

## A Call to Grief



David Wilkerson October 5, 1987

*I am convinced that the only way to experience the fullness of the joy of Jehovah is to share His grief. God does grieve over sin, and those who truly walk with Him enter into His grief.*

In the days of Noah, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved* him at his heart" (Genesis 6:5,6).

The Hebrew word used here means *cut to the heart*. It means *hurt, pain*. The wickedness of mankind was hurting God deeply, causing great pain to His heart.

Isaiah said of Christ, "He is...a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). The sin of mankind caused that grief. He entered into the very hurt and pain of the heavenly Father.

### Old and New Testament Servants of God Shared This Grief Over Sin.

David was a man of God who discovered the glory of joy in Jehovah, but it was born out of great grief over the transgressions among the Lord's people. He said, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word. (Psalm 119:158). "Do not I hate them, Lord, that hate thee...and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee?" (Psalm 139:21). David hated what God hated; he grieved over the things that grieved God and detested what God detested.

The prophet Amos cries out against "those at ease in Zion...who are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph..." (Amos 6). He shared God's grief over a backslidden people lounging in ease and prosperity, putting out of mind the impending hour of judgment, while lying on beds of ivory (materialism), chanting their music, drinking wine — yet, having no grief over the ruin all about them. (See Amos 6:1-6.)

The word Amos used is *sickened*. He was actually saying, "The sin and ruin among God's people does not sicken you. It does not disgust you because you have become blinded by sin and the good life you now enjoy."

Nehemiah was grieved because he understood the evil that had infiltrated the house of God. A backslidden priesthood had brought into the Lord's house a terrible compromise, and only Nehemiah understood the depth of the iniquity and the awful consequences it would bring upon the people. (See Ezekiel 13:1-9.) The high priest Eliashib, whose name in Hebrew suggests *unity through compromise* had set up a residence in the temple for Tobiah, an Ammonite prince. By law, no Ammonite was to be permitted to set foot in the temple. But Tobiah, whose name means "prosperity, pleasure, good life," was permitted to abide there, a heathen entrenched in the house of God.

*There was now a new thing in God's house. A corrupted ministry was in league with paganism. The people of God were yearning for prosperity, for the good life; and Tobiah was ready and willing to teach them the materialistic path*

of idolatry. "Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah" (Nehemiah 13:4).

Nehemiah understood the evil that was going on sponsored by a sin-soft priesthood. "And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again vessels of the house of God..." (Nehemiah 13:7-9).

Nehemiah was not acting on impulse or legalistic tradition! He was seeing through God's eyes, feeling as God felt and he was understanding the evil of mixture, of compromise, of the cancerous growth of sin in God's house.

If more ministers understood the evil mixture of the music, the encroachment of entertainment, the lust for materialism now in the church — like Nehemiah, they would grieve over it and cast it out of the church once again. God, give us a body of preachers and parishioners who are sick of sin and mixture, and who will take a stand against it. God, give us believers with enough discernment to understand the depth and horror of the compromises and sinfulness creeping into the Lord's house.

Paul grieved over the backsliding of God's people. He warned, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly...whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:18,19). The Greek meaning here is loud sobbing or a piercing sobbing out of a broken heart. To see Christians turn aside to earthly things, rejecting the reproach of the Cross, broke Paul's heart to the point he literally shook with the grief of God. This was not silent despair nor resigned sighing over the falling away, but the loud, piercing, heart-broken crying of a man entering into God's grief for His wayward children.

## The Ministry of Grief

Samuel was a young man who was called to "the ministry of grief." Not his own grief, not the grief of humanity — but the deep and unfathomable grief of God! God was profoundly grieved over the backslidden condition of His own people, and there was no one to share it. God was about to remove His glory from His house at Shiloh, and the present ministry that stood before His altar did not know it. How sad to be so deaf, dumb and blind just at the hour of judgment.

Israel was corrupt; the priesthood was adulterous; and the established, organized ministry was totally blind. Eli represents the decaying religious system with all its self interests, having gone soft by easy living with only a token hatred for sin. Eli had become fat and lazy about the deep things of God, simply going through the motions.

His sons Hophni and Phinehas represent the on-going ministry of tradition. These two young priests never did have an encounter with God. They knew nothing of "hearing from heaven." They knew nothing of hunger for God, of a burning passion to experience the glory and presence of the Lord — nothing of God's grief. These kind don't fast or pray. They look for the best ministerial positions, with the highest benefits and the best chance of promotion. Their hearts have never been broken over lost humanity; they know little of suffering. They are the products of cold, dead ritualism. They are not fresh from God! They say the right things, novel things, they sound and act professional. *But there is no anointing, no holy unction; they don't know the fear and dread of a holy God.*

So, like Eli's sons, they become sensual, worldly and self-serving. The sons of Eli became so corrupt, God called them "the sons of Belial" (sons of Satan). It is said of them, "They knew not God." They "made themselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel" (1 Samuel 2:29). This is why multitudes of evangelical youth are growing so cold and sensual, becoming rock and roll addicts, drinking beer, engaging in illicit sex, bored and restless. Some youth pastors are damning them by their own poor example and their lack of Holy Ghost discernment. If the youth leaders don't know the Lord, how can they reach the kids for God? We now face the tragedy of an entire generation going astray because they have so few shepherds to show them how to escape the Satanic snares of this age. There has been too much catering to the sensual desires of youth.

Eli had lost all his spiritual discernment! Hannah, a godly woman, was weeping bitterly in the house of God at Shiloh. She was beseeching the Lord to give her a son and was in deep intercession. She is a type of the interceding holy remnant who yearn and cry out to God for a fresh word from God. "Now Hannah, she spake in her

heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she was drunk" (1 Samuel 1:13).

How blind can a minister of the Lord be? She was in the Spirit, conversing with God, under divine unction and soon to become a channel of renewal in Israel — and the man of God couldn't discern the truth. He totally missed the significance of what was happening at the altar. What has happened to this priest of the most high God, that he should be standing at the threshold of a profound new move of God that would affect Israel's future — and he is so out of touch with God he mistakes it for flesh?

How is God going to get through to this backslidden, corrupt people of Israel? God is grieved; He is wanting to shake things; He is about to move swiftly in wrath and spew it all out of His mouth! But Eli doesn't know it! Eli has become so indulgent, so comfortable, so steeped in cold tradition — he has not the slightest hint of what God is saying or about to do. His sons are going to be cast aside — literally cut off from the things of God. But they are so consumed with lust, so addicted to the best cuts of meat, so hardened by sin — they have become agents of Satan, blind to impending judgment. *God must go outside the established religious structure to find someone open enough to share His grief!*

## The Samuel Company

The Lord always brings in a Samuel-people to hear His voice in a time of spiritual declension. This company is made up of men and women who care nothing for tradition, for promotion, for denominational boundaries. They represent pastors and lay people who have an ear to hear. They are shut in with God.

God sent an unnamed prophet to Eli with a warning. It was an arrow shot directly into the heart of a religious system that had become self-protective. Eli had protected his wayward sons. God said to him prophetically, "You honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel" (1 Samuel 2:29).

When Eli had heard how his sons flaunted their fornication right at the door of the congregation, all he would say was, "Nay, my sons; it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress" (1 Samuel 2:24). God later told Samuel He would judge Eli's house because he knew of their iniquity and did nothing about it. *"For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not"* (1 Samuel 2:13).

There is a day of judgment appointed here on earth for ministers of the gospel who know the sin in the congregation or their family — and they refuse to deal with it. They may slap the wrist of the adulterers, the winebibbers, the fornicators — but they have no penetrating message of reproof! They are afraid to discipline their spiritual children. At the judgment our Lord will ask, "Why did you not show the people the difference between the holy and the profane?"

Why was Eli so soft on the sin of his boys? Because they were stealing the filet mignon before it went into the seething pot, and they were bringing home this fresh, red meat and Eli had grown accustomed to it. He would suffer if he came down too hard on them — he would have to go back to eating sodden, boiled meat. He had learned to shut his eyes to all the evil about him in God's house — and in his own family.

This I believe is why some preachers are soft on sin. They have become sedated by the good life! They enjoy the comfort and prestige of large numbers, bigger buildings! How subtle it is — while knowing something must be said, the minister simply utters a limp, "You shouldn't do these evil things!" No holy thunder. No grief over sin and compromise. None of Paul's vision of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. No warnings of divine retribution and judgment. People would get offended — stop coming — stop paying the bills. The growth might be hindered.

*I've preached in some of these churches, and it's been a heartbreaking experience.* The pastor like Eli, usually loves the *Ark of God* — he is not an evil man. But he is a fearful man. Afraid of the moving of the Holy Spirit, afraid of offending people, giving lip service to holiness — but fearful of dealing too harshly with sin. There is rampant divorce. There are secret affairs! Young people bound by habits; deacons smoking and drinking; and a lot of unspiritual socializing.

I stand in that brother's pulpit making known the Lord's demand for holiness, calling for repentance, warning of judgment upon sin — and compromisers rush forward, weeping, confessing, seeking deliverance. I look to the side

and see a pastor worried that the service might get out of control or that there will be some kind of manifestation of uncontrollable weeping or falling to the floor with conviction and grief for sin. He is deathly afraid his "new people" won't understand. He can't wait to take over the meeting to quiet things down. He begins to whisper sweet reassurances that God loves them all — and reminds everybody of the lateness of the hour and quickly dismisses them. He puts a wet blanket on the conviction, and the sin-burdened members go home troubled by what appears to be their pastor's unconcern.

I have left those kinds of meetings broken in heart. I ask myself, "Where is the grief over sin? Can't leaders see those weeping sheep want to cry out and permit the conviction of the Holy Ghost do His cleansing work in them?"

## Where Is the Grief of God in Our Pulpits?

Where are the Samuels who have heard the voice of God, who have been awakened by the Holy Spirit, who have received a revelation of the soon-coming judgments upon a backslidden house of God? Why aren't all preachers of the gospel grieving over the sinful condition of the church? Why aren't all pastors and evangelists crying out as watchmen on the wall?

It is said of Samuel, "Samuel told him [Eli] everything, and hid nothing from him" (1 Samuel 3:18). I ask you, pastor: *Are you telling it all? Are you holding back, hiding the truth, afraid to offend?*

The message of the Samuel Company is not a pleasant one! "Samuel feared to tell Eli the vision..." (3:15). Samuel heard God pronounce the end of a backslidden religious structure. The vision was overwhelming! God was no longer going to put up with a form of godliness without the power of holiness. Judgment was about to fall in the house of God. Adultery would be exposed. The compromising leadership would no longer enjoy the blessings of the presence of God.

God was going to remove His presence from Shiloh and do a glorious new thing in Israel. God said, "I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed forever..." (1 Samuel 2:35). This speaks of the Samuel Company of believers and ministers who share the very heart of God. They know the Lord's mind; they know His will; and they walk in fear and holiness before Him. The Samuel Company is a praying people; and because they are in touch with God, they are made to know and share His grief! It was while Samuel was in prayer that God revealed to him the fearful things coming to the Lord's people. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle" (1 Samuel 3:11).

I can tell you who God is speaking to these days! He is speaking to those shut up to Himself — who pant after Him as the deer pants after the water — who have died to every selfish ambition — who have no other goal in life but to bring pleasure, glory and joy to His heart!

I say it unflinchingly — *it is not going to be a denomination that delivers the Word of the Lord to this cursed generation!* It will not be a committee which hears the true Word and ignites the last day gathering of the remnant. While the angels of the apocalypse go forth to smite the earth, denominations and religious leaders will be hard at work protecting their interests and strengthening their authority, drawing up bylaws and resolutions.

To the very end of his ministry, Samuel bore the grief of God over His people. Israel lusted after a king so they could be "judged like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). Samuel fell on his knees, greatly displeased. And again God shared His grief with him: "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7).

## God's Grief Brings Protest Against Sin.

The grief of God upon the Samuel Company must bring forth a protest against all sin and apostasy! "Now therefore harken unto their voice: how be it yet protest solemnly unto them...and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:9).

Everywhere you turn now, God's people in growing numbers are rejecting the lordship of Christ! There is a clamor to "be as the nations." That is mixture! That is being just like the world. That is saying, "We want God and the world!"

Thank God for the *protesting Samuel Company!* They have heard from God and they know where all this compromise is going to end. They see the frightful results of apostasy ahead and, like Paul, they sob that piercing, heart-rending cry of grief.

## A Call to Grief Results in Everlasting Joy in Jehovah!

Those who sob over sin in the church are called doomsayers and sad-sacks. Many Christians have said, "I don't like to be around them. They sound so negative, so morose, and they look so sad." That is because they simply do not know them! They don't know that those who share God's grief over sin are also brought into the greatest measure of joy.

Those who truly grieve with God are given a leaping heart of joy in Jehovah! "Although the fig tree shall not fruit; neither should there be any provision on the vines; the produce of the olive should fail, and the fields not yield subsistence; the flocks should be cut off from the fold, neither should there be any herd in the stalls. *Yet will I leap for joy in Jehovah. I will exult in the God of my salvation. Jehovah my Lord is my strength*" (Habakkuk 3:17-19, Spurrell Original Hebrew).

This joy comes from knowing that God will always have a pure ministry, a holy and separated body — even in the most evil days. They know that God will honor them with His constant presence though all others turn from them in fear. They are full of joy because they draw strength from believing in the majesty and power of God, whose judgments are always righteous. With Habakkuk, they can say, "Though all else fails, my heart will rejoice in God alone!" Even when there seems to be failure all around and so little evidence of results, grief gives way to ecstatic joy, because of nearness to the heart of the Lord. With Paul, the grieving remnant can say, "As dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; *as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing...*" (2 Corinthians 6:9,10).

As conclusive biblical proof that sharing God's grief results in rejoicing, I remind you of the words of David who said, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again *with rejoicing*, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:6).

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