

God Won't Let Go of You

Presented by Mary Lowman

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Day One

Years ago, someone sent me this story, which illustrates a wonderful truth. Let me tell it for you.

On a hot summer day in Florida, a little boy decided to go for a swim in the old swimming hole behind his house. He flew into the water, not realizing as he swam toward the middle of the lake, an alligator was swimming toward the shore.

His father saw what was happening, and he ran toward the water, yelling to his son. The little boy made a U-turn to swim to his father. It was too late. From the dock, the father grabbed his little boy by the arms just as the alligator snatched his legs.

That began an incredible tug-of-war between the two. The alligator was much stronger than the father, but the father would not let go. A farmer happened to drive by, heard the screams, raced from his truck, took aim and shot the alligator.

Remarkably, the little boy survived. His legs were extremely scarred and on his arms were deep scratches where his father's fingernails dug into his flesh in his effort to hang on to the son he loved.

The newspaper reporter who interviewed the boy asked if he would show him his scars. The boy lifted his pant legs. And then, with obvious pride, he said, "But look at my arms. I have great scars on my arms, too, because my Dad wouldn't let go."

Maybe you can identify with that little boy. You have scars, too. Not from an alligator, but the scars of a painful past. Some are unsightly and have caused you deep pain or regret. But some wounds are because God has refused to let go. In the midst of your struggle, he's been there holding on to you.

Think of Joseph. His brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. Joseph didn't deserve to be so terribly mistreated, but there he was, a slave and a prisoner in Egypt. But God never let go of Joseph, because Joseph never forsook his faith in Jehovah God. And he was used by God to deliver many people, including his own family, from starvation. I wonder how many times, as he sat in that prison, he just wanted to give up. It looked hopeless, but God didn't let go.

If you're in what looks like a hopeless situation right now, remember God is not going to let go of you, if you are his child by faith in Jesus Christ. God won't let go of you!

Day Two

Are you in a tough place right now? I want to encourage you to know God will never let go of you. When we are born from above, the Bible teaches us nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. God won't let go of you!

Think of Elijah. You remember the story found in 1 Kings 18, where Elijah challenged all the prophets of Baal, with great courage, and their pagan gods could not deliver them. Elijah triumphed over all that evil, proving Jehovah God was the only true God. It was an incredible victory.

But the very next day, brave Elijah becomes a coward, fearful of one woman, Jezebel, who has threatened to kill him. And he starts running for his life. Elijah no doubt would have been diagnosed today as having a deep depression, even as being deluded, as he ran for his life. But God didn't let go, and with great patience and kindness, he nurtured him back to strength, taught him some wonderful lessons, and brought him out of that deep funk an even better man of God.

Are you there today? Has your faith failed you; are you full of fear? Are you in that kind of deep depression where everything looks hopeless, you feel worthless, and you're sure life is coming to an end—at least life with any meaning? I want to encourage you today to know God won't let go of you. He will patiently guide you back to wholeness, as he did with Elijah.

How did Elijah recover? He needed some rest and some nourishment, first of all. When you are physically depleted, it will affect you spiritually and emotionally. So, God put him in quiet place for some rest and nourishment. Then he reminded Elijah of who God is, he helped him get beyond the pity party he was having, and then he sent Elisha to be his companion and coworker.

God never let go of Elijah, and if you are his child, he will not let go of you. David wrote:

For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock (Psalm 27:5).

Day Three

Earlier I told the story of a boy who was rescued from the jaws of an alligator by a father who would not let go. And afterward the boy showed with pride the scars on his arm where his father dug in and held on against a much stronger animal who was trying to devour his son.

Just as this young boy foolishly and ignorantly dove into the dangerous water where this alligator lived, we as children of God sometimes foolishly dive into dangerous situations, not knowing what lies ahead. The swimming hole of life is filled with peril, and we forget the enemy is waiting to attack. The Bible says the enemy of our soul, Satan, prowls about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, kind of like an alligator. Peter goes on to say,

Resist him, standing firm in the faith...And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast (1 Peter 5:9–10).

If you feel like you're in the alligator swamp right now and they're ready to take you under, remember God has said if you are called to his eternal glory in Christ, he will himself restore you and make you strong again—after you have suffered a little while. God is not going to let go of you.

But why does he allow us to suffer a little while? Unlike the story of the father who fought to save his son, God is not helpless against Satan. He could deliver us sooner rather than later, and we puzzle as to why he doesn't, don't we?

There are various reasons God allows his children to endure suffering, and one reason is to bring us to maturity so our lives will bring glory to God. In writing about suffering, James said,

Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard

of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy (James 5:10-11).

James reminds us in retrospect, as we look back to the suffering saints of old, we consider them blessed who persevered through suffering, and he uses Job as an example. In other words, James says, "Get the big picture here. Look beyond your momentary pain and consider what God is doing through your suffering."

Whether your suffering is a result of your wrongdoing or someone else's or it's just the hardships of life, it didn't catch God by surprise, and he intends to use it for your good. He is not going to let go of you, so hang on and trust him. He is a trustworthy God.

Day Four

God will never let go of you! If you have accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of your life, he is committed to you and will keep you for all eternity. Jesus said,

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one (John 10:27-30).

Maybe you're thinking, "Yeah, but Mary, you don't know what I've done. I've committed a sin, knowingly, and I've wandered far from God." That may be sadly true, but it doesn't change the promise Jesus gave us. If—and that is an important "if"—you have truly been born from above through faith in Jesus Christ, you can't even jump out of his hand. Your own disobedience and sin are not strong enough to break his grip on you.

I would remind you of David, a man after God's own heart. You can't go much further wrong as a believer than David did, committing adultery and murder. He tried to cover it up, to bury it and forget it, but until he confessed it and admitted his guilt, he was the most miserable person alive. That's always true for a believer. If you are living in willful disobedience to God's principles, as a true child of God, you will be more and more miserable until you come to full repentance. Read Psalm 51 to remind yourself of David's agony because of his sin.

None of us escape the consequences of our sin, whether believers or not, but nothing can separate a true believer from God's love. Not even our sin. I want to encourage you today to come back to God with a repentant heart, with a commitment to forsake your sin and walk in his way, and he will restore to you the joy of your salvation, just as he did to David.

My own story corroborates this truth, for I foolishly chose to walk away from my commitment to God's principles for a period of ten years—ten long years. It wasn't ignorance, but it was a willful determination to run my own life and get what I wanted. I failed miserably in that endeavor, and at the end of my emotional and mental rope, I came back to God, truly repentant, and he has proven himself to be a God of great mercy and grace to me. That was many years ago, and I can testify God simply never let go of me. He let me run my own show, until I ran it into the ground, and then he restored me.

Day Five

I'd like to briefly recap the story I told about the young boy who was attacked by an alligator. He had jumped into the swimming hole and as he swam out, an alligator swam toward him. His father was nearby, and he ran to the lake to rescue his son. As he reached from the dock for his son's hands, the alligator grabbed his legs, and a tug of war ensued. But this father was not letting go, and he dug his fingers into the boy's arms to hold him. A farmer driving by heard the screams, ran to the lake and shot

the alligator. But of course, the boy's legs were greatly scarred, and he spent days in the hospital recovering.

When asked to show the scars on his legs, the boy did so, but then with obvious pride, he said, "But look at my arms. I have great scars on my arms, too. They are there because my Dad wouldn't let go."

In Romans 8 Paul tells us those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, and because of that, we can cry, "Abba, Father." We are permitted to call the God of creation by an intimate term, a family name, if you please—Abba, Father, Papa. He is our heavenly father, and he will never let us go.

I think of a friend of mine who never knew her father; he abandoned her before she was born. Others have fathers who simply neglected them, and still others have fathers who abused them. If that is true for you, your concept of a father is likely warped. But let me assure you God is your heavenly Father, and he is perfect. Don't transfer your negative experience with your earthly father to God, because you will then miss the joy of fellowshiping with him as Father, Abba, Papa.

I had a wonderful earthly father who never neglected me or mistreated me, but even he could not promise to never leave me. My heavenly Father can say, *I will never leave you or forsake you*, and I have full assurance he will always be with me. He will not let me go, and the same is true for you, if you are his child.

Let me close with these wonderful verses from Romans 8:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).