

Articles and Sermons :: God Has Not Forgotten You by David Wilkerson

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There is a fiery message burning in my bones. It is a message every Christian needs to hear, especially in this age of overpowering temptations and excruciating hurt.

The message I bring to you from the Lord is simply this: God has not forgotten you! He knows exactly where you are, what you are going through right now, and He is monitoring every step along your path. But we are just like the children of Israel who doubted God's daily care for them, even though prophets were sent to deliver wonderful promises from Heaven.

God's people sat in darkness, hungry and thirsty, praying for deliverance and comfort. God bottled every tear, and He heard their cry and answered, "I will preserve thee... You shall no longer hunger and thirst... I will have mercy on you and I lead you by springs of living water... for the Lord will comfort his people and have mercy on all the troubled ones..." (Isaiah 49). Did Israel rejoice in these promises sent directly from the throne of God? Did God's people quit their fretting and begin trusting in the Lord to see them through? Did those who were hurt and confused believe a single word of these promises? No!

"But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me" (Isaiah 49:14). These were not reprobates or sons of the devil. Rather, they were those "who sought the Lord... the sons of Abraham... those who knew righteousness... in whose heart was the law of God..." How much clearer must God make His Word to these stubborn, unbelieving children? God was greatly concerned because they were not appropriating or hearing His promises. You can almost sense the impatience of the Lord in rebuking their unbelief. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of men... and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and thou hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy..." (Isaiah 51:12-13).

We Simply Ignore God's Promises

Does it all sound familiar? Here we are today as the children of the same Holy God, having in us the glorious promise of Holy Ghost comfort; yet we go about daily fearing the oppressor. We know what our Lord has promised us: guidance, peace, a shelter from the storm, a way where there seems to be none, a supply for every need, healing for every hurt. Do we believe any of it? Do we just put these promises out of our minds and go on our way, worrying and fretting and taking matters into our own hands? I'm afraid so! And we are all alike. We get in a tight place; we get lonely and depressed; we fall into temptation and yield to lust; we make tragic errors and live in guilt and terror; and through it all, we choose to forget all that God has promised us. We forget we serve a God who laid the very foundations of this earth. We forget our Father is all powerful, and that all things that exist were made by Him. We see only our problems. Our fears shut out the vision of His power and glory. We get afraid; we panic; we question; we doubt.

We forget in our hour of need that God has us in the palm of His hand. Instead, like the children of Israel, we are afraid we are going to blow it all and be destroyed by the enemy. How difficult it must be for our loving Father to understand why we won't trust Him when we are down and in need. God must think to Himself, "Don't they know I have graven them upon the palms of My hands... I could no more forget them in their hour of need than a mother could forget her suckling child... and even though a mother could forget her child, I cannot forget a single child of mine" (Isaiah 49:15-16).

The Sin Of Christians Is Unbelief

Again and again God came to Israel pleading for their confidence and trust in times of crises. "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not!" (Isaiah 30:15). God said to them, "You didn't ask at My mouth, praying for help and guidance. You didn't wait for Me to help. You didn't return to Me for help and strength when you really needed it. You didn't accept My counsel; you didn't wait for Me to work; you didn't wait for that quiet word behind you that whispers, 'This is the way; walk ye in it.' You didn't believe My strong arm could deliver you. You didn't call upon My name of rest in the shadow of My palm. No! You took matters in your own hand; you depended on others; you trusted in your own thoughts. You conceived chaff and were burnt by your own fire."

God seems finally to shout at Israel, "Seek ye out the book of the Lord, and read: not one promise shall fail... for my mouth hath commanded... so strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you... sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 34:16, 35:3-10).

It seems to me that even the New Testament echoes God's displeasure with unbelief: "Ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:6-8).

Jesus worried that when He returned to this earth, He would not find any faith left. He had just finished a message about how certainly God answers prayer. He had just promised that the Heavenly Father would speedily "avenge and answer his own elect, which cry unto Him day and night." It must have been with a heavy heart that Jesus spoke the following: "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:7-8).

We Have Begun to Doubt That God Still Answers Prayer

Can it be that we continue in our hurting - continue in our sinning - continue living in defeat and failure - simply because we really do not believe God answers our prayers anymore?

Are we as guilty as the children of Israel in thinking God has forsaken us and given us over to our own devices to figure things out for ourselves? Do we really believe our Lord meant it when He said God will act just in time, in answer to our prayer of faith? Jesus implies that most of us, even though called and chosen, will not be trusting in Him when He returns. Some of God's people have already lost their confidence in Him. They do not believe, in the deepest of their souls, that their prayers make any difference. They act as if they are all on their own.

Instead of submitting to the Lord in quiet confidence and rest in His promises, we try so hard to work out our own solutions. And when our way of doing things blows up in our faces, we get angry with God.

A young divorcee confessed, "I almost went out to get stone-drunk tonight. I've been praying for a whole year now for my husband to return, but instead of coming back to me, he has taken up with another woman. God didn't answer my prayer, so I thought I'd go out and get drunk to show Him how angry I am." What a pity! She was ready to take it out on God because He wouldn't answer her prayer her way on her time schedule. Like so many others who beg God for favors, she wanted only one thing: relief from her loneliness and release for her sexual drive. She didn't want more of Jesus, more holiness and Christian character. No! She simply wanted a man at her side. I knew immediately that God could not answer that woman's prayer. She was not ready to receive her husband back. She was till an emotional cripple, and she would have blown it a second time. Then all she would have left would be another failure, and her despair would be compounded. God had not forsaken her; He was actually being merciful to her. He was saving her life, but she couldn't see it.

Be honest now! Has your faith been weak lately? Have you almost given up on certain things you have prayed so much about? Have you grown weary with waiting? Have you thrown up your hands in resignation as if to say, "I just can't seem to break through. I don't know what is wrong and why my prayer is not answered. Evidently God has said no to me."

What about all the lonely people in the world who are torn apart by their solitude? The young unmarrieds who spend months and even years praying for a loving mate? Others would be satisfied if God would answer prayer and give them just a friend. They cry at night. The telephone becomes their life line, and when things get unbearable, they call someone - anyone - just to talk for awhile. Does God still answer those kinds of prayers? You know - the old-fashioned kinds where Christian girls still pray in a Christian husband - and boys pray in the Christian wife? Can God miraculously send into lonely lives friends, mates, in answer to prayer and faith? I still have to believe God works that way. Yet I know for a fact, after interviewing hundreds of lonely people, that few of them really believe God's promises.

Show me a lonely, hurting child of God who puts character and growth ahead of all other needs, and I'll show you one who is sure to be fulfilled. Instead of praying with faith, instead of reading God's Word and growing in strength, instead of committing their future to His keeping - most lonely people watch TV, read junk magazines, and grow spiritually dull. Their faith is weak because they are spiritually crippled. They pray only in quick snatches. They wallow in self-pity and self-condemnation. They are stunted and unbelieving, ready to think God has picked them out of the crowd to be treated wrongly. God can't answer their prayers because they are not ready for friendship and true love. They would mess it up in a short time because unbelief with God always leads to instability in human relationships. I say to all lonely people: Get back to the secret closet! Get back to simple, childlike faith! Start yearning for Jesus - more than for a friend or mate. God will

ll, according to His own Word, meet your every need.

God Help Me, Or I'm Going to Blow It All

Almost everywhere I go today I hear Christians, even ministers, tell me there is something missing in their lives. A pastor friend summed it up like this, "David, I start to hunger after the Lord. I get a broken spirit; I weep and cry for hours. I feel like something in me is seeking expression. Like a birth about to take place. I want more from God and more out of life. I want to be holy. I want to know God and get through to Him. I pray that what I feel won't dissipate but will keep growing until I break through. But, sadly, in a few weeks I lose my broken spirit. I go back to my old fears and dryness. I get so close, but I never go all the way. Then I say to myself - What happened?"

Does that describe what you go through? Do you feel like you are just outside the gate; so close, about to break through to a life of joy, faith, answered prayers, and victory? Is there something in you that keeps condemning you, as if you never do enough to please God? At times do you think to yourself, "I'm just not doing anything. I'm not getting anything accomplished. I'm not growing. I'm not making real progress?"

I am of the opinion that in all of us, just beneath the surface, there lingers a horrible thought, "Oh God, help me or I'm going to blow it all." We never say it, but we think it. "God, I'm so weak, so susceptible to my besetting sin, so ignorant about winning over temptation, so confused about prayer and how to overcome the devil - I'm afraid I'll do something stupid and ruin everything."

God Is Not a Divine Tease or Riddle

What does it all mean when prayers go unanswered? When hurts linger? When suffering is permitted to continue, and God seems to be doing nothing in response to our faith? Often God is loving us more supremely at that time than ever before. The Word says, "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." A chastening of love takes precedence over every act of faith, over every prayer, over every promise. What I see as hurting in me could be His loving me. It could be His gentle hand spanking me out of my stubbornness and pride. God could be saying to me, "I've promised to meet your every need. I told you I would do anything you asked of Me in faith. You need to submit to a season of chastening; it is the only way I can make you into an experienced vessel of love. You can ask to be delivered, but it will only delay your spiritual growth. Through this suffering you will learn obedience, if you submit."

We have faith in our faith. We place more emphasis on the power of our prayers than we do on getting His power into us. We want to figure out God so we can read Him like a book. We don't want to be surprised or bewildered. And when things happen contrary to our concept of God, we say, "That can't be God; that's not the way He works."

We are so busy working on God, we forget He is trying to work on us. That is what this life is all about: God at work on us, trying to remake us into vessels of glory. We are so busy praying to change things, we have little time to allow prayer to change us. God has not put prayer and faith in our hands as if they were two secret tools by which a select group of "experts" learn to pry something out of Him. God said He is more willing to give than we are to receive. Why are we using prayer and faith as "keys" or tools to unlock something that has never been locked up? It's all freely given. It's been out-poured. It's a storehouse with all the doors and windows opened, with a Father who is already at work daily loading us with His benefits. When Jesus said, "Knock, and it shall be opened," He was talking about your door, not His. Knock down all your own doors. You need no key to enter His presence.

Prayer is not for God's benefit; it is for ours. Faith is not for His benefit, but for ours. God is not some eternal, divine tease. He has not surrounded Himself in riddles for men to unravel, as if to say, "The wise will get the prize."

We are so mixed up on this matter of prayer and faith; we have had the audacity to think of God as our personal "genie" who fulfills every wish. We think of faith as a way to corner God on His promises. We think God is pleased by our efforts to back Him against the wall and shout, "Lord, You can't go back on Your promise. I want what is coming to me. You are bound by Your Word. You must do it or Your Word is not true."

This is why we miss the true meaning of prayer and faith. We see God only as the giver, we are the receiver. But prayer and faith are the avenues by which we become the givers to God. They are to be used, not as ways to get things from God, but as a way to give Him those things by which we can please Him.

Something Better Than Answered Prayer

Do you want a promise or do you want the Promisemaker? Do you want answers to prayer or do you want Him who works all things together for good? Can you imagine a wife who sticks with her husband only for the benefits she receives?

She enjoys the prestige of her renowned husband, using his name freely to enhance her own position. She enjoys all the luxuries he provides; she constantly spends on his credit cards. Yet she takes for granted the one who loves her so. She has little time to spend with him; she is so preoccupied with her own comfort and pleasure. How long before the world knows she uses her husband, that she is more interested not so much in him, but in what he provides? Beloved bride of Christ, is that not the way we treat our Master? We demand the use of His credit cards, while showing so little interest in His love.

All the promises are given to us so we can become partakers of Him. He wants to get His divine nature of love into our physical bodies.

Do I believe all the promises are mine? Yes! Do I believe God still answers prayer? Yes! Do I believe He will comfort me; deliver me; give me the things I need to be free and fulfilled? Yes! But all that God does in me and for me depends on one thing: I must believe that He hears me when I call, that He bottles every tear, that He is more willing to give than I am to receive, that He is most anxious to answer every prayer that will help me be more like Himself, that He will never withhold anything that I need any longer than I can bear to be without it.

God has not forsaken me - nor you! A thousand times no! He is right now wanting us all to believe He is working all things out for our good. So quit trying to figure it out; stop worrying; stop doubting your Lord! The answer is coming! God has not shut His ear! You will reap - in due season - if you faint not!

from: <http://www.worldchallenge.org/en/node/1340>