

A Dry Spell



David Wilkerson February 1, 1979

I preach to thousands, yet there are times I feel so very dry - so far away from the warm presence of God. In these moments of dryness, I have no great yearning to read the Word - the reading of the Bible is done mostly through a sense of obligation. When I'm dry and empty, I feel little compulsion to pray. I know my faith is intact, and my love for Jesus is strong. There is no desire in me to taste the things of this world. It's just that I can't seem to touch God in those days and weeks of spiritual dryness.

Have you ever sat in church and watched those all around you getting blessed, while you feel nothing? they cry; they pray; they worship with tremendous feelings. But you are not moved upon - at all. You begin to wonder if there is something wrong with your spiritual life. Christians all around you are telling these great stories about how God is blessing them and answering all their prayers. They seem to live on a mountaintop of happy experiences, while you just plod along, loving Jesus, but not setting the world on fire. some of your prayers have still not been answered. You don't shout or put on an emotional display. You have no big stories to tell about some fantastic miracle you've witnessed. It almost makes you feel like a second-class believer.

I believe that all true believers experience dry spells at various times in their Christian life. Even Jesus felt the isolation - when He cried aloud, "Father, why have you forsaken me?"

Notes from my diary - during a dry spell:

I keep notes of almost every thought I receive in my nighttime devotions. Recently, during a dry spell, I recorded my feelings. I think there are many Christians who will relate to these honest notations made in my diary.

A note of caution before reading this very personal confession: when I talk about the sin in my own life - do not try to interpret that as some hideous, openly flaunted weakness. To me, whatever is not of faith is sin. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. I often fall into the gross sin of doubt. So, please do not read into my confession of sin something not intended. Think of your own sin as you read.

I wonder why God seems to be so distant at times. Is He angry with me? Does He have to hide from me because of failure in my life? Is God holding back on me in some way, bound by a contract in His Holy Word that demands He close His eyes in my direction because of my stubbornness?

Does sin cause a separation? Is God really there, wanting to break through to me with overwhelming joy and peace - but unable to because of a barrier I have constructed as a result of a besetting sin? Must He hide - against His own will - because He honors His Word above His name? He hid from Israel in times of backsliding. Must He hide from me for awhile, until I see the horror of my sins and run from them?

Does He finally get weary of my constant falling, and must He shut me off for awhile only because He loves me so? Does His omnipotent love demand that He isolate me from His presence until I break and yield as a submitting child - weary of my emptiness and despair?

Or is all of this dryness a result of my own blindness? Is it just a result of living on feelings? Is He there all the time, in spite of my failure, waiting for me to accept His forgiveness? Do I feel isolated only because I'm ashamed and

burdened with guilt? Do I shun Him because I know I'm unworthy of His blessings? Has the knowledge of my weaknesses made me believe I have no right to expect this nearness and comfort?

I am not morbid; I have no death wish. It's not just the "nighttime blues." And, I never once doubt my eternal salvation. What I do doubt is my ability to understand how God works. I have always felt the power of His great love. Even in my driest hours, the sense of His love for me is almost overwhelming. But it is not enough to know the Father loves you. It is not enough to believe all His promises. It is not enough to know you want the Lord with all that is in you. There must be more.

There must be the nearness of the Lord. The still small voice. The joy of hearing that voice. The knowledge that He not only abides, but that His word is even in your mouth. The heart must feel His warmth. The glow of God's presence must fill the room. The tears that are all bottled up inside must find release. The joy of Jesus must rush through all the corridors of the mind. The heart must know that He has come to guide, to comfort, to help in the hour of need. There must be no doubt - no question - that God has chosen to come and commune with His servant.

Without the nearness of God, there can be no peace. The dryness can be stopped only with the dew of His glory. The despair can be dispelled only by the assurance God is answering. The fire of the Holy Ghost must heat the mind, body and soul.

I want God's total presence. I want to flow in His river of love. I want complete forgiveness of all my sins. But more than forgiveness - I want freedom. What is forgiveness without freedom? I know the Lord has promised to forgive me seven times seven in a single day. I know His love and forgiveness is to all generations. I know that if I confess my sins, He is faithful and just to forgive - and to cleanse me. But it is not enough to be forgiven and cleansed from yesterday's sins. I need freedom from the power of the sin that so easily besets me. Freedom from the slavery of all passions. Freedom from the chains of all iniquity.

I know God's Word promises freedom. I know the many Scriptures that talk of "walking in the Spirit," so as not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. I know about the warnings to flee all lusts. Other Scriptures flood my mind about "overcoming" the world. But there are times I don't seem to find the key. How do those verses work in a practical way in my everyday life? What does it really mean to "walk in the Spirit"? Does that mean you will never fall again? A child keeps falling while learning to walk. Even adults stumble and fall. Can you fall - even while walking in the Spirit - get up and walk again - getting stronger as you go?

But God, You've got to be there! If You are not there in my time of dryness, there is no hope. You must be there, calling for me - longing for my voice - yearning over me as a father pities his child. If not - life has no meaning.

He cannot give up on me when I'm hurting. Yes, my flesh is weak. Yes, I fail Him - over and over again. Yes, I've told Him how sorry I am - a thousand times this year. Yes, I've promised to forsake the world and everything in it. Yet, I can't seem to keep my word at times. Yes, there are a few times I feel like the worst kind of sinner; a cheat; a cad; a two-timing, worthless child. Yes, I don't feel I am worthy to ever expect Him to come near me when I feel so cheap and ungrateful.

But, in spite of all that, somehow I know He is not far off. Somehow, I hear a distinct small voice calling, "Come, my child - I am aware of all you are experiencing. I still love you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. We will face it all together. I am still your Father - and you are My child. Come, not on your merits or goodness, but come on the merits of your Savior - Jesus the Lord!"

Somehow I know He will bring me out of this dry spell. I have in me a flame that will not be smothered. I seem to know the promises will be fulfilled. In His time, in His way, He will turn my dryness into a river of love. His word will come to me. A new revelation of His will. A renewed spirit and a greater peace of mind. All because He has never failed me once before.

Oh, God! I have feet of clay. My mind is strong in faith. My heart melts for You. My tears are hot with desire for the touch of the Lord. But my feet keep taking me astray. I am not walking in the Spirit as I would honestly like to. Where is that day-by-day victory? Where is the power to keep myself holy and pure?

God, I search the Scripture, hoping to find a formula - a way out of the bondage of sin. If it means staying on my knees all night, then I'll do it. Does it mean reading my Bible through - until I stumble on a clear message of

deliverance? Then I'll read and read! Most of the cliches and easy solutions offered by preachers do not work - even though they sound pious.

Somewhere there has to be victory over all the power of the enemy. Somewhere I can put aside the weight, the burden, the harassment. God promises total freedom, total victory over the power of the enemy. Someday my foot will no longer be snared in Satan's trap. Someday I'll look into my heart and see only Jesus - only holiness - only those things pleasing to God.

Someday God must lead all His children to a place of freedom from sin's power. The Word of God is so vast. I know so little of how to find in it the answers to my personal needs. The only hope is that the Holy Spirit will supernaturally lead me to the truth that will set me free. I can't find it by myself. I can't get it out of books or from counselors. I can't understand any of it without the Holy Spirit revealing it to me. I want to know what God expects of me; I want to know how much is my part and how much is His!

Oh God, cleanse my desires. Make me desire those things You know to be best for me. If You gave me everything I desired, it would be a bedlam of confusion, with no order or harmony left. All my human desires are blind! They are usually out of keeping with my real needs and are often contrary to God's moral laws.

It is so easy to desire what would cause the greatest damage to myself, lead to the worst misery, and bring on the most tragic kind of confusion. I think of my desires as being well thought out, intelligent and needful to my well-being.

Sin causes my desires to be loosed from God's moral law. They end up as foamings of the inner appetites. Soul-hunger, aspirations, lusts and passions reek with all kinds of disorder. They are phantoms without perception.

Where do many of my desires originate? Not from a spring of reason and common sense; but they are instigated, instead, by raw lustings of the old nature. They rush out of my mind like wild troops - confused, blind and in total disarray. They swarm like bees - fast and wild.

As time goes by, I so often discover how vain and foolish my desires were. I desire to undertake a new project, and it explodes before I can get started. Later, I learn my disappointment is a blessing in disguise. If God had not interfered and kept those desires from me, I could have destroyed myself.

My desires can often be very morally bad. They can be fouled by lust. There is an entire breed of desires lurking beneath the surface, pushed upon us all constantly by our Adam nature - always breaking into the mind, mingling with our deepest and holiest thoughts, trying to make the mind accept them as God's thoughts.

Very often, my personal desires are so dominate, so deeply embedded, they invade my mind in the secret closet. They become so powerful and persistent, I allow them to deceive me into accepting them as the still small voice of God in the inner man. May God keep me from the deception of my own immoral desires. What shall I do to overcome spiritual dryness?

1. I must maintain a life of prayer!

Why is it that none of us pray as we should anymore? We know that God is wanting to comfort and help us. We know that our burdens can all be lifted when we are shut in with Him. There is something deep within us that keeps calling us to prayer. It is the Holy Spirit saying, "Come." Come to the water that satisfies that soul thirst. Come to the Father who pities His children. Come to the Lord of life who promises to forgive every sin committed. Come to the One who refuses to condemn you, or forsake you, or hide from you.

God does not hide from us when we sin. Never! That is only our fear condemning our hearts. God did not hide in the garden when Adam and Eve sinned. He still came to them, calling and yearning for their fellowship and love. We ourselves hide - because of our guilt and condemnation. We can't imagine God still loving us, when we are so disobedient and ungrateful.

Come boldly to His throne of grace - even when you have sinned and failed. He forgives - instantly - those who repent with godly sorrow. You don't have to spend hours and days in remorse and guilt. You don't have to earn your way back into His good graces. You don't have to pretend a superficial kind of sorrow or feign tears. Go to the Father - bend your knees and open your heart - and cry out your agony and pain. Tell Him all about your failings -

all about your struggles. Tell Him about your loneliness, about your feelings of isolation, about your fears, about your failures.

We try everything but prayer. We read books, looking for formulas and guidelines. We go to friends, to ministers, to counselors - looking everywhere for a word of comfort or advice. We seek mediators and forget the one Mediator who has the answer to everything.

We don't pray because it's so hard to do - most of the time. It's not hard when trouble comes unexpectedly. Cancer strikes - or a loved one dies suddenly of a heart attack. Then we are so broken in spirit, we cry and pray. That's all right. But we should be leaning on Jesus through the good and the bad. We should be getting our strength and help long before the crisis overwhelms us. We should be pouring out our hearts to Him every day of our lives.

No wonder we are so dry and empty. We have simply neglected the secret closet of prayer. It is not really dryness - it is lukewarmness. It is a growing coldness caused by drifting along, getting away from the holy place.

Nothing dispels dryness and emptiness quicker than an hour or two shut in with God. Putting off that date with God in His secret closet causes guilt. We know that our love for Him should lead us into His presence, but we busy ourselves in so many other things - time slips away, and God is left out. We throw in His direction a whole array of "thought prayers." But nothing can take the place of that secret closet - with the door shut - praying to the Father in that seclusion! That is the solution to every dry spell.

2. I must no longer be afraid of a little suffering!

Christ's resurrection was preceded by a short period of suffering. We do die! We do suffer! There is pain and sorrow!

We do not want to suffer! Or resist! Or be hurt! We want painless deliverance! We want supernatural intervention. "Do it, God," we pray, "because I am weak and always will be. Do it all, while I go my way, waiting for a supernatural deliverance!"

Or, we blame our troubles on demons! We seek out a man of God and hope he can cast him out - so we can go our way with no pain or suffering - all done! Breeze right through to a peaceful life of victory! We want someone to lay hands on us and drive away all the dryness. But victory is not always without suffering and pain. Look at your sin! Face it! Suffer it through as Jesus did. Fill up His suffering! Enter into it! Suffering endures only for a night; joy always follows in the morning.

God sets before you a choice. His love demands a choice. If God supernaturally lifted us out of every battle without pain or suffering, it would abort all trials, all temptation - there would be no free choice, no testing as by fire. It would be God superseding His will on mankind. He chooses to meet us in our dryness and show us how it can become the way into a new life of faith.

- It is often according to the will of God to suffer dryness - and even pain.

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

- But thank God - suffering is always that short period before final victory!

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

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