

*"Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."* (PSA 130:1-4).

David suffered incredibly under the Lord's chastening rod. On every front, things went horribly wrong in his life. He faced overwhelming floods of trouble, awful physical maladies, tragedy after tragedy, a kingdom in turmoil. His troubles mounted so high, he didn't think he would survive. And he cried out, *"Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me."* (PSA 69:1-2).

Yet David's outward troubles didn't bother him nearly as much as did his inward horrors. He was afraid the Lord had utterly forsaken him. He wrote, *"Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps."* (PSA 88:6). *"Thy wrath lieth hard upon me..."* (VERSE 7). *"...I suffer thy terrors..."* (VERSE 15). *"Thy fierce wrath goeth over me..."* (VERSE 16).

David believed God had abandoned him because of his sin - a thought he simply couldn't bear. He pleaded with the Lord, *"Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me."* (PSA 69:15). He was saying, "Oh, Lord, please - don't let me go so far down I can't get out!"

David also anguished over the scandal he'd caused in Israel. His sin had been exposed, and the whole world knew about it. His grief over the shame he'd caused was so overwhelming, he begged God, *"...make me not the reproach of the foolish."* (PSA 39:8).

# Out Of The Depths I Cried

David even feared that God might take his life as judgment for his sin. His every waking moment was filled with thoughts of being struck down in wrath. He cried out, *"O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath..."* (PSA 38:1).

As all these anxieties fell on David, his soul was filled with the holy fear of God. He confessed, *"I remembered God, and was troubled..."* (PSA 77:3). Here is a puzzling statement. Why would David be troubled if all his memories of God's work in his life had brought him joy and happiness? What could possibly trouble him about that now?

David was distressed because all his thoughts were consumed with how God was going to deal with his sin. He felt the chastening of the Lord's rod in his flesh, the arrows of truth piercing his soul with ferocity: *"Thine arrows stick fast in me..."* (PSA 38:2).

This man's conscience now placed a heavy weight on him. He knew he'd sinned against all the love and light he'd received from heaven. The Lord had mercifully delivered him time after time from his past failures. And this time, David knew he deserved to be cast aside. So he fell ever deeper into sorrow and confusion, writing, *"...mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head..."* (PSA 40:12).

I know a number of Christians who are just like David. They're lovers of Jesus - yet they've sinned horribly against the light they've been

given. They've heard thousands of righteous sermons, read the Bible daily for years, spent countless hours in prayer. Yet they've sinned against all of God's blessings. How? They have a besetting sin they've never dealt with!

Over time, their sin has shut off their communion with Jesus. And now the Holy Spirit has fingered their habit, holding it up before them. He's warning them, "No more - this sin must go! I won't wink at the way you keep indulging it. From now on, you're under a deadline. I've exposed your sin to you - but soon it may be exposed to the world!"

Whenever they enter God's house now, they can't even lift their heads. And they cry as David did, "My sins are too numerous to count! My iniquity has so taken hold of me, I can't even lift my face to heaven!"

They've lost all the joy, cheer and freedom they once enjoyed. They're no longer able to pray or sing with any life or power. And they carry around a great sense of failure. They've become weak, soul-sick, bowed down, ready to faint. And they know it's all because their sin has cut off their communion with God!

Does this describe your soul's condition at the moment? If so, **thank God for His mercy. He's implanting in you a holy fear of the Lord!** That's why you're sinking further into the depths of conviction. You're under the weight of a troubled conscience!

**Many Sincere Believers Make Every Diligent Effort Not to Turn His Grace Into License - Yet They Realize Their Walk Doesn't Measure Up to His Holy Standard!**

Most Christians are relieved to know they're not included in Paul's list of damning offenses:

*"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."* (1.COR 6:9-10).

Yet as they read the next verse, they feel the piercing arrow of truth: *"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."* (1.COR 6:11). Suddenly, they remember a besetting lust they've never been able to shake. They think, "Wait a minute - I've been delivered and sanctified. So why can't I quit this habit? I'm not truly free!"

Maybe you've returned to an old lust recently. Perhaps you've visited a pornography website on the internet, or you're involved in adultery or homosexual sin. Or perhaps you've stolen goods from your employer, or you're sneaking a drink on the way home from work. Whatever your habit is, you know you're not free in that one area. Yet God has said very plainly, **"You can't enter my kingdom if you continue in sin!"**

Don't be surprised if you start to feel the way David did. Whenever the Lord sees one of His children wrestling with some lust or bondage, He moves in quickly to bring us back to a path of obedience, peace and rest. How does He do this? He brings about conditions in our lives that force us to face our sin!

Often this means taking us down into the depths, as God did with Jonah. He allows us to feel His rebuke and to be swallowed up by our circumstances. Yet it was while in the darkest depths that Jonah cried out to God. And the Lord responded to His servant's cries quickly, restoring him to His blessing and will!

**It Was in the Depths That David's Praying Became Intense!**

In desperation, David cried out, *"Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications."* (PSA 130:2). This sounds to me like the plea of a dying man. David obviously wasn't just uttering "thought prayers." He was face-down on the ground - broken, contrite, pleading with God from the very depths of his heart:

"O, Holy God Jehovah - you must hear my cry! I can't go on any longer. My sin is ever before me, and I'm sinking with fear and dread. Please, God, have mercy on me!"

David knew his soul needed a release. And he turned to God alone to find that release. He concluded, "I'm in such a dire condition, only the Lord can help me now. I can't rely on counselors, friends, even family. My only hope is in prayer. So I'm going to cry out night and day until God hears my plea!"

Many Christian marriages desperately need the kind of release David sought. All across the land, I see couples sinking into dark pits of despair. Spouses claim to love one another, but they're not even civil when they speak to each other. They show more kindness to strangers than they do to their mate. Over time, their home has become a deep-freeze of downright meanness. They don't know it, but they're free-falling into destruction, their relationship fast spinning out of control.

Perhaps your marriage has fallen as far down as it can go. You and your spouse have hit rock bottom, and you wake up every day wondering if there's any hope left. You've even been tempted lately to leave the relationship permanently.

Beloved, you need to wake up to your condition! You've fallen into a black hole, full of ungodly attitudes. And this condition won't simply wear off by itself. Unless you take action, it will only get worse until one of you finally kills the marriage.

Wake up now to the Holy Spirit's voice! There's sin in your marriage - and it's being committed by both you and your spouse. You have to deal with it, or you'll remain at the bottom of the dark well forever!

So, to whom are you taking your grief? Are you spilling your guts to your best friend? If so, are you merely building a case against your spouse? If you're seeing a counselor, are you actually seeking a justification for ending it all?

Please don't mistake me - I believe in marriage counseling. But if you seriously want to get to the source of the problem, there's only one place to go. You need to look no further than your own heart! The sin is right there inside you. And, like David, you need to cry out to the Lord for mercy!

**Have you gotten as desperate as David was? Have you shut yourself in with the Lord, falling on your face and crying out to Him? Dull, quiet, lazy praying won't accomplish anything. If you're not unburdening your soul to God, you don't really want healing - you want out!**

David testified, *"...I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart... and my groaning is not hid from thee."* (PSALM 38:8-9). You have to cry out loudly, as David did, "Lord, hear my plea! I'm not letting go of you until you answer!"

Let me illustrate the kind of desperation David had. Suppose you're on your way home one day. As you turn the corner of your street, you see fire trucks parked in front of your house. Black smoke is billowing out the windows, the whole place about to go up in flames. And you know your mate and children are trapped inside.

Tell me - how calm and quiet would you be in that moment? How long would you stand by doing nothing, hoping the fire dies down on its own? Would you sit there quietly praying, "Jesus, I hope you put out the fire"? No! If you had any love in your heart at all, you'd race through the smoke into your home and try to do something!

If your marriage is in trouble, then your house is on fire - and your relationship is going up in flames! And if you allow this fire to continue, you're going to lose everything!

So, do you have the fear of God in you about your marriage? Are you burdened down with guilt and condemnation over your role in its disintegration? If so, don't try to ease your conscience. God is

sending you His strong word because He loves you. He's mercifully warning you, trying to wake you up before you self-destruct. So run to Him, and pray diligently. That's where all healing begins - by calling urgently on His Name!

**David Realized He Couldn't Remain In the Depths of Despair for Long, Or He Would Be Destroyed.**

David knew he had to have a life-saving word, or all hope would be gone. So he cried, "*If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*" (PSA 130:3).

If I were to put David's words in modern, everyday language, they would sound something like this: "Oh, Lord - I saw you only as the great private investigator in the sky - trailing me every moment of the day, marking down all my failures, tapping my phone, listening to my every thought, videotaping my every step, building a case against me daily. And you gather enough proof to put me away forever.

"Lord, with all the evidence you've gathered, what chance would I have? How could I stand, when my own evil words and secret deeds testify against me? How could I do anything but wait to be judged and condemned?"

"Every day I wake up fearing your awful wrath against my sin. Who can stand before a holy God who punishes iniquity? Not even the most holy, humble, trusting souls can escape your judgment. And if they don't measure up to your law, what chance do I have? I've sinned more wickedly than them all!

"I know my sin displeases you, Lord. And I know you won't allow it to continue. But if I don't see just a sign of your mercy soon, I'm finished. My soul is bankrupt, hopeless. I can't go on!"

Many Christians struggle as David did. When the holy, righteous fear of God is implanted in their souls, His terrible majesty constantly looms before them. Streams from His fiery law point straight into their hearts, and they begin to wither in agony. Like David, they cry out, "Lord, who can stand before you? Who can endure your holiness?"

Our ministry regularly receives letters from sincere Christians who struggle with homosexuality. The tone of their writing sounds a lot

like David's agony. Many of these precious people have grown up in the church, and they love Jesus with all their heart. But they can't get free from their homosexual lust. They end up in despair, wilting under guilt and condemnation. One desperate young man wrote, "Pastor David, if I can't find a release from this bondage soon, I have no choice. I'm going to take my life."

Tragically, multitudes of homosexuals, lesbians, alcoholics and drug addicts have taken their lives because they've fallen so far down into the depths. They couldn't escape the sense they were continually failing God. And they constantly wondered, "I should have the power to overcome this, but I don't. How can I ever get free?"

Jonah asked the very same question. He was literally at rock bottom, on the ocean floor, unable to escape his dilemma. He too cried out, "*...thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me... I went down to the bottoms...*" (JONAH 2:3-6).

According to Jonah, who cast him down into those depths of darkness? The Lord did! Indeed, it was God who took the prophet down to the very bottom and prepared the whale to swallow him. When Jonah called his troubles "your billows, your waves," he was referring to the Lord.

Yet, God wasn't mad at Jonah, merely tallying up his sins. So why did He allow this to happen to him? Why did He send him to the depths? He wanted to stop His servant from running away from His will! He wanted Jonah to follow His plan, so he would be blessed. In short, God took Jonah down to the depths in order to restore him!

Jonah 2:2 tells us exactly what God was after: "*...I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.*" The Lord was waiting for Jonah to turn to Him - to cry out to Him alone! "*Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.*" (VERSE 4). "*When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD...*" (VERSE 7).

Today, the Lord does the same thing with us: He delivers us by

allowing us to go down into the depths. He lets us sink in despair over our sin until we have no other source to turn to but Him. And finally, out of the belly of our hell we cry, "Oh Lord, please hear me! I've hit bottom, with no hope in sight. You've got to deliver me!"

Perhaps you've hit rock bottom over your sin. You just can't seem to get victory over that one besetting lust or bitterness. And now the Lord has allowed you to go down to the depths. Yet it's all for a purpose. He's hoping that, like Jonah, you'll "look again to Him."

Rest assured, when Jonah cried out to the Lord, God delivered him quickly: "The LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." (VERSE 10). God told the whale, "That's enough - now, spit him out. My servant has called out to Me, and I'm going to answer him!"

Your heavenly Father doesn't want you to stay down at the bottom, withering under a heavy load of guilt and condemnation. His desire is that you learn your lesson there - and place all your dependence on Him!

**Too Many Christians Stay Down in The Depths, in Total Dependency.**

For many believers, sinking to the bottom means the end. They become so overwhelmed by their failures, they develop a sense of unworthiness. And over time they feel trapped beyond any help. Isaiah wrote of such believers, "*O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted...*" (ISAIAH 54:11).

Some eventually get mad at God. They grow tired of waiting for Him to move. So they cry accusingly, "Lord, where were you when I needed you? I cried out to you for deliverance, but you never answered. I've done everything I know how to do, yet I'm still not free. I'm tired of repenting and crying, without ever seeing any change!" Many such believers simply give up trying and give themselves over to their lust.

Others fall into a fog of spiritual apathy. They're convinced God doesn't care about them anymore. They tell themselves, "*...My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?*" (ISA 40:27). "*The LORD hath forsaken*

*me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."* (ISA 49:14).

Still others end up focusing all their attention on their sin, trying to keep themselves in a constant state of conviction. Yet this only causes them to be bewildered, crying, *"...our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?"* (EZEK 33:10). The fact is, feeling conviction is not an end in itself. When we're humbled by guilt and sorrow over our sin, we're not supposed to rest in those feelings. They're meant to drive us to the end of ourselves - and to the victory of the cross!

**David Was Brought up From The Depths by Remembering the Forgiving Nature of God!**

After all his weeping and crying out to the Lord, David ended up testifying, *"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."* (PSA 130:4). The Holy Spirit began to flood his soul with memories of God's mercies. And suddenly, David recalled all he'd learned of the father's forgiving, pardoning nature. *"...thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness..."* (NEH 9:17).

Soon David was rejoicing, reminding himself, *"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."* (PSA 86:5). *"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities..."* (PSA 103:3).

Here is one of the foundational promises of the New Covenant. Jeremiah declares, *"...I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."* (JER 31:34). And Paul adds in the New Testament: *"...having forgiven you all trespasses."* (COL 2:13). God has promised us His forgiveness, for every sin! However, this promise of forgiveness is limited to certain people. It applies only to those who have been crushed and sickened by their sins... who have gone

down into the depths of guilt... who have endured the soul-searching of the Holy Ghost... and who have repented and turned to Christ in faith!

Jesus Himself says that not everyone who cries, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of God. Sadly, multitudes of Christians aren't troubled at all by their sin. Their besetting habit doesn't bother them in the least. They've convinced themselves that God is so merciful and full of grace, he'll pardon them even if they stubbornly continue in sin.

**No - never!** They've appropriated to themselves a false peace! They've choked off the Holy Spirit's convictions, searchings and dealings. They've sought forgiveness before their guilt could ripen into godly sorrow!

Yet, at the same time, God's forgiveness can be obtained only by faith. We can't reason it out. Christ's gift to us of His Blood atonement is so deep, so gracious, so mysterious, it's far beyond any human ability to understand. We may see the law clearly applied to our sin. We may feel condemnation, fear and guilt over our trespasses. But our heavenly father stands lovingly beside us at all times, ready to forgive. The Blood of Christ, the love of the Father, the Lord's desire to pardon - all these blessings are known only by faith: *"...The just shall live by faith."* (GAL 3:11).

You may wonder - how many times will the Lord forgive you for indulging the same sin again and again? Rest assured, His incredible forgiveness is unlimited. Every time you sin, you can go to Jesus and find deliverance. Yet the Lord's forgiveness is not unwise or blind. To be sure, our Heavenly Father forgives us - but at a certain point, He punishes us to keep us from continuing in sin.

When my four children were growing up, I had to punish them for doing wrong. I would call them into my room for a spanking - and when they saw the belt in my hand, they would burst into tears. They cried, "No, Daddy! I'm sorry. Please, forgive me!"

I did forgive them. But that didn't stop me from applying the belt. I knew if I didn't apply it, it would become meaningless to them - a joke rather than a source of discipline. Likewise, God's Law is always there to remind us of His holy standard. It's a beam of His holiness to us, reminding us of His ways - and that He means what He says!

Let me leave you with a word of hope. If you're in the depths right now because of your sin - if you're weeping because of the Lord's rod on your back - be encouraged. He's chastening you because of His tender love. He's taking you down because He wants you to know His fear!

What, exactly, does it mean to fear the Lord? It means being able to say, "I know my Father loves me. I'm safely, forever His, and I know He'll never abandon me. He feels my pain whenever I struggle. And He's patient with me as I war against sin. He's always ready to forgive me whenever I call on Him. But I also know He's not going to allow me to keep disobeying His Word. My Heavenly Father won't spare me - because He loves me deeply!"

That is the point of it all. God wants us to accept His forgiveness so that we may fear Him. *"There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."* (PSA 130:4). Once we fear the Lord, we'll want more than just to obey Him. We'll want to please Him, to put a smile on His face. That is the blessed result of the holy fear of God!

By David Wilkerson  
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