The Touch of God

Published on World Challenge (https://worldchallenge.org)

I want to make three statements to you about the touch of God. These three points are the heart of my message:

1. Once God touches and possesses someone, it isn't a part-time possession. It's for a lifetime. The Lord will never surrender to Satan what is his.

2. Those whom God possesses, he preserves. We may falter, fail or fall into devastating sin. But once God possesses us, he will never, ever give up on us: "The Lord...forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved forever" (Psalm 37:28).

3. Those whom God possesses, he prepares for ever-increasing usefulness. This includes even fallen, discouraged servants. You may be convinced God has given up on you, that he can't use you anymore. The truth is, if you have a contrite heart, you're being prepared for something greater. God uses even those things that Satan intends to destroy us.

We find this pattern at work in the lives of God-possessed people throughout the Bible. We read of godly saints falling into deplorable failure and sin. At times they're ready to quit. But God doesn't give up on them. Instead, he keeps coming to them. And out of the ashes of ruin, many are healed. Indeed, their best days are still ahead of them.

This is the point of my message to you. I want to prove to you that once God touches and possesses you, he will deliver you out of every satanic snare, if you call upon him. He will preserve you from the devil's wrath. And he will use everything in your life - including your failures, problems, trials - to prepare you for his best, which is still ahead.

Think back to the time when God came to you, supernaturally touching your soul. He called you to himself and filled you with his Spirit. At that moment, God made a commitment to you: "I want you. And I claim you. You are my possession." Suddenly, he took control of your life. And nothing was going to change that fact. You became God's purchased possession: "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

The Creator of the universe bought you with the price of his own blood. And nothing has power over that blood. So you remain God's possession, even when the powers of hell seduce and condemn you. Satan himself may ensnare you in a hellish trap. Yet just as he thinks, "I've got him," God answers, "No, devil, you can't have him. He's mine. I have purchased him. Now, release my property." You're still God's possession. And he is preserving you, preparing you for his best. Here is the biblical pattern:

1. Consider the God-possessed leader of Israel, Moses

Moses was possessed by God. The Lord preserved him through trial after trial. And all along God was preparing this man for a great work.

Moses was touched by God while he lived in Pharaoh's house. As a result, Moses refused to be called Pharaoh's son: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:25-26).
There was no doubting God’s touch on Moses’ life while he was in Egypt. Moses rejected all that was of the flesh. And he knew he was called to deliver Israel. In fact, he assumed the Israelites would recognize him as their deliverer when he killed the Egyptian slave driver. Stephen testifies, “He...smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them” (Acts 7:24-25).

Instead, Moses had to fear Pharaoh because of his action. So he fled Egypt. Yet, by the time he left, Moses was totally God-possessed. He’d given up all for the sake of Christ. Little did he know, however, he was about to enter a long wilderness period. He would be hidden on the back side of a desert for forty years.

What does this wilderness period in Moses’ life represent? It’s a time that many God-possessed servants face. They feel stuck in a place far beneath their abilities. Their role is desperately short of what they believe God has in mind for them. Moses was just such a servant. He had a mighty call on his life, and he dreamed of doing great works for God. Yet he was stuck on the back side of a wilderness, with no apparent future.

I wonder how often Moses looked at his flock of sheep and prayed, “God, you touched me so clearly. I thought you called me to be your deliverer. Why have you left me out here? Surely you could entrust me with more than tending so few sheep. You gave me an education from Egypt’s highest learning centers. You showed me mighty things that could be done through your hand. But I feel overlooked, put on a shelf. Is this all there is for me?”

I believe Moses was convinced time had run out for him. He had no voice, no message. So he resigned himself to being a back-side-of-the-wilderness shepherd. But God was committed to this man. And all the while Moses was frustrated with his limited existence, the Lord was preserving and preparing him for greater things.

During this time, Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, was scouting the wilderness, locating water, navigating trails, finding routes. Moses didn’t realize Jethro was about to become Israel’s guide through the desert. God’s hidden shepherds were being prepared all along, trained in wilderness survival for the work ahead.

Then, suddenly, Moses had his encounter with the burning bush. The bush was probably a common shrub, low to the ground and useless. But God set that bush on fire, and a voice came out of it, saying, "Take off your shoes, Moses. You’re on holy ground." The Lord then spoke a message directly to Moses’ heart. And after just a few hours at that burning bush, Moses’ life was never the same. God instructed him, "Go, gather the children of Israel. Tell Pharaoh, 'Let my people go.'"

Here was a God-possessed man who’d been preserved and prepared for many years. Now he was being addressed by God himself from a burning bush. It was all meant to tell Moses, "I have not forgotten you. I’ve been with you all along. I was the one who led you into this wilderness. And I have protected you from Pharaoh. Now you’re about to see greater things in your service to me."

That burning bush was the fire of the Holy Ghost moving through a natural object. God took a useless shrub and caused incredible changes to take place through it. Likewise today, I may be the low-to-the-ground bush God is using to speak to your heart. Let me ask you: are you on the back side of a wilderness?

Perhaps you’re stuck in a low-paying job with no hope of influence. Or, your spouse is an unbeliever, and at times your marriage tests your soul. You truly aren’t envious of others’ blessings. But you wonder, "Lord, why am I not being used? You’ve given me a heart to do more for your kingdom. Don’t pass me by."

God is committed to you, just as he was to Moses. You may be frustrated with your limited existence. But all the while, God is preserving and preparing you. You may not be called to some great work. But you are being called to a new walk with the Lord, such as you’ve never experienced. And you’re being called to minister Christ as never before. Your role is simply to believe God will take you to higher, holy ground. He wants to reveal more of himself to you, to put his fire in you. He wants those around you to realize, "That person has been with Jesus."

Once you begin seeking him with intensity, you’re going to see miracles. You’ll be turned into a new man, a new woman. And it’s all because you are his possession. Your best days are still ahead.

2. David was also a God-possessed man.

David had a fierce battle with lust in his heart. Here was a giant-killing soldier, an anointed Psalm-writer, a king mightily used to rule God’s people. The Lord himself called David a man after his own heart. Yet, at the very height...
of God's blessing and favor, David was surprised by a violent attack of lust.

This righteous king had just won a string of victories over enemy after enemy. He had recaptured and restored the ark. And he had received from the Lord a promise of an everlasting house. Scripture says, "The Lord preserved David whithersoever he went" (2 Samuel 8:14).

Then one day, David saw Bathsheba and was overcome by a horrendous lust. He committed adultery, conceiving a child with her. David tried desperately to hide his terrible sin. He manipulated, schemed and lied to cover it up. Finally, he fell so low that he caused the murder of his lover's husband.

David's awful sin would make headlines in any society, in any age. If you lived during his time, you'd probably think, "God is about to give up on that man. He has sinned against such great light." Yet, what does David's low point represent to us today? It's a picture of the God-possessed servant who has been surprised by an overwhelming lust. Satan tries to surprise every servant who's serious about his walk with God.

Have you been surprised and overtaken by a lust of some kind? You had a clean history, an admirable walk with Jesus. You were known and regarded as a righteous servant, someone in love with the Lord. But the devil got you in his sights, took aim and shot a hellish arsenal of fiery darts.

Perhaps your fall was adultery. Maybe it was pornography or secret drinking. Like David, your sin found you out, and you were exposed. (I have a minister friend who experienced this. He was in a hotel on a ministry trip, and found himself tempted by an awful lust. He finally gave in and ordered an X-rated movie. But within five minutes, his sin was exposed.)

You may say, "I don't have any such sin in my life. I have a clean walk." But what about the mother of all sins, unbelief? Perhaps you came to a place of victory, a peak in your walk of faith. You felt you'd broken through to the Lord. Then, out of nowhere, you were overcome with unbelief. You were plagued by depression, fear, anxiety, even anger at God. Suddenly, you began to doubt God's presence in your life. I tell you, that very thought is a satanic snare. The enemy would like nothing more than to destroy the faith of every God-possessed believer.

It doesn't matter what your iniquity may be. There is no such sin in your life that would cause God to give up on you. You are still his purchased possession. Even though David despised God by committing adultery, the Lord didn't quit on him. Scripture tells us, "The Lord sent Nathan unto David" (2 Samuel 12:1). While Moses was challenged by a burning bush, David was confronted by a prophet. Nathan pointed to him and said, "You're the man who has sinned. You have committed adultery." How did David respond? He humbled himself, confessing, "I have sinned against the Lord" (12:13).

David suffered dire consequences for his sin. But God preserved him through the ordeal. After Nathan confronted David, he told the king, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin" (12:13). In fact, David was being prepared for even greater ministry after his fall. His voice was heard throughout the land as never before. Today we read his anointed words in the Psalms. Indeed, the Word that God revealed to David through his trial is still being preached today.

Sadly, Saul, David's predecessor, wasn't preserved as David was. Saul was also touched mightily by God and possessed by his Spirit. But Saul disobeyed every word the prophet Samuel spoke to him. Instead of humbling himself, Saul grew bitter and angry toward God. The Lord tried to reach Saul again at Ramah, pouring out his Spirit on him. But Saul shut him out. He gave up on God completely, turning to a witch for counsel.

The fact is, God will never quit on you. If you're entangled in sin, he'll bring you face to face with a convicting, prophetic word. I've said many times that I have never claimed to be a prophet. But right now, I know I serve as a prophet to many readers of this message. I am your Nathan, and I declare to you: "If you will confess and forsake your sin...if you'll trust God to keep his covenant promises to you...you'll not only be forgiven and restored, but your best, most fruitful days will be ahead of you."

3. Peter was truly a God-possessed man.

This God-possessed disciple committed the worst sin of all. It was one thing for Moses to flee and hide from God. It was another for David to despise the Lord. But worst of all, Peter denied knowing Christ. He even cursed his Lord.

Jesus had said his good friend Peter was a rock. The bold disciple had even walked on water with the Lord. And he'd boldly sworn he would die for his Master. Yet later, when Peter was accused of being Christ's disciple, he
answered with these chilling words: "I do not know the man" (Matthew 26:72). When the crowd persisted, "then began (Peter) to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man" (26:74).

Can you imagine this awful scene? Had we known Peter, we would have thought, "That's it, Peter's finished. He cursed the very face of God. And he denied Jesus, helping send him to the cross. There's no hope for him. God has to give him up."

The devil must have gloated over Peter's ruin, crying, "I got you. You're all mine now." But God wouldn't give up his ownership. He was going to preserve Peter. And he cried, "No, devil, he's my property. Just watch what I do with him."

While Moses was apprehended by a burning bush, and David by a prophet, Peter was apprehended by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit brought to Peter's remembrance what Christ had said: "Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly" (26:75).

The Holy Ghost fell on Peter, convicting and melting him. The disciple was given a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Then, just a few weeks later, we see a wholly different Peter. This man preached the gospel boldly at Pentecost to at least 3,000 people. The disciple who had shriveled in cowardice before a servant girl was now a fearless evangelist, full of fire and unction.

Here is a prime example of how the Lord preserves and prepares his possessions. Do you see the pattern? Peter was being prepared even in his denial of Jesus. What the devil intended as gross evil, God turned into his own glory. How? The same priests who saw Peter deny Jesus later saw him stand and preach the resurrected Christ. Peter's holy boldness caused them to marvel, "This man has been with Jesus, whom he denied. What power is this that moves and anoints him?"

4. God has made an oath to preserve and make fruitful everyone he possesses.

The Lord has sworn by covenant to rescue and restore fallen, wounded servants he possesses. Can you honestly say God has made you his possession? I remember the day it happened to me. I was eight years old at a camp meeting. The Spirit of God came upon me, possessing my body, mind, soul and spirit. He called me to preach his Word.

Because the Lord possessed me then, he has preserved me throughout the years. He has delivered me from snare after snare devised by Satan. Every one of those demonic traps could have destroyed my ministry and ruined my life. But, because the Lord possessed me, he stepped in each time, saying, "I won't let you have him, devil." Now, at age seventy-one, I know my best years are ahead. And I can see that all my trials have prepared me for this time.

Years ago, I endured the darkest period of my ministry. I was attacked by every temptation from hell. My wife, Gwen, was under extreme pressure because of her physical illnesses. And everything in our ministry that could possibly go wrong did. At one point, my staff began to leave. I dreaded preaching because I saw hypocrisy in my life. I felt so unholy.

The pain of those days was indescribable. I sat in church, pleading, "God, send me a word, a person, something to touch this pain in me. Please, tell me where I've gone wrong. Why is Satan buffetting me this way? I beg you to bring me out of this snare." I thought I was finished, completely washed up. I felt God had every right to take away my anointing, because I was such a failure.

It was during this dark period that God sent a godly prophet to me, a man named Leonard Ravenhill. This gentle man handed me a book and said, "David, God sent me to you. Here, read this book. It's going to change your life."

It did. The book was The Christian in Complete Armor, by the Puritan writer William Gurnall. After only twenty pages, I was flat on my face. Gurnall's words shook me to the core and awakened my soul. I realized, "Lord, I don't know you the way this man does." God used that experience to renew my spirit and calling. He revealed to me, "David, I love you, and I have not forsaken you. But I want you to deal with several things in your life. I also want you to know that your best days are ahead of you."

God never gave up on me. In fact, he had allowed me to drop that low so I would die to all confidence in my flesh.
All through that time, I knew he was preserving me, because his Spirit kept whispering to me, "I love you."

Finally, the Holy Spirit delivered me by unveiling God's New Covenant promises to me. He freed me by opening my eyes to his sworn oath to be God to me: forgiving me, showing me mercy and offering me deliverance. He provided for my every need.

Here are the New Covenant promises God chains himself to.

Are you hooked by a besetting sin? Are you convinced your habit will destroy you? The covenant promises of God have brought me freedom, rest and victory:

1. God has promised to subdue all our sins. "He will subdue all our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). The word for subdue here means to put down or conquer. The Lord promises to mortify and kill off all our sinful habits and strongholds, through faith and true repentance.

2. God has promised to cause us to walk holy. Do you think, "I want to be free, but I don't have the will to forsake my sin?" The Lord answers, "I will cleanse you...a new heart also will I give you...I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

3. He has promised never to forsake his possessions. The Lord chastens us for our sin, but he never forsakes his seed: "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod...Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips...His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me" (Psalm 89:31-36).

4. He has promised to put his fear in our hearts. "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jeremiah 32:40).

I want to say directly to those struggling with secret sin, despair or spiritual weariness: the only thing keeping you from total victory is unbelief. God has sworn to give you all the power you need to obey his every word. Indeed, he has given you these covenant promises so you'll quit trying to overcome sin by your own power.

Here is a key to understanding the New Covenant: God has no boundaries or limits. We limit the Lord by our own limited thinking. But he gave us his covenant promises to take off the chains we put on him.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan used God's limitless nature to seduce Adam and Eve. He told them, "You can be as God. He has no boundaries, no limits. And so can you." (Out of this deception came the false doctrine that claims, "Whatever you can conceive, you can do. If you can imagine it, you can achieve it.")

The Lord had to send his law to show humankind we can't be as God. We simply can't break down all the boundaries and limitations of our flesh. So the Lord used the law to help us recognize our utter powerlessness. Jesus also demonstrated this truth. He limited himself with the boundaries of flesh, saying, "Without the Father I can do nothing." Yet Christ also came to reveal that any trusting believer can be brought into this New Covenant promise: "I will be God to you, without limits or boundaries."

You may think your unsaved spouse will never come to Jesus. But God says, "You're limiting me. I have no boundaries." Likewise, at one time the church thought Communism would eventually rule the world. We reasoned, "The Lord can't move under such godless dictatorships." But we were limiting God. In his time, the Lord tore down the whole system, beginning with the Berlin Wall. His Spirit swept through all of Eastern Europe and into Russia.

Christians had the same thoughts about the Bamboo Curtain. We put limits on God's ability to move in China. But today that vast nation is on fire with the Spirit of God. We also put boundaries on God in Cuba. But I just saw a film telling of 100,000 Methodists there on fire with the Holy Ghost.

I tell you, God has no boundaries, no limits, even in the world of Islam. Revival can take place anywhere the Lord pleases. It can happen in your home, with your children, even among your unsaved loved ones. And God can wipe out abortion or pornography at any time. Our task is merely to give up what our flesh can conceive, and surrender to God's faithful promises. We need to believe him for miracles.

As you face your own struggle, remember that the Lord will not give up on you. He calls you his friend, and he still has his hand on you. All he asks for is a repentant heart and absolute trust in his promises. Yet, you are to heed
this warning: Though God will not quit on you, you can quit on him. And that leads to hardness of heart. Remember Saul's example. Had that hardened man turned to the Lord instead of to a witch, God would have saved him.

Right now, you face both a burning bush and a prophetic voice. I firmly believe the Holy Ghost is speaking through my words to you, saying, "This is your hour of freedom. Don't put down this message unchanged. Don't allow yourself to go away carrying any discouragement, bondage, guilt, stronghold or besetting sin. Instead, lay hold of the New Covenant promises. You are the Lord's, and he needs you. Soon he's going to lead you into green pastures and still waters. So now, by faith, receive his love, power, forgiveness and freedom. Your best days are still to come."

"The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance" (Psalm 94:14).

Links