

**T**he Holy Spirit has prompted me to bring a solemn warning to the body of Jesus Christ! The warning is this: **There is a sin raging in the church right now that is causing the fall of multitudes of Christians.** This particular sin is leading many believers to the very brink of the abyss!

Here at Times Square Church a number of dear, Christ-loving people have already begun slipping left and right. Others are on the brink of a serious slide. I pray this message will open your eyes to your condition -- and that the word God has given me here will set you free.

The awful sin I'm writing about is dangerous because most Christians have not taken it seriously. It is not considered to be a major sin; its evil has been either underestimated or ignored. And yet it is affecting multitudes of believers -- causing the shipwreck of numerous pastors, evangelists and laypeople around the world.

This sin is not what we would call a sin of the flesh, such as adultery, fornication, lust, homosexuality, gambling, stealing, or drug or alcohol abuse. Nor am I talking about a sin of the mind, such as anger, covetousness, ambition, rebellion, unforgiveness, slander, gossip or even pride. In fact, the sin I'm referring to is far more serious and seductive than pride itself. Yet **when this sin is indulged, it is capable of leading to every other sin listed here.**

I am not trying to be dramatic. This is a soul-damning sin that must be exposed and dealt with -- in every one of us!

**Let Me Reveal to You This  
Serious, Seductive Sin!**

# ***I Almost Slipped!***

Not long ago, I was sitting at my desk in our ministry offices when I heard loud sobs coming from the reception area. I walked out of my office and saw my secretary consoling a twenty- four-year-old Nigerian girl. I recognized the young woman: She has attended Times Square Church for about four years now. She has been wonderfully faithful -- a beautiful witness for Jesus who comes from a Christian family. But now her face was lined with grief.

"What happened?" I asked. My secretary answered, "She just received word from Nigeria that her father and mother have been killed in an auto accident."

The girl was absolutely crushed. She told us she had six brothers and sisters, all under seventeen years of age, who now were left with no support. She could get only temporary work, and she regularly sent money back to Nigeria to help support her family, even though she was barely able to make ends meet for herself.

The distraught girl cried, "I don't understand! I have served the Lord faithfully for years. I tithe consistently. I walk upright before the Lord. And now this! Why would God allow such a tragedy? I don't have any money to fly back to

Nigeria to bury my parents, or to take care of my six siblings. This makes no sense to me!"

Then she looked up at me through tear-stained eyes, almost like a child, and asked, "Pastor, why is it so hard to do right? The closer I get to Jesus, the more I suffer. My life has been so hard, so painful already. I've had all I can take. And now my troubles only increase. Why has God put me in this condition?"

Her grief was absolutely overwhelming. She even told us she had just thought of suicide. "There is no more reason to live," she wept. "Why go on?"

We happily provided the girl with a round-trip ticket and money to bury her parents. We later learned that when she arrived in Nigeria, she rejoiced to hear that her father's last words were, "The battle is over. Light has overcome darkness."

Yet as I went back to my office that day after trying to console the girl, I was shaken. I prayed, "Lord, she is hurting so badly. She believes You've let her down, that You've forsaken her. She thinks that serving You is too hard. How can I bring her any comfort at all? I feel so bad for her -- and yet nothing I

say seems to console her in any way."

As I sat down to pray, I realized: "Lord, it seems the whole body of Christ has yet to understand why You allow the godly to suffer. We don't understand the poverty, the hardships. None of it computes. We're all trying to live to please You -- yet we have trouble upon trouble, plague upon plague, chastening after chastening, sudden calamities.

"Father, how can I reach out to our own church body of hurting, grieving, suffering people? We're all asking the same question: **'Why is there so much pain in my life, when we only do what is right?'**"

All day long I contemplated this matter. That evening, as I went home to pray, I was in agony. Finally, I cried out to the Lord, "Father, Your church is in a quandary over this issue of suffering! There are many Christians who, like Paul, can say, 'I have suffered the loss of all things that I may win Christ.' Yet, like Paul, the closer they get to Jesus, the more troubles and problems they face!

"I've got to be able to give Your people something, Lord. I want to be able to stand before them with Your wisdom and knowledge to talk about this serious, perplexing matter. What words of comfort and wisdom can I offer them?"

### **I Was Shocked and Surprised by the Lord's Answer to Me!**

The Holy Spirit's words to me literally shook my soul. And afterward, I saw something about grief and sorrow through God's eyes that I'd never seen before.

I began to see how easy it is for suffering, tested Christians to slide into a grievous sin -- the very sin I am exposing in this message. You see, unless we look at our trials through God's eyes -- unless we see the potential danger facing us in our time of sorrow and grief -- we can slide into an abyss of darkness and never come out!

You may think it cruel of me to suggest that a grieving twenty-four-year-old girl who has just lost both her parents could slide into a terrible sin. But the Lord spoke to

my heart very clearly about her grief:

"David, she's in danger -- and you've got to warn her! Whenever my people endure a condition like hers -- when sudden calamity falls, and they face fear, trouble, poverty -- the heart always questions, 'Why is life so hard when I only do what is right?' That is exactly the time when they are at the brink of a terrible abyss. They are on the verge of indulging a sin that is ruinous!"

These words shocked me. I thought, "But, Lord -- we are to weep with those who weep. As a pastor, I am to offer every word of comfort the Holy Ghost prompts me to give from Your scriptures. I am to be there as a nurse the best that I know how -- to stand by suffering people and let them pour out their grief."

This is all true, without question. Yet the Holy Spirit was showing me that a time comes in the midst of our crises when we cannot allow doubt to take root!

Yes, I believe God understands our sudden outbursts whenever calamities strike. As we face tragedy, death or any other kind of trouble, many of us cry out, "God, why did You allow this?" Even Christ, at Calvary, cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

**But Jesus, in His overwhelming pain and suffering, did not allow His grief to take root and turn to doubt. Instead, He allowed the Holy Spirit to console Him. And in his most trying hour, He turned his life and future over to the father's hands: "...Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit..."**

(Luke 23:46).

I realize now there is no way out of our grief, sorrow or any other problem unless we come to the point where we can say, "I will not allow this questioning to go on. Yes, I grieve, I hurt -- but God is on the throne. Enough of doubting!"

That is when I began to see human grief and suffering through God's eyes. The Spirit whispered to me, "David, you think it is enough to share your pity and grief with suffering saints. But it is not enough! I want you to look at their grieving hearts through My eyes."

Bear with me now as I endeavor to open up to you what the Lord has shown me about this grievous sin that brings destruction upon so many Christians. I pray this message will be a weapon in your hands -- and that it will keep you from the sin that can damn your soul! This sin will become obvious as we go on.

### **In Psalm 73, a Man Named Asaph Nearly Fell Into This Sin!**

Asaph was a chief singer, a Levite and a leader of King David's choral worshipers. He and his clan also played cymbals in times of praise. He is credited with writing eleven of the Psalms.

This man was a coworker with David and a very close friend. Indeed, no one could be a Levite serving in God's house without being close to David -- because that is where David was most of the time. David loved God, and he loved being in God's house.

Yet, in spite of his tremendous calling and blessings, Asaph confessed, *"But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped"* (PSA 73:2).

Now, we know Asaph was a pure-hearted man. He had the right concept of the heavenly father, believing God was good. He even began his discourse in this psalm by saying, *"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart"* (verse 1). In other words: "God has been good to me by giving me a clean heart!"

Yet in the very next verse this clean-hearted man confesses, "I almost slipped. I almost fell!" Why does Asaph declare this?

Could it be that Asaph was disillusioned by the compromise he saw in David? As a loving friend, this musician probably observed all that the king said and did. He must have grieved over David's failures - his battles with lust, his adultery with Bathsheba, his conniving and murder of Uriah, his taking on more wives when God had forbidden him to do so. Yes, David had a lot of problems in his life. So, did Asaph detect a hypocrisy in this man who had a reputation for being so godly? Did the musician cry out, "My leader has failed me!"

Was this the sin of Asaph? Did he almost fall because David took a fall? When David slipped, did Asaph cry, "That's all I can take. I just can't handle this!"

No -- there was none of that in Asaph's heart. What, then, was the sin that caused Asaph to slip and nearly fall? What is this grievous sin I am talking about?

### **Asaph's Sin Was the Sin of Believing His Sufferings Were Unfair Punishments From God!**

#### **This is the sin of charging God with neglect and injustice!**

We know from this psalm that Asaph was in the hot fires of affliction, facing great troubles. He testified, "*For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning*" (verse 14).

The Hebrew meaning of the words "plagued" and "chastened" here is simply this: "I have been stricken violently with trouble! Every morning I wake up touched by sorrow, pain and grief. Every day I am being beaten down. I feel I'm being punished. It's too painful even to talk about!" (see verses 14- 16).

Asaph also implies poverty in what he says: "*For I was envious...when I saw the prosperity of the wicked*" (verse 3). As Asaph looked around him, all he saw was wicked people with great wealth -- people who apparently lived without pain, enjoying the high life, fat with material blessings, having all they could ever want or need. Perhaps Asaph was made to feel the pain of his own poverty more acutely. The pure-hearted musician couldn't understand it -- and he cried out, "Lord, it doesn't make sense to me!"

Asaph's suffering brought him to the brink of a deadly sin: attributing to God unfaithfulness or unconcern! This man said to himself, "Look at all the foolish, wicked sinners. They don't pray. They reject God's word. They neglect the Lord's commands. And yet they aren't plagued as other men are!" "They are not in trouble as other men..." (Psalm 73:5).

What Asaph actually meant here was, "The wicked are not plagued as I am. They only do evil -- and yet they prosper! While I deny

myself, they grow rich and prosperous. While I am weak with sorrow, their strength only increases" (see verse 4).

Then Asaph asks, "*...is there knowledge in the most High?*" (verse 11). In other words: "Doesn't God balance His books? Doesn't He see what's going on here? Isn't the Lord aware of the disparity between his suffering, righteous children and the prosperous wicked? We are constantly being deprived, while the foolish get everything their hearts desire. And God allows it all to continue!"

Have you ever wondered why blessings are heaped on people who live like devils? Perhaps you've felt this way because some ungodly coworker has been rewarded instead of you. Or maybe you've wondered how your unconverted neighbor could ever afford his expensive car and new furniture. Meanwhile, you work hard at your job, as unto the Lord - - and you're having to figure out ways to stretch your income!

A number of years ago, I was driving down the West Side Highway in Manhattan with a man who had been saved in our church. As we drove past Donald Trump's huge yacht docked along the river, this man began to fume. He said, "I get so mad whenever I see that boat. That man has everything -- and I have nothing!"

I thought to myself, "All Trump has is a piece of junk floating in the water -- and you have eternal life with the Lord. Do you think that's nothing?"

According to our human thinking, life should be as follows: If we give everything to God, we should have a clear path to glory; nothing should get in our way -- no suffering and no trials. Indeed, numerous pastors throughout the country are trying to sell this very doctrine to downcast sheep.

Yet, the truth is, **if you try to figure out your trials with human reasoning, they won't make any sense.** No matter how hard you try, none of it will ever compute!

I ask you: Have you ever gone through a time when every day you rose with a cloud hanging over your head? Perhaps it was a time of testing. Or maybe it was a time of apostasy, backsliding, coldness

in your life. Or, maybe it even happened during your best times with God. Your heart was open to His voice; you were ready to be a living sacrifice for Him; you prayed, "Father, I'm walking with You the best that I know how. If there is anything in my heart that isn't right before You, remove it!"

But your prayers were not answered. You heard nothing whatsoever. And, like Asaph, you finally wondered: "Why is it so hard to do right?"

#### **This Is the Point of Danger -- the Place Where Slipping Begins!**

*"Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency"* (PSA 73:13).

**Asaph was so confused by his sufferings in comparison to the easy life of the wicked, he nearly slipped into a pit of absolute unbelief. He was ready to accuse God of forsaking him -- of abandoning him, of not being concerned.** And for a moment he was ready to quit the battle -- to give up completely.

This godly man must have thought, "I've been doing right and enduring hardships all this time -- but for nothing! All my strictness, my diligence, my praising and worshiping, my study of God's Word -- it's been useless, in vain. I have given everything to worshiping the Lord -- I have done only right -- and yet I continue to suffer! These plagues, chastenings and sorrows make no sense. What's the use of going on?"

Beloved, that is when you have to be careful! When calamity falls, when a trial comes upon you, when you are grieving -- you need to guard your heart against slipping!

You may not be in Asaph's condition -- at a point of great personal testing and troubles. But you may know someone who is going through what he endured. Sudden calamity may have come upon a godly relative, friend or church member -- someone you know who is doing right. And you've asked, "Why, God? How could you allow this? That person is so holy, so righteous!"

I once knew a young couple in their mid-thirties with two children.

The husband was righteous man, a loving husband and father. He had never been sick a day in his life -- and yet suddenly he became ill and died within a short time. His wife was left with their two children, not knowing what to do.

Everyone around them asked, "Why, God? This doesn't make sense. How could You allow it? Why does her life have to be so hard now, with these children -- after all the years she and her husband served You so faithfully? Why didn't this happen to somebody else?"

This thinking sounds innocent -- but it represents the very brink of the pit of unbelief! Asaph came very close to slipping into this pit. And it is the pit into which Israel fell. They spent forty years in the wilderness saying, "This doesn't make sense. Life is too hard!" And **they died questioning God -- in total apostasy!**

Let me ask you: How do you react when all your plans and dreams blow up in your face? You were so sure you heard from God. You thought He gave you direction, encouraging you to move forward. Everything you read in His word seemed to confirm your plans. You prayed about every step along the way, always giving glory to God. And the Lord seemed to be leading on.

You were happy, thinking, "At last - I'm going to see my prayers answered! God's plan is finally beginning to come together in my life."

Then one day, all of a sudden, your dream blew up in your face. Your plan was destroyed, your dream shattered -- and it all lay in ashes at your feet. You didn't know how to make any sense of it. That's when satan came along, bringing his lies:

"See what you get for being so strict about your walk with God? This is how He treats you when you trust Him for direction. He lets you become confused about His voice -- and He gives you phony guidance! He lets you hear voices and see words from the Scriptures. And then, when you're finally ready to move in, He abandons you. He leads you on, and then He drops you!"

I talked to a young preacher recently who is at this very point. He told me, "I don't understand. I know there is no pride in my heart, nothing that's unlike Jesus. I prayed and fasted, and God gave me this plan. Everything was going fine -- and then suddenly it blew up overnight. It's all gone!"

I didn't pity this young man. I didn't sympathize with him. Instead, the Holy Ghost gave me a clear word for him: "Don't let your faith be shaken! **Don't lose your confidence in God. Let all your dreams go. God is still on His throne!**"

The devil had come to this young man and said, "You can't hear God's voice anymore. You've already heard so much that's wrong. How could you trust any voice now?" That is satan's trick -- to try to deafen us to Jesus's promise: "My sheep know My voice -- and they hear when I call!"

**When Asaph Considered All These Things, He Finally Concluded: "This Is All Too Painful for Me. I'm Going to God's House!"**

*"When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end"* (PSA 73:16-17). Asaph said, "I'm not giving up. I'm going to the sanctuary. God has my answer!"

So he went to the temple. And as he meditated on the Lord, he kept telling himself, "I'm not going to let the devil make me fall. I'm not going to slip into the abyss of unbelief. I'm going to pray -- to talk it out with the Lord!"

**Beloved, when your time of grief, sorrow, or suffering comes, you also must go to the secret closet.** Don't get on the telephone with someone. Get alone with God! Cry your heart out to Him. Go to the sanctuary to find your answer! No book, preacher or sermon tape will ever make you understand your trials. But if you'll get alone with the Father, He will give you understanding!

That is when the Holy Spirit spoke to Asaph. And the answer came loud and clear: *"Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction"*

(verse 18). Asaph realized, "I'm not the one who's slipping. The wicked are slipping. They're going straight into destruction!"

The Lord was telling this man, "Your problem, Asaph, is that you've been looking at their outward appearances -- the false dream, the bubble they're living in. You've never seen the terror in their hearts!" *"...they are utterly consumed with terrors"* (verse 19).

God was showing Asaph, "It's all a smoke screen! If you could see behind their wealth and facades, you'd realize they're living in panic and terror. All these wicked people who look so happy -- who spend their time drinking and partying -- go home each night with panic and dread in their hearts. Deep down they know one day they're going to stand before Me at the Judgment -- and I'm going to judge them. They're living in a dream world, Asaph -- and suddenly their dream will end!"

God was saying to Asaph, "You may feel despised right now, Asaph. But when you stand before Me, you are going to be embraced and loved!"

Suddenly, Asaph began to feel pity and grief for those wicked people who seemed so blessed: *"Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked [convicted] in my reins [heart]. So foolish was I..."* (verses 21-22).

In other words: "How could I ever have been envious of them? Their dream world is really a life of hidden terror and fear, of eternal loss. They'll live just a few years in their dream world -- but I have the eternal consolation of the Holy Ghost! I have a heavenly Father who cares about me, no matter what I go through. And when I stand before His throne, I'll hear Him say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joys of thy Father!'"

Asaph finally began to see the whole picture -- and he rejoiced: *"...God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever"* (verse 26). He could say, "Yes, my strength is failing. Yes, I'm being plagued and chastened. Yes, I'm enduring a great battle with my afflictions. But I'm not alone in my struggles. I have a loving Father in heaven Who watches over me!"

**"Lord, nothing else in this world matters but You -- knowing You, loving You and trusting You.** I'm sorry I was ever angry at You -- that I ever accused You of being unfaithful. Whom do I have but You, anyway? Although my flesh and my heart may fail, You are the strength of my heart!"

That is when Asaph came into true rest. He saw that he had almost slipped -- but he'd held on! The musician closes his psalm on this note of victory: *"...I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works"* (verse 28).

So, dear saint -- have you been holding on? Or have you been believing satan's lie that God can't keep you? Have you been testifying of God's strength in your life? Or have you been thinking the devil has more power than the God who abides in you?

There has to be something in all of us that cries out, "Oh, God, I want to be delivered! If I'm starting to doubt You, then I have started to slip." That is the point where we have to trust God to be our strength -- no matter how weak we feel or how painful our trial.

**So, get your eyes off people. And put your eyes on your strength -- the Lord himself! He has a reason for everything He allows in your life. He may not always tell you that reason -- but He will be the strength of your heart through it all.** May the same hope that Asaph experienced well up in your heart and cry, "Lord, You are the strength of my heart. Live or die, I'm going to trust You!"

God help us all who love Him never to slip and fall into unbelief.

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