

Call to Obedience #468
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At Wits' End

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For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end (Ps. 107:25-27).

Have you ever come to your wits' end? Have you ever come to a point in your life where you see no escape from your troubles? Have you ever been in a place where wave after wave of troubles have rolled over you, bringing you to total exhaustion physically, mentally and spiritually? Have you tried to get yourself out of trouble, but to no avail? Are you perhaps even now drifting hopelessly and aimlessly in an unsettled sea of despondency?

My friend, take courage. Millions have been in such a sea before you, saved and sinners alike, and have lived to say like David: *Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses (Ps. 107:28).* By God's grace, you will survive. **The history of Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ is a history of being delivered from wits' ends.** Can you number the many times in the Old and New Testaments when Israel and the apostles were at wits' end? If you have never been at your wits' end, rejoice for this experience may bring you into the company of the committed. As you have more wits' end experiences, you will learn to take them in stride.

The "City of Wits' End" is a place of God's design requiring complete trust. You must not fear to enter this city because it is indispensable for building character, for refining the soul and for shedding all unnecessary, ungodly attachments. It will boil out the debris that has settled in your soul, making you a better witness for Christ and revitalizing the fire you once had. All your worldly attachments will be incinerated by the fire of the Holy Spirit. At your wits' end, you are forced to sit, rest and adore at the nail-scarred feet of Jesus and He will strip away from you all that burdens your soul, quenches your spirit and is superfluous. He does not want you to be distracted by the chatter, confusion and clutter of the world. Jesus wants you there at His feet

where it is just you and Him, and nothing else. He wants to teach you what to hold on to and what you need to let go of. He will get you back to the basics. Unconsciously, we easily slip away from business with the Lord to business about the Lord, from being hot to becoming lukewarm. It is at this City of Wits' End where we discover that all that matters is God and God alone. It is here where we change from serving God also to serving God only and truly knowing the difference. Indeed, it is here at the City of Wits' End where our journey with God in His kingdom reaches a new level.

My friend, do not despise the City of Wits' End for it is on the way to the City of God. And there is no finer, no nobler, no grander place, no place more sublime, no place more sacred than the City of Wits' End. It is here where the angels ascend and descend, ministering to you in holy fellowship with God. Of course if you are new to the City of Wits' End, it may be scary. You may say with the psalmist: *For my days are consumed like smoke, And my bones are burned like a hearth. My heart is stricken and withered like grass, So that I forget to eat my bread... I am like an owl of the desert. I lie awake, And am like a sparrow alone on the housetop* (Ps. 102:3-7). Or you may feel totally disconnected from God, and say with Job: *Oh, that I knew where I might find Him...* (Job 23:3).

Being in the City of Wits' End can be very uncomfortable. How much it shakes you depends on the depth of your root system. If your roots do not reach deep into divine springs, the agony can be overwhelming. It is here where you reap what you have been sowing all along: neglect in prayer, meditation and the reading of the God's word; disobedience in witnessing, too busy with worldly things, trying to get ahead to make your nest more comfortable and giving too little to the Lord. It is here where we finally must agree with the words from Martin Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God:" Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also: The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever.

It is here at the City of Wits' End where we go with Him on His terms or where we say: "We will not have this man rule over us," and start on the way to perdition. There is no playing around here. **There is no room for pretending here.** This is no place for negotiations and total surrender is required here. Nothing less than that will get us out of the City of Wits' End.

Now, enough of theology. Let us get practical. Let us get down to: "What must we do then?" When Peter preached his sermon at Pentecost, the people asked: *...what shall we do?* (Acts 2:37). So the first advice to God's people on

the birthday of the church was: **REPENT!** It was not a suggestion, but a trumpet call from God. Friend, this is the first thing you must do: clean out, clean up and change course. Next, you must make restitution like Zacchaeus did. Then you must add **prayer** to that and you may add **fasting** also. You have heard those things from me before, but today I want to propose an additional powerful tool: **START SINGING PRAISES.** This is indeed what the first Christians did after repenting and praying: they began to praise the Lord. **Do not stop short of SINGING A SONG. Keep singing and never quit. Sing your way all the way to heaven.**

But especially sing wholeheartedly, yes even in the dark. You must remind yourself that the dark clouds above you are just hiding the sun for a moment and they are filled with the water of life without which you cannot grow. Truly, it is in the dark where your melody becomes the sweetest and your song the most inspiring. We have no better example of this than that of our Lord Jesus. At the end of the Lord's Last Supper, Judas had gone out into the dark to betray his Master. Yet, in this darkest night in human history, Jesus called for the traditional hymn to be sung for such an occasion (Matt. 26:30). He refused to get into a pity party. He refused to dwell on the negatives. Nothing good comes out of a negative spirit. Two of the finest discourses of the whole Bible came out of that spirit of praise during that dark night: the discourses on the vine and the branches (John 15) and on the Holy Spirit (John 16). Friend, what are you producing in your darkest hours?

You MUST learn to sing in the dark, acting as if God is still alive and cares for you; remembering that God has a way of escape for you! He surely does. Do you understand? If you do not sing in the City of Wits' End, it is proof that your faith is dead and that your God has left the planet! Evangelist Loran Helm said: "Praise is the very breath of trust; and where there is no praise, trust is choked to death." Praise and trust are in a symbiotic relationship. Neither can survive without the other. If one dies, the other dies also.

Therefore, praise spoken or sung is not a choice, something you do when you feel like it. It is a discipline that needs to be done and should never be abandoned. The book of Psalms can be expressed in one single word: SING. Heaven is full of joyful adoration. Lack of praise was the main problem with the three friends that came to comfort Job? Yes, they came to comfort, but they only increased Job's misery because **they failed to bring a song.** Job needed a young man like David who sang his king out of depression (1 Sam. 16:23). In

addition, we have the example of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25). They came to their wits' end and yet sang praises at the midnight hour.

Finally, let us not forget how God delivered entire nations through songs. In 2 Kings 3, Israel and Judah went to war against Moab. When Israel was at wits' end because they could not find water, Elisha called for a minstrel, a musician. And while a song was being sung, the Holy Spirit gave the revelation for the way of escape: dig ditches. God filled the ditches with water and saved Israel's army.

When Israel was about to be attacked by a great multitude beyond number, King Jehoshaphat was afraid (2 Chron. 20). The nation gathered together for fasting and prayer. They said: *...nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You* (2 Chron. 20:12). God told them to face the enemy with singing, and they received a great victory. When you are at wits' end, **sing a song**. This has been the sign of victory in the church from time immemorial. When believers were saved, they sang a song. When they were forbidden to preach the gospel, they sang a song. When they were imprisoned, they sang a song. So my friend, if you are in the City of Wits' End, sing a song and it will not be long until you shall find a way of escape, a revelation or a word of comfort from Christ. Indeed, it will not be long, and you will be on your way to the City of Holy Contentment. God inhabits the praises of Israel. **Sing, and show cold disregard for your feelings—just do it.**

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