

"Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

"Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble . . ." (Heb. 12:5-12)

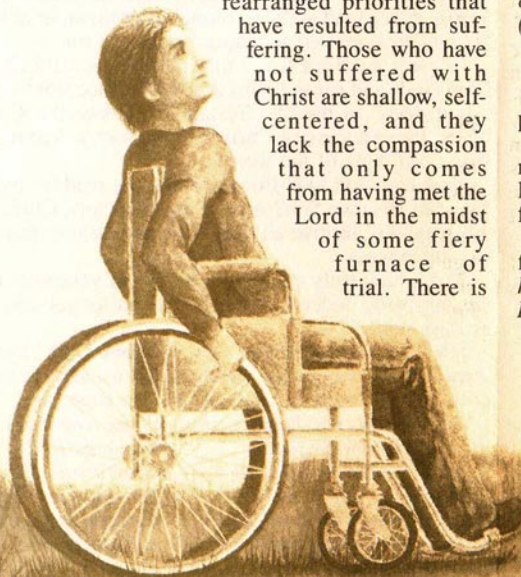
I hear people say today, "Yes, the Lord chastens and corrects. But not by way of suffering or pain. God wouldn't do that. Proper faith wouldn't allow it."

The truth is, my friend—all through history, to this very day, godly people have suffered and are even now suffering. To deny that is to deny the truth. Paul tells of the suffering of the early Christians. Shall we accuse them of not having faith?

The truth is that some of the saintliest people living today suffer from cancer, ulcers, rheumatism, heart trouble, etc., etc. I cringe when I hear people say, "They don't have to be sick. Their faith is weak."

None of these saints who have suffered would trade places with those who have not. Oh, the growth, the depths of God's love discovered, the true values and

rearranged priorities that have resulted from suffering. Those who have not suffered with Christ are shallow, self-centered, and they lack the compassion that only comes from having met the Lord in the midst of some fiery furnace of trial. There is



also an impatient kind of arrogance about people who have never suffered.

I once refused to accept the term, "chosen to suffer." I was appalled by the idea that God allowed some to suffer

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more than others, to help bring them into a deeper knowledge of Himself. But then I look at those who suffer—and often they are the most faithful, trusting, loving of all God's children. Truly, they are chosen vessels.

I know some will be offended by what I've just said. And that is because we have strayed so far from the realities of Christ's Gospel. We are so spoiled, so self-pampering, we forget that the call of Christ is to separation, tests, trials, yes—and even suffering. Proof? Yes! Much proof!

"But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.'" (Acts 9:15-16)

"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin . . ." (Heb. 11:24-25)

"For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake . . ." (Phil. 1:29)

Conclusion

1. If you can't give God perfect faith, give Him perfect love. "Perfect love casts out all fear."

Not perfect faith—but perfect love. Perfect love is the rest God has for His people. He wants us to rest in His love, trusting that He will always come to our aid as a father to a hurting child—in spite of our inadequate faith.

Stop evaluating or grading your faith. Quit trying to figure out faith. The Bible says, "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. Pursue love . . ." (1 Cor. 13:13; 14:1)

If you are going to "specialize" in anything—make it love. The Bible says, "Faith works by love." Without love, all faith is in vain.

2. If God does not answer certain of our prayers, you can be sure He has some great eternal reason for not doing so.

It boils down to this: God has all power and can do anything. Nothing is impossible to Him. He has promised to answer every prayer in Christ's name. So we must ask, in full assurance of faith—expecting an answer. But—should God delay that answer or choose another path for us—He must have a mighty good reason for it all. And we must believe that whatever God permits in our lives—it will one day all work to our good.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28)

Our Heavenly Father knows exactly where we are going, what we need, and He will give us what is best—in proper Holy Ghost timing.

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matt. 7:11)

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust!' For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper, and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day; of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.

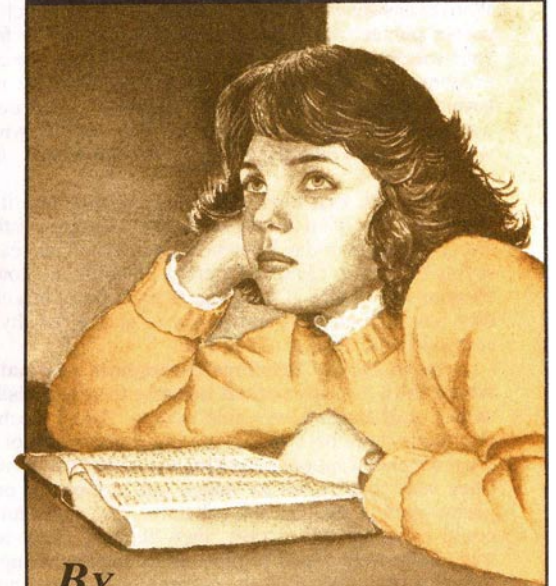
"Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him, and honor him. With a long life I will satisfy him, and let him behold My salvation." (Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16)

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The TRUTH About FAITH



BY
DAVID WILKERSON

Is your faith weak? Are you perplexed because your faith doesn't seem to get results? Have you diligently prayed about a request and believed for it with all your heart—and it didn't happen? Even worse, the very opposite happened? A loved one was not healed. The desire of your heart was not granted—at least, not to your satisfaction. The miracle you needed has not yet come. Time drags on, and the problems are still there.

The worst part of it all is that the Word of God tries you in such times. You read all the glorious promises: "All things are possible to them that believe." "Ask, nothing wavering, and it shall be done." "All things whatsoever you shall ask in faith, believing, you shall have them." You

set out to claim those promises. You know God is not a liar, and He would not tease you with unreachable goals. Yet, try as you may to believe—really, truly believe—you often are left confused, because the answer is either delayed or not in view.

According to the theology of some, there are only two reasons why you did not get what you asked for. Either your faith is faulty or there is sin in your life. You are made to believe that God had to withhold the answer until your faith improved enough to satisfy Him. Either the quality or quantity of your faith did not come up to God's criteria for answered prayer.

You are made to believe that God is obligated by His Word to answer every request—the moment you reach the proper pinnacle of faith. That includes removing from your vocabulary any negative thoughts, words, or confessions. You see, you dare not offend God. He may have been almost ready to grant your desire—but, oops! You made a negative confession. You said the wrong words, so God's taking it all back! Now you have it—now you don't!

My friends, that kind of theology is silly, and it's a slap in the face of an intelligent, loving Heavenly Father. Everywhere I go today, I meet Christians living in fear of saying the wrong thing and thereby blocking the flow of blessings—as if God is hanging on every word His children say, tiptoeing around, ready to slap a penalty on everyone who speaks out of line.

I am meeting Christians throughout our nation whose faith is shipwrecked because they are disillusioned and hurt. They came upon a "faith" teaching that made them believe that getting every desire of the heart depended simply on getting their formulas correct. They were challenged to launch out in God for prosperity, perfect health, and whatever else their minds could conceive. "Conceive, then believe," they were told. They were urged to blot out of their thinking all thoughts of suffering, pain, poverty—or anything negative. They were carried along by the testimonies of those around them who were getting new cars, homes, jobs, fur coats, diamond rings—whatever their hearts desired—all through positive faith.

But when none of these things happened for them—when, instead of prosperity, there came accumulating bills—when, instead of healing, there came a time of testing, tears, sorrow, and all—they ended up confused! What happened? It worked for the teacher. It worked for the evangelist. He prospers. He gets anything he wants—right when he wants it. Then come the questions, "It works for others—why not for me?" "What am I doing wrong? It must be in me—my faith must be weak, imperfect. There must be a secret sin blocking the answer."

Let me share with you some very healing thoughts about faith and love. I believe God works miracles in answer to the prayer of faith. I believe every promise in God's Word—as is! But, through much suffering and tears, I've discovered something wonderful about the way God works. What you are about to read should help

renew your confidence in the Lord and set you free from the bondage of trying to figure out faith.

● LESSON ONE:

God is not motivated to act for us as a result of our faith alone. God is love, and that is what motivates Him to act.

Suppose my son Greg was caught in a bear trap in the woods near our home. I hear his cry for help. He is hurt, bleeding, and calls for me with all his might.

As his father, do I stop first to analyze the quality of his faith? Do I ask myself the question, "I wonder if Greg believes I'll answer him? Does he have faith enough in me—trusting I'll come to his rescue?"

No! A thousand times no! I run to my boy's side—no questions asked—no faith involved—because I am motivated by a father's love for a hurting child. His faith doesn't motivate me. It is not anything he does at all. It is simply my love for him.

What kind of an earthly father would leave a child bleeding and hurt in some forsaken woods—simply because the child didn't voice some kind of faith in him? And God will never leave one of His children to suffer alone. He will never shut His ear to their cry—simply because their faith in Him is weak.

My faith, your faith, all faith—must rest on the lovingkindness and concern of our Heavenly Father. We are commanded to glory in the love and everlasting kindness of our Father.

"But let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things." (Jer. 9:24)

God so loves His children, He hears BEFORE they call, like a mother who anticipates her baby's cry. He loves me and comes to my rescue when my faith is weak, when I don't deserve any answer from Him—all because of His tenderness and kindness.

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us; nor will He keep His anger forever." (Psalm 103:8-9)

The greatest peace has flooded my life since I have convinced myself that God loves me. So much so, He will come to my rescue and do what is right—in every situation of my life. Weak faith or not, He still loves me and nothing can hinder that love.

● LESSON TWO:

A right confession is no guarantee of an answer—a wrong confession alone does not hinder an answer!

Job's wife confessed the world's worst confession. She said to Job, "Curse God and die!" Yet, in spite of it, she participated in the very same blessings of her faithful husband.

One theologian asked, "Why didn't God take his wife, since He took everything else from Job?" Read almost any commentary and you detect that same kind of disrespect for Job's wife. But lately I've had a new appreciation for that suffering woman. I think we've been too hard on her. After all, those ten children who were killed were hers, too.

No wonder this woman was staggered in her faith. The devil wasn't after her; yet she suffered as much or more than Job. A woman usually suffers more than a man over the death of children. She had the added sorrow of watching her husband slowly die of elephantiasis, a terminal disease.

Job's wife had stood weeping over ten caskets—all in a row. No more grandchildren. No more holidays together with the family. The only family left now was Job, and he, too, was dying. Elephantiasis is described as a disease causing intense heat; a burning, swelling from ulcers and cancerous sores; covering the skin with knotty bark-like texture, such as the skin of an elephant. The disease grows progressively worse and affects the genital organs. This meant Job could have no more children in his diseased condition.

His wife could not even look forward to raising a new family. What despair must have come over her. I'm sure she lost all hope. She had to have been mad at God. I don't excuse what she said, and I think it is tragic that she did not yield to God's love and hold on to her faith. But I can understand the kind of grief and pain that staggered her so. I can understand how, in her human sorrow, she could not fathom what was happening. All she knew was that all was lost. She thought there was nothing left to live for. And that is why she suggested Job commit suicide and abandon his faith in God.

Did God hold a grudge against her? After the troubles passed and Job was healed, did God hold her wrong confession against her? Did He hold back any blessing from her because of her very human outburst of fear? No! God blessed that lady! I believe God understood her. He knew she didn't mean what she said! He looked beyond her frailty and saw the cry of her heart—and He blessed her in spite of herself.

"If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." (Psalm 130:3-4)

"He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him." (Psalm 103:10,13)

"You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful." (James 5:11)

"For He will deliver the needy when he cries for help, the afflicted also, and him who has no helper." (Psalm 72:12)

Don't ever be condemned by the things you said in haste or in fear. We serve a Father who forgives and forgets every doubting, fearful word that has been spoken in despair. Be honest with God. Job's wife was. Don't fake it. If you can't understand why your prayers aren't answered, or why you have to suffer—if your heart is full of questions, fears, and confusion—tell it to God! Spill out your innermost feelings, negative or not. Our Father will let you cry it all out, listen patiently to your complaints and fears, and not once will He condemn you for it.

All you need do is turn to Him in love and cry out, "Now Lord, heal my unbelief. Take away my fears and confusion. Show me Your love, now that I need it so. Help me submit."

The God I serve holds no grudges.

● LESSON THREE:

If you have confessed and forsaken your sins—they can in no way hinder God's work in your life.

I hear it said, "You have sin in your life; therefore God is hiding from you." What a clever satanic tool to keep God's people in fear and bondage! And surprisingly, multitudes of God's dear children have convinced themselves that God is either mad at them, hiding from them, or at least holding back answers to prayer—because of sin.

Doesn't the Bible say, "Your sins have separated you from God, and caused Him to hide His face from you"? Yes it does! In the Old Testament, before the Cross, before the shedding of Christ's blood for the free remission of all sins of the world.

How can God hide from sins already paid for by the blood of His own Son? And, if any man sins, Christ the advocate will forgive all those sins and cleanse from all unrighteousness.

If you have truly confessed the sins of yesterday, they are forgiven, under the blood, and no longer counted against you!

For the Christian whose sins are blotted out, delayed answers, suffering, tests, and trials are usually the result of loving chastisement and not sin. The Bible says, *"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently . . ." (Proverbs 13:24)*

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.'

"It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."