

When You Come to the End of Yourself



David Wilkerson November 5, 2012

In Psalm 38 we find David at his wits' end. He was downcast and discouraged, and his struggle had drained him of all strength. David cried, "I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long...I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart... My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me" (Psalm 38:6, 8, 10).

This was the same man who revered God's Word and wrote exuberant psalms to extol the Lord's glory. But in this depressed state David did what many discouraged Christians today do: He reasoned that God must be chastening him. He cried, "Rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore" (38:1-2).

David is describing something every follower of Jesus faces at some point. He's speaking of being under a demonic attack from a plaguing spirit of discouragement. This is Satan's most potent weapon against God's elect. No Christian brings it on himself, nor does the Lord send it. It comes straight from the pits of hell. Satan wants to convince us we've brought God's wrath on ourselves by not measuring up to his holy standards.

Paul urges us not to fall prey to this mental snare: "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Paul is warning, "See this discouragement for what it is: a demonic weapon. It is Satan's arrow to get you to doubt yourself. He knows he can't tempt you to turn away from Jesus. So he swamps you with lies, to make you so downcast you'll want to throw in the towel."

David's trial was not at all unique.

I have read many biographies of devout men and women whom the Lord used mightily, and every one of them struggled through the same kind of crippling discouragement. The great British preacher C.H. Spurgeon led multitudes to Christ through his powerful sermons but suffered awful bouts with melancholy (or depression in today's terms). He once lamented, "I've got the blackest heart in Britain." Spurgeon would go into his garden, raise his hands to God and cry, "Lord, I've never desired you more, yet my spirit has never been so low. Where are you?"

I've led evangelistic crusades where thousands at a time have come to Christ. I've helped lead multitudes of drug addicts and alcoholics to deliverance in Jesus. But often within days of these events I became overwhelmed by discouragement. I've thought, "My life has been a complete waste. I'm a failure." I identified with David's words, "As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me" (Psalm 38:10).

We can talk to God all we want about our feelings of failure. We can tell him about our despair over our sins and foolish mistakes. Our Lord invites that, and he will always be tender with us in our helpless condition. But we are never to entertain the thought that God has abandoned us. Even in his despair, David cried out in the same psalm, "For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God" (38:15).

If you're enduring a demonic attack of discouragement, I suggest three things.

1. Do not rely on your wits to try to maneuver your way out.

You are no match for the demonic spirit you're up against. The battle is far beyond your human skill or physical power to wage. This conflict is in the spiritual realm and has to be fought in the Spirit.

David's questions weren't doubts about God. He actually begins Psalm 42 by famously expressing his deep thirst for the Lord: "As the hart [deer] panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (42:1-2). David was pleading for a revelation, saying, "Lord, I've never loved you more. Why am I so cast down?"

Discouragement has been the enemy's weapon of choice against God's elect for centuries. When your attack comes, don't think it is unusual. Peter writes, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Peter 4:12). God allows this kind of trial with all his saints—and he will bring us out of them.

2. Go to prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to do his work.

When you're cast down with discouragement you probably don't feel like praying. You may not be able to even whisper a prayer. But you can talk to Jesus in your spirit: "Lord, help me. This attack is too much for me. I can't do anything but sit here in faith. I'm trusting your Spirit to drive all discouragement out of me."

Don't worry about trying to pray your way out of despair. It is a time for God's Spirit to work in you. Jesus promises, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever... I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:16, 18).

The first thing the Spirit does when he comes is expose Satan's lies. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). That is the work of the Holy Spirit. He undoes the lies of the enemy and brings encouragement from on high.

3. Dare to believe the incredibly good things the Holy Spirit is going to tell you.

Multitudes of Christians enter God's presence every day expecting to be reproved by him. How that must grieve our Lord! When we go to prayer we ought to be prepared to hear a good word from our loving Father. All who wait on him will receive his glorious promises:

"As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

Take a closer look at two phrases from this passage:

* "The things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (2:9). Satan will attack you, flooding you with lies and discouraging words. But if you'll simply wait on the Lord, his Spirit will come and drive out all of the devil's lies. He does it by giving you a revelation that God has good things prepared for you because you love him.

Our Lord has a wonderful plan for every child of his. And no satanic attack against us can ever alter those plans. God knows the sorrows, struggles and pain we face each day— yet he also knows the glorious things he has laid out for us. He knows the revelation we'll receive, the usefulness we'll enjoy, the fruit we'll see, the joy and peace we'll possess. He has a good word for all who love him.

* "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (2:10). The Lord desires to show us his good word about what he has prepared for us. And his Spirit is the messenger who bears that good word. The Holy Ghost will give wings to our drooping spirits with this revelation, and we'll be able to fly like eagles out of Satan's snare.

"Hast thou not heard, that the ever- lasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be

weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:28-31).

This is the work of the Holy Spirit: to encourage us. Our work is to simply trust him to fulfill what the Father has sent him to do. Go to your secret closet right now, even in your discouraged state, and quiet yourself before the Lord. Even if you don't have strength enough to speak, you can cry out to him in your spirit. Speak to him this prayer:

"Lord, I know you abide in me. And I know you've sent your Spirit to comfort me, strengthen me and reveal the mind of Christ to me. Speak to me your comfort. I don't have any strength left. You have to lift me up and lead me."

The Spirit of Christ won't let you be deceived. He'll show you the good things God has ahead for you. But you must dare to believe he will speak to you.

You are not going to faint. You're going to come out of your trial victorious, because your faith will be tested and tried as gold. And you'll see the Lord fulfill every promise he has made to you. Amen!

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