

# Devil, You Can't Walk On Me Anymore

By David Wilkerson

In Isaiah 51, the Lord delivers a powerful message to all who pursue righteousness. He declares, "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord" (Isaiah 51:1). A few verses later, he again calls to those "that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law" (51:7).

When Isaiah delivered this message, his immediate audience was Israel. Yet God also directs this call to every devoted believer today. It's a word meant not just for natural Israel, but for all who comprise the Israel of faith. He's speaking to everyone who would pursue Jesus with a greater passion. And in these two brief verses, he tells us, "I have a message here for you in particular."

The Lord begins by addressing his hearers as "thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine" (51:21). At the time Isaiah prophesied, Israel was enslaved by Babylon. God wanted his precious people to know he recognized their plight. Likewise today, he's addressing every Christian who has become captive to some form of bondage. It doesn't matter whether this bondage is mental, physical or spiritual. God's eye is on every saint who staggers under the weight of an awful burden. And he gives them this word:

"Don't think for a moment this weight has come upon you as a result of sin. You're under a direct attack from Satan. The enemy of your soul has accused and tormented you. So now, like a person who's drunk on wine, you're woozy from the effect. You've been blind-sided by the devil, and you think you've caused it. But you have to listen to me now. I want your ear, because I have a word to speak to you."

Maybe right now you're enduring a dark night of the soul.  
Perhaps you're sitting on an ash heap of perceived failure.  
Or, you're weighed down by a band of sinful chains hanging around your neck.  
You've worn it for so long now, you've sunk into despair.  
You've laid aside the robe of righteousness Jesus gave you, because you feel unworthy to wear it.  
You're simply too depressed to move on in faith.

I tell you, God has a message just for you. And he's asking you to listen with full attention:

*"Therefore hear now this...Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling...But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee" (51:21-23).*

The Lord is saying, in other words: "I'm here to plead your cause, to intervene for you. And I make you this promise: I will take from you the cup of fear that's plaguing your life. And I'll place it in the hands of those who oppress you. I've had it with every demon or person who has caused your affliction. I won't allow their harassment to continue.

I'm telling you right now, it's all over for your oppressors." He has directed his fury at those "which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over" (51:23).

Yet the Lord continues by saying, "Thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over" (51:23). Do you see the picture he's describing? He's saying, "Yes, I've come to deliver you. But I also have to point out your part in this. The truth is, you've allowed the devil to have his way with you.

"At first, Satan overwhelmed you with his tactics. But instead of resisting him with my promises, you've bowed and scraped to him. You've willingly laid down your body in fear, on the streets of despair. And you've subjected yourself to his devilish indignities. You let him rub your face in the dust. You let him walk all over you. You're totally intimidated by his principalities and powers."

1. God sees sincere, devoted saints being trampled underfoot by Satan.

Many dedicated servants today are bearing burdens they shouldn't bear. They're being beaten down by fear and discouragement. How does the Lord react to this? He asks, "What have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for naught? They that rule over them make them to howl...and my name continually every day is

blasphemed" (Isaiah 52:5).

God is indignant at what's happening. He's saying, "What am I seeing here? Why are my people being robbed and humiliated so easily? Satan is taking them down at will, ruling over them, harassing them, making them cry and howl. And they're giving him no resistance. This blasphemes my name, my majesty, my power."

In his amazement, God reminds his bowed-down people, "My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth" (51:5).

He's saying, "I've already spoken the word of your deliverance. I decreed it in my covenant promises. I have stretched forth my mighty arm, to take you out of your wilderness experience. So, why don't you claim what I've decreed? Why don't you walk in the light of my freedom, joy and peace?"

God then promises, "The Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (51:3). He states, "I'm going to bring you comfort. Right now, all you can see is failure in every area of your life. But that's about to change. I'm going to turn your wilderness into an Eden-like garden.

You're about to enter my refreshing glade of joy and gladness."

These aren't empty, foolish promises. They're spoken to us by Almighty God, who reigns over all. His thoughts about his people are good, not about ruin and failure. He loves us, and he's set on delivering us from all fear and depression.

But the Lord also wants to show us how we came to such a low condition. He points out,

"You've bowed down to the devil.

You've willingly laid your body on the ground before him.

And you've allowed him to tramp all over you."

Right now, multitudes of pastors, evangelists and godly lay people live under a cloud of fear. Why? They've given Satan access to freely plunder them with doubt. Week after week, they live with thoughts of quitting the ministry. They question the Lord. They wonder about his guidance. They live without any hope of a future.

And God is incredulous at it all. He says, "I, even I, am he that comforts you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?" (51:12). He says, "Why do you fear what people can do to you? Their gossip and threats can't harm you. Satan is using your fear to bring you under bondage. Yet I've promised you deliverance. Who are you to listen to his lies, and not my Word?"

The Lord then adds, "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings" (51:7). In other words:

"Why do you measure yourself by others' concepts of success or failure?

I've given you promises from eternity.

But you've brought reproach upon yourself.

You've laid down on the ground as a stepping stone for the enemy."

Finally, God says, "[Thou] hast feared continually every day" (51:13).

He's describing believers who fall prey to morbid introspection. David admitted, "I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart" (Psalm 38:8). David knew he only added to his turmoil by his own fearful churning.

So, where does your fear come from? Why are you so deeply discouraged? Do you dwell on your low condition endlessly?

## **2. God also sees multitudes of bruised and broken shepherds.**

Scores of once-zealous pastors have left the ministry. And many others are on the brink of quitting. They haven't seen a good day in months. Their wives watch as they churn in turmoil and distress, and they become weighed down also.

They're afraid their husbands will lose their jobs, their homes, and their stability. Some are even afraid their spouse will give up on life. So they fight their own battles of discouragement, alone and in despair.

Many pastors are discouraged because they see so little fruit from their labors. Not long ago, a dear pastor called me, discouraged. He asked, "What do you do when you've done all you know how to do as a pastor, but you see so little response? You pray diligently, you fast; you walk in the righteousness of Christ. You're obedient and trusting, and you preach an anointed word. Yet people leave the church with no explanation. Or worse, they turn on you.

"Tell me, what do you do when the promise God gave you doesn't come to pass? What happens after years of ministering to a body of people, and some start to fall away from the faith? You do everything you've learned from

years of serving God. But nothing turns out right."

I spoke with a Lutheran preacher who meets regularly with other pastors from his city. These are godly men from various denominations who encourage one another in their ministries. During the first few years, their numbers grew.

But over the past year, the group began to dwindle. Now, as fewer and fewer ministers show up, discouragement has crept in. Soon the pastors confided in one another, "I'm working harder than ever, but I see so little growth. People are even turning away. What can I do?"

Now the Lutheran pastor has become discouraged also. His last words to me were, "Please, pray for me, David. And pray for the hurting pastors in my city."

*Our whole nation is in distress.*

Newsweek magazine reports that 65 percent of Americans are having trouble sleeping. They wake up with a black cloud of despair hanging over them. Millions are now medicating themselves just to find a small bit of relief. Here in New York City, people are especially anxious and stressed out.

There's a prevailing fear of bio-terrorism, of nuclear attack, of tunnels and bridges blowing up. People on Long Island are afraid the atomic plants there might be bombed.

Now more than ever, God's people need to hear a word from him. And in this time of distress, our Lord has given us an uncompromising word: "[Thou] hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy...where is the fury of the oppressor?" (Isaiah 51:13).

God is demanding of us, "Why do you fear the enemy? What can he possibly do to you, when I have promised you a future?"

Beloved, there is no scenario, no possible situation, wherein the devil can destroy us. You see, Jesus Christ has promised heaven to those walking in faith. When we die, we instantly go straight to his side. Therefore, we can't be destroyed by the devil; we merely pass from death to life.

We're given a new body. And we spend eternity in glory with our Lord.

Of all people, God's saints should be shining examples of what it means to live in peace in these fearful days. We're to be at rest in spite of our circumstances, offering this testimony to the world: "The peace you see in me is beyond this world's understanding. It's all because I've put my life in Jesus' hands. It doesn't matter what happens to me.

Live or die, I'm the Lord's for all eternity."

God has also given us an ironclad promise for life on this earth. He says that when our enemy attempts to walk over us, "My people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I" (52:6). In other words, God says, "When you're in your darkest trial, I will come and speak a word to you. You'll hear me say, it is I, Jesus, your Savior. Don't be afraid." Christ fulfilled this promise to the very letter in Matthew 14. The disciples were on a boat in an awful storm, being tossed about by torrents of wind and waves. Suddenly, the men saw Jesus walking toward them on the water. Scripture says, "When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear" (Matthew 14:26). What did Jesus do in that fearful moment? "Straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (14:27).

I've wondered why Jesus used these particular words, "Be of good cheer." Why would he say this to men who thought they were about to die?

The word cheer means to be relieved, happy, released from fear. And here, in the disciples' time of distress, Jesus tied the word to his identity. Remember, these men knew him personally. And he expected them to act on his word by faith. He was saying, "The Father has promised I'll come to you in your storm. It is written, they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I" (Isaiah 52:6). Now I've come to you in your storm. It's me, Jesus, here with you in the midst of it all. So, cheer up."

Likewise, our Savior expects the same faith reaction from us, in our distressing times.

Next, God puts his finger on the true cause of his people's fear and discontent: "Forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth" (Isaiah 51:13). He says, "You've forgotten me in your crisis. You've let your circumstances rob you of all memory of who I am. I'm the Creator of the universe, possessing all power and majesty. I'm able to deliver you at any moment. Yet you've completely forgotten this."

The Lord then points out, "You've become a captive to your own fear, bound by needless doubts. Instead of running to my Word, you struggle against your bonds." "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail" (51:14). Simply put, we've become preoccupied with our circumstances. And we've failed to remember his Word to us: "That bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth

salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (52:7).

The Lord's message here couldn't be clearer: "You don't see me as a God who can work out your circumstances. You're so anxious to be released from your problems, you've turned away from my glory and power. Instead, you struggle on, crying, God, get me out of this.' Yet all you need is a glimpse of my majesty."

Think about it: our Lord has never once failed his people.

He urges us, "Look back at my children's history, in both Testaments. I've delivered them time after time, in every instance. I've never allowed the enemy to destroy those who trust me.

"Now look at your own history with me. Have I ever failed to deliver you? Have you ever been without my provision? My servant David testified, I'm old and gray, and I have yet to see God's people begging for bread.' I am a loving Father. And I will always take care of your needs."

**God commands his people to wake up and see their bowed-down condition.**

"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments... Shake thyself from the dust" (Isaiah 52:1-2). God calls out to his bowed-down servants, "Get up and shake off the dust. I am your Lord. And you are still my righteous ones.

"You've allowed the enemy to convince you you're filthy and unclean. He says you have no right to put on Christ's garment of righteousness. But I command you to rise up, put that garment back on, and take your rightful seat to reign with him. You don't have to let Satan walk on you anymore.

My Word has made you righteous."

How can believers today wake up to our condition and shake off the dust? What is required for us to no longer bow before the enemy? David answers, "All my springs are in thee" (Psalm 87:7). He's saying, "All my satisfaction is found in you, Lord. You alone are the wellspring of my fulfillment. You're all I need to be complete, joyful, happy and at peace."

I came to the same conclusion long ago. Nothing satisfies my soul's longings outside of Jesus. Nothing on this earth can touch what I have in him: not family, not friends, not successes in ministry. You can take all the books I've written, all the works I've established, all the millions who've been touched through our outreaches, even my love of preaching. You can take all of it away, because none of it compares to the joy of intimacy with Christ.

Just give me a greater revelation of Christ. Let me draw ever closer to him. Let me understand his ways better.

That's what makes my soul cry, "Hallelujah!" and my heart leap for joy. My thirst is quenched only when I drink from his well.

Jesus is also the reason I no longer care whether my circumstances change. I'm satisfied that my Lord has revealed something of himself to me. And the grace he provides is equal to any circumstance I may endure.

Christ himself experienced such powerful grace during his walk on earth. As he faced the cross, he prayed in agony three times, "Father, let this cup pass from me." The third time he prayed, an angel came and ministered to him. At that point, Jesus received strength to face the events ahead. And according to Scripture, he prayed even more earnestly. Yet, the Bible says Jesus' agony remained.

I find this amazing. Even after being strengthened by the Father himself, Jesus still carried his agony. Apparently, this only made him more determined to pray. You may say, "The Father didn't deliver Jesus after all." Yes, he did.

The strength that Christ received from heaven delivered him through his trial. Indeed, it carried him all the way to the cross, and beyond it to glory.

We all know Jesus is our example. And here he provides a clear illustration for us, as he prays in essence, "Father, I admit I want deliverance. Yet I don't hasten to be loosed from this trial. I don't wrestle with my circumstances. I only want to know you in my crisis. Not my will, but yours be done."

I thank God for the many victories and successes I've enjoyed during my fifty years in ministry. But I have to confess as Jacob did, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Genesis 47:9). The Hebrew word for evil here means adversity, distress, affliction, calamity, trouble, sadness, heavy-heartedness. In short, I know what it's like to be a captive to fear and despair. At times, when I was a young pastor, I felt like quitting the ministry. I've been so low; the devil has made me his stepping stone. And many nights I've screamed at God, "Where are you?"

Yet I also identify with Jeremiah. He stated, "I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jeremiah 20:9). Only when I came to my wits' end did I stop caring whether God would change my circumstances.

*That's when he brought me into his rest, with no more bowing down.*

For most Christians, conditions aren't going to change overnight.

You may receive a touch from God in church and go home encouraged. But once the feeling wears off, you realize your circumstances are the same. What's the solution, you ask?

Any change that comes must happen in us, not in our situation. We have to be so given to Jesus; he becomes our all, our sole source of fulfillment.

A pastor told me a beautiful story regarding this. A young woman in his church had been born with an extreme facial disfigurement. All through her teen years, she dreamed of meeting a man who would love her despite her handicap. Her desire continued into her twenties, and she longed to have a child as well. Through those years, she faithfully brought her request before the Lord, hoping he would answer.

Not long ago, the young woman approached the pastor. She handed him a bar of soap and a baby rattle. She said, "Pastor, I need you to take these things off my hands. They have to do with a dream I've carried since I was a little girl.

"Every time my father washed up, he asked me, honey, go get me some soap.' I loved getting it for him. It made me feel needed and wanted by him. As I grew older, I always hoped a husband would say that to me, too. Then I could respond in love, as I did with my dad. As for the baby rattle, it reminds me of my desire to have a child.

"I want you to know, I don't need these anymore. I've laid those dreams down. And I've traded them in for a better one.

You see, I'm at peace with my condition. I know it will never change. So I've surrendered it to the Lord. Now Jesus totally fills my life. He has become my source of joy. I've found in him what no husband could give me. He took my old dreams and gave me himself.

"The Lord is my husband. And the kids you see flocking to me in church are the children he's given me. I've been blessed without measure. So, please, take these symbols for me. I've finally been freed from their weight."

The pastor says all of this woman's discouragement is gone now. She couldn't be happier. And she has become the most loving person in his church.

Then, with tender words, the pastor confessed that he also was changing. "I've surrendered my dream of having a large church," he said. "My congregation wasn't growing as I thought it should.

I wanted to see fruit from my ministry.

That desire caused me to strive to succeed in others' eyes.

"But I only want one thing now. And that is, a church that loves. I want to shepherd people who care for each other, a loving family of believers. It doesn't matter how large or small we are. When I stand before the Lord, I want to know I taught my people to love as Jesus loves." This man has come into God's rest.

Even our godliest dreams can become foolish if we don't trade them for Christ. If our Lord wants such things for us, he'll bring them to pass. Meanwhile, we are to live in his peace. He's reminding you, right now: "I have commanded your deliverance. Now, rise up from the dust. The enemy can't walk on you anymore. I have empowered you."

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