."

When Job was served his cup of pain, he cried out, "I am so pained, I can't see my way. I have bathed my sores in tears." When David drank his cup of pain, his couch became a bed of tears. He said, "My breast and bones are consumed with pain." I hear in both men's voices Jesus' own words: "Master, if it is at all possible, let this cup of pain depart from me."

I don't know what your cup of pain may be. Some Christians have prayed for years to be delivered from theirs. Make no mistake, I believe in healing. Yet I also believe in *healing afflictions*. David testified, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psalm 119:67).

We cannot let ourselves think that every pain or trial is an attack of the devil. Nor can we think that these trials mean we have sin in our lives and that God is judging us. David tells us differently: If he had not been afflicted, he wouldn't have sought the Lord.

So, you want to be a man or woman of God? You want the hand of the Lord on you? I tell you, you are going to be served a cup of pain. You will lie in a bed of tears. You'll weep not so much at physical pain but at something much worse than that. I'm speaking of the pain of being bruised and rejected by friends. It is the pain of parents when children trample their hearts and become strangers to them. It is the pain between a husband and wife when brick walls are built up between them.

Oh, the tragic turmoil that comes, the restless, sleepless nights — knowing that God is real, that you are walking in his Spirit, that you are loving Jesus with all that is in you...and yet you are forced to drink a cup of pain.

We cannot run from this cup. We cannot be fooled into thinking following Jesus is only happiness. Scripture does say our approach to life should be to "count it all joy." Yet it also says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Even though God has promised to deliver us from our afflictions, it still pains us deeply to go through them.

Peter tried to drive away affliction in his flesh. He wielded a sword at Gethsemane, telling Jesus in effect, "Master, you don't have to go through this. I'll keep them at bay while you make your escape."

Many Christians today have the same attitude. They take sword in hand to try to turn away afflictions, saying, "I don't have to face this. My God is a good God!"

I believe God is faithful. But Jesus tells us we cannot run from our cup of pain. He commanded Peter, "Put up your sword. That is not my Father's way. Live by your sword and you will die by it." Then he stated, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

When you trust the One who is serving you this cup — when you see his purpose behind your suffering — then you are able to drink it. It may burn, sear and scar you, but don't be afraid, for your Father holds the cup. You are not drinking death but life!

The servant of God will also endure a night of confusion. Jesus said at Gethsemane, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). Can you imagine the very Son of God enduring a night of confusion? Didn't he know he was about to claim all victory over hell and death? Didn't he have an innate sense of guidance and destiny, that the Father was with him? He had to see in his prophetic eye he would face this hour. In fact, he had told the disciples, "I will not be with you for long."

It has been said by generations of Christians that the hardest part of faith is the last half hour. I want to add a word here that the night of confusion always comes just before the victory, just before the darkness breaks and light begins to dawn. In other words: Just before all power of Satan is broken, you will face a devastating night of confusion.

In that hour, it will seem to you as if all sense of guidance and purpose are gone. The sense of God's Spirit you once relied on will seem to have evaporated. Job made this clear when he said, "I turn to the right, and he is not there. I turn to the left, and he is not there. If the Lord is at work, I cannot perceive it."

David cried during his night of confusion, "I am overwhelmed by darkness. My eye is as blackness!" On Peter's night of confusion, he was provoked to curse the Master. His cry was essentially that of many Christians today: "Why me?"

Job had the same feeling as Peter. He declared, "I haven't trusted in the arm of the flesh. And I haven't hidden my transgressions. I've been honest; I have kept my integrity. So, why me? Why do I have to face this confusion? Why should I have to suffer?"

He speaks for many believers today, who cry, "Lord, I haven't cheated anybody. I avoid dishonesty of any kind. So, where is your guidance? Why this night of confusion?"

Picture David, the mighty king of a mighty nation, as the prophet Nathan confronted him. Can you imagine the terror David felt as his sin was exposed? Suddenly, David didn't recognize the man who had done the wicked things Nathan named. Indeed, David wrote three beautiful Psalms about this

night of confusion, grappling with why he had committed such foolish acts. He could only say, "It is too hard for me to grasp. My sin has overwhelmed me. Oh, why me?"

Many in Christ's body face moral issues like David's. In their night of confusion they wonder, "God, why me? My heart was searching after you when my sin overwhelmed me. My soul is plagued by it all. I don't understand."

Don't think for a moment that someone who has been used mightily by God has the answers. I know what it is like to face that divine silence in a night of confusion. I know what it feels like to walk through a season of confusion, with no apparent guidance. All my previous patterns of guidance and discernment were useless. I simply couldn't see my way. I was reduced to this cry: "Lord, what has happened? I don't know which way to go."

We all will face that night. Yet, thank God, it is a season that will pass. The Lord desires to make our path clear.

Finally, the servant of God will endure an hour of isolation. Jesus cried at Gethsemane, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" What incredible words to hear coming from the lips of Jesus, the Son of God. We hear similar words from Job, who said, "God has become cruel to me." Likewise, David asked, "Has God forgotten his mercies? Has he taken them away from me?" And Peter, isolating himself by the fire outside the Sanhedrin, said bitterly, "I don't know the man!"

The truth is, in an hour of isolation there is no friend who understands what you're going through. It appears God has hidden his face from you. You may ask, "Is it really possible for God to lift his hand and hide his face from his beloved ones for a season?" Scripture answers, "God hid from him that he may prove him and try him to find out all that was in his heart."

I can honestly say Jesus has never been more real to me. Yet no terror can compare to that which plagues you when heaven is as brass to your prayers. In those moments there is only fear and emptiness. Your heart cries out, "Oh, God, where are you?"

Does this sound strange to you? Have you never faced this crisis in your life? Then you have never been to Gethsemane. God said of himself in that dark hour, "In just a moment of wrath I hid myself." Yet he also promised, "I will turn to thee in tender loving mercies." And so he will do with us, his children, extending to us his mercy in our times of isolation.

What has resulted for those servants who have endured the cup of pain, the night of confusion, the hour of isolation? Job concluded in his hour of isolation, "The Lord knows the path that I take. And when he has finished trying me, I will come forth as gold, because I trust in him."

David, in his night of confusion, declared, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever! I will raise my voice in praise to him."

At Pentecost, Peter rose above his failure to deliver a sermon that brought thousands into the kingdom in a single hour. This was the apostle whom Jesus chose to declare to the world, "What you are seeing is that which was promised by the prophet Joel."

We know that all of these men were dedicated servants of God. The Lord acknowledged Job's righteousness...he handpicked David from among his brethren...and Jesus himself pointed to Peter and told him, "Come, follow me." Yet all of these beloved, chosen servants experienced great testings beyond their human limits.

I think of a line from an old gospel song, which says, "Standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find Jesus." Beloved, my battle is not in my home. I love my wife and I have wonderful children and grandchildren. My battle is not with friends; I have thousands around the world who I know appreciate me. Nor is my battle with faith; I have never loved the Lord more than I do now. I have never desired Jesus more in all of my life.

Let me tell you where my battle lies. The more I pray, "Lord, use me," the more I feel the enemy's forces arrayed against me. The more I pray for people to be won to Jesus — the more I struggle in prayer and faithful witness for people's souls — the more I feel myself being crushed as Jesus was. And I cry all the more, "Oh, Lord, that I had wings to fly. Then I would escape this cup of pain, this trial of my soul. God, I can't endure it!"

Yet like Job, David and Peter before me, I know in whom I have believed.

When a man or woman of God is in the making, enemy forces will come at them with great fury. Right now you may be tasting a bitter cup of pain. You may be enduring a dark night of confusion, a terrifying hour of isolation. But I urge you to do as these men did in their darkest moment, and take a stand in faith. Say as they did, "Though I be tried, and all these forces are arrayed against me, I know in whom I have believed. And I know he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

You may not have joy at that moment. Your soul may not be flooded with peace. In fact, you may still have turmoil in your soul. If that is the case, stay rooted firmly in his Word. Stop trying to think your way through it all. There is but one way through, and that is the path through Gethsemane. "Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Many dear men and women in Christ tell me sad stories of lost love, prolonged sorrows, unending afflictions. Often it seems as if their trials will never end. And indeed, in human terms, they seem locked into hopeless situations. For them, life is all pain and rejection, with moments of happiness very few and far between. They have begun to question the Lord, wondering, "Will this dark night ever end? Am I destined to a lifetime of trouble?"

Precious one, I assure you: God has not forgotten you. He bottles every tear you shed. Years ago,

after I first preached this sermon, I was approached by a dear sister in Christ. She told me, “Pastor, when I came to church this morning I was happy and carefree. But when you began talking about the cup of pain, I wept inside. I realized I was putting on a front. My husband has left me and my children are in turmoil. I’ve covered it up to hide my pain. But the reality is my soul is being flooded.” I prayed with her in that moment, asking God to make her faith strong in him. She left with true encouragement because she knows in whom she has believed.

Dear saint, in the midst of your battle, make Jesus the joy and hope of your life. Let him change your heart so that your conditions no longer thwart your spirit. God does his best work when changing us in such times. Then, whatever may come, you will remain above it all, seated with him in heavenly places. You are the object of his incredible love!

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