
Father's Love

By David Wilkerson

August 30, 2010 Dearly Beloved:

We've often heard grace defined as the unmerited favor and blessing of God. Yet I believe grace is much more than this. In my opinion, grace is everything that Christ is to us in our times of suffering—power, might, kindness, mercy, love—to see us through our afflictions.

As I look back over the years—years of great trials, suffering, temptation and affliction—I can testify that God's grace has been enough. I know what it is to question God, as my wife endured cancer over and over, and then both our daughters were also stricken. Today they are all healthy and strong, and for that I thank the Lord. I also know what it is to be buffeted by a messenger of Satan. I've been grievously tempted and enticed, and I've had enemies stirred up against me on all sides. I've been slandered by rumors, falsely accused and rejected by friends. In those dark times, I fell on my knees and cried out to God.

His grace has always brought me through. And that's enough for today. Then, someday in glory, my Father will reveal to me the beautiful plan he had all along. He'll show me how I obtained patience through all my trials; how I learned compassion for others; how his strength was made perfect in my weakness; how I learned his utter faithfulness toward me; how I longed to be more like Jesus.

We may still ask why—yet it all remains a mystery. I'm prepared to accept this until Jesus comes for me. I see no end to my trials and afflictions. I've had them for over fifty years of ministry now and counting.

Yet, through it all, I'm still being given an ever-increasing measure of Christ's strength. In fact, my great revelations of his glory have come during my hardest times. Likewise, in your lowest moments, Jesus will release in you the fullest measure of his strength.

We may never understand our pain, depression and discomfort. We may never know why our prayers for healing haven't been answered. But we don't have to know why. Our God has already answered us: "You've got my grace. And, my beloved child, that is all you need."

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In Christ,
DAVID WILKERSON

DW:bbm 8.30.10

Newsletter: Father's Love

August 30, 2010 Most Christians know what the Bible says about God's great love for his children. Yet even after years of walking faithfully with Jesus, many have never learned to appropriate that great love. Sadly, there are dedicated servants of God who have never enjoyed the glorious experience and benefits of knowing the Father's love. And nothing saddens God's heart more.

In my years of ministry I have identified three main hindrances that keep Christians from entering fully into the special love our Father has for us.

1. Many Christians don't really believe what God says about himself. Consider how God described himself to Moses: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:6-7).

Here were the primary traits God wanted Moses to know about him: He is merciful, gracious, longsuffering and forgiving. We have been taught much about these things. Indeed, from cover to cover the Bible speaks of how loving and tender our Father's heart is toward us.

Yet when we're mired in the midst of trials and tribulations, we often forget what God has said about himself. If only we would remind ourselves of these truths about him at such times, our souls would be blessedly assured. Scripture says of the Lord again and again:

- He is ready to forgive at all times. "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Psalm 86:5).

- He is patient with us, full of tenderness and mercy. "Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord" (Psalm 119:156). "His tender mercies are over all his works" (145:9). "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11).

- He is slow to anger and wrath. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Psalm 103:8). "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy" (145:8). "Turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:13).

When we pray, we are to be aware of the kind of image of God we are taking into his presence. The Lord wants us to approach him fully convinced that he loves us. And he wants us to know he is all he says he is.

For this reason, Satan will try to do to us what he did to Job. He planted in Job's mind a perverted view of the Father. And Job, in a season of great pain, believed the lie. He accused the Father, "For now thou numberest my steps: dost thou not watch over my sin? My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity" (Job 14:16–17).

In other words: "God, you're putting all my sins into a bag and saving them for judgment against me. They're piling up day after day. And someday you'll make me face them." This is the image some have of our heavenly Father today. Deep down they fear he's waiting for them to fail so he can judge them.

It is easy to see how perverted such a view of God is. In truth, God wasn't spying on Job at all. On the contrary, the Lord was so full of love for his servant that he boasted of Job before all of heaven and hell. He said to Satan, "Have you ever seen a man like this one, who loves me so much? My servant Job is a righteous man, without guile."

Beloved, I urge you to remember this whenever you go into God's presence with your head down. You may think you've failed him. *But in truth he has been boasting about you.* He tells all the angels, "Behold my servant. Whenever he fails he reaches out to me. That delights my heart!"

The Father has two kinds of love: a general love for all sinners and a special love for those in his family. God has a general love for humankind that seeks to draw every person to himself. But there is also in God's heart another kind of love — a special love for his children. The Lord has always had a chosen, special people for himself upon whom he bestowed his great love. In the Old Testament, Israel was the sole object of this special love:

"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:6–8).

God directed these special words to Israel. Today, if you have been adopted into God's family through Christ, you must know how special you are to him. You are the recipient of the Father's special love for his children. And here are his words to you:

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light...(you) are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9–10).

Beloved, it is important never to revere God's judgments above his love. In your times of weakness and failure, Satan will hammer you with every passage of Scripture about God's wrath against sin. And, of course, God does judge unrepented sin. But Satan twists verses like the following ones to

inject fear into your mind:

- "Thou [God] art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:13).

- "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" (1 Samuel 6:20).

Each of these verses has a context that explains their true meaning. In each of them God was addressing a rebellious, hypocritical nation. He was telling Israel, "In your present state I can't bless you because you refuse to ask me for forgiveness and mercy."

These harsh verses were never meant for children who are repentant and covered by Christ's blood. Our Father is pleased by every child who turns to him in repentance.

2. We often do not rest in the fact that God knows what is best for us. There are times when God takes things from us. There are also times we pray for things we think we need but God doesn't give them to us. In both cases, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" (Psalm 1:6). And one day it will all prove to our benefit and to his kingdom purposes.

The truest satisfaction in life is in doing the perfect will of God: being in his perfect will, doing his work, living according to his direction. But our flesh is constantly at war with us, telling us that only we know what we need to be fulfilled and happy. The truth is God has never taken anything from one of his children except for a purpose of eternal worth. God's best is not something to fear; it is always what satisfies most in the end. The Lord knows not only what is best for us but also desires that we have his spiritual blessings.

If we truly believed this, what rest, peace and joy we would have. We wouldn't grieve over having to let go of things. We would realize, "Lord, if you're taking this from me, it must mean you have something life-giving for me. So, please, give me the power to say, 'My Father knows best.'"

I ask you: How did Job finally come into a place of rest? He persuaded himself that God knew what he was doing and that everything was under his divine control. Job famously said, "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

Right now you may be wondering, "Will God cut me off if I fail while I'm waiting for his best? I know I'm not perfect. Does that mean I'll miss his best for me? What if I do something wrong? Will all God's promises fail me? Will I have to settle for something less than his best?"

No, never! I want to give you a wonderful illustration that God's eternal purposes will not be thwarted by your weaknesses or failures. If your heart is right before God — if you keep returning to him and seeking him — nothing can ever change his plans for you.

Consider God's merciful dealings with Ephraim, who had shamed the Lord. "I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn" (Jeremiah 31:9). Ephraim was the largest tribe of Israel and the people closest to God's heart. The Lord had an eternal plan for this blessed tribe but Ephraim kept backsliding and grieving him. These people sinned against more light and grace than any others in Israel.

So did the Lord abandon sinful Ephraim? Just the opposite: God said Ephraim was to be a free and ransomed people. They would live among fatness, indicating God's greatest blessings. What was it that God saw in Ephraim? They had a repentant heart — meaning, a shame for sin and a willingness to return to the Lord. In spite of all their failures, this one trait endeared them to God's heart. Whenever a prophetic word came forth they responded. And when they were rebuked they wept over their sin.

At the very height of their backsliding God said: "Is Ephraim a precious son to me? Is he a delightful child? That as soon as I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still? Wherefore are my bowels so stirred for him? Tenderly loving I will tenderly love him, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:20).

God was saying, "In spite of Ephraim's shortcomings and failures, I see a repentant spirit. And I will not take away my tender love. My eternal purpose for Ephraim will go on as I have planned."

Likewise, beloved, God is going to accomplish all his purposes for you, no matter how serious your struggle. He has mapped out your future with his best in mind for you.

We cannot judge God's eternal purpose for us by what we may be feeling or thinking. At times each of us can become too focused on our failures or weaknesses to judge correctly. God is saying to us, "Trust my word about my nature — that I'm a tender, loving Father who has invested much in you, and I am not about to let you go. You are my delightful child, and I will deliver you in my time."

It is no wonder David wrote, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:17). Likewise, Jeremiah wrote, "For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11).

God has a specific message for us here. He's saying, "I am not inclined to think evil, judgment and chastisement towards you. My nature is to think good thoughts, for I am at work planning your life. Stand still and see my deliverance unfold. Soak in my love for you."

Simply put, we have two options. First, we can believe what God says about himself — that he loves

us and will see us through our trials; that he is at work opening and closing all doors to us; that when we fail he isn't mad at us but will correct us in his tender love. Or, second, we can believe the terrible alternative: that God has allowed us to be deceived by the devil and has left us to fend for ourselves.

You may think, "I don't see much evidence that God is doing anything to change my terrible condition. My pain seems to never end. I've waited and waited. How long will it take?"

It takes as long as necessary for a holy, omnipotent God to put all the pieces of his plan for you together. He has so many thoughts about you and your future you couldn't even count them. His Word says his thoughts toward you are more numerous than the sands in the sea.

Consider David's example of trust despite his circumstances. God gave David a promise that he would build him a sure house, an everlasting kingdom that would be established forever. And through all of David's testings, sins and disgrace, God's purpose was not hindered. Even when shame was heaped on David by his own family and sons, he held onto the Lord's loving promise and would not let go.

Finally, when David was old and gray and it didn't look as if the promise would be fulfilled, he made this declaration: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow" (2 Samuel 23:5). He was saying, "I don't see it being fulfilled yet. But I stand on God's word to me. He will surely bring it to pass."

David rested knowing that God knew best and would keep his word: "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope" (Acts 2:25–26).

3. At times we consider it too good to be true that we can serve the Lord all our days with joy and not fear. God's desire for us is to be so convinced of his tender love, so persuaded he is at work bringing us into his best, that we'll have continual joy and gladness in our walk with him. Moreover, he wants our trust in his love to become testimonies of gladness and hope.

"Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing" (Psalm 100:2). "He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness" (105:43). "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (32:11). "Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice" (68:3).

You may ask, "Can I expect to maintain gladness and joy in my service to the Lord?" Many Christians believe joy lasts only as long as seasons of refreshing come or as long as things go right in our lives. Not so, according to Isaiah.

"Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and

her people a joy" (Isaiah 65:18). Beloved, we are "the Jerusalem from above," living for him with a spirit of gladness and rejoicing. And our loving Father has given us a rock-solid foundation for all our joy and gladness: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

I promise you: As you trust the Father, believing his Word about himself, you will see his gladness pour forth from your life. Trust his word to you today. Amen!

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