

# Taking the Stronghold

by Carter Conlon

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*Carter Conlon's sermon 'Taking the Stronghold' emphasizes the importance of standing on God's Word and overcoming fear through faith and obedience.*

**Duration:** 55:00

**Scripture:** Luke 4:18

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having faith in God and trusting in His power to give victory. He uses the example of Jonathan, who confidently climbed up to a stronghold of trained soldiers, despite being at a disadvantage. The preacher encourages the audience to step out of darkness and come into the light of Christ, offering counseling and support for those who want to make this choice. He also highlights the need to have a personal encounter with God and to let go of self-made excuses in order to experience freedom and transformation.

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## Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit Series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge, P.O. Box 260, Lindale, TX 75771 or calling 903-963-8626.

None of these messages are copyrighted, and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. Good morning. Welcome to the year 2000.

I couldn't help but wonder on New Year's Eve when we hit the year 2000, if it even dawned on the millions of people that are standing in the streets here in Manhattan and all over the world that this 2000 started with the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I've often wondered if people are even cognizant of that fact anymore. 2000 years has passed, and I think he's closer now, I know he's closer now to coming than it ever has been before.

What an hour we're living in. What a privilege to be alive in this hour, to stand by his grace, to know the revelation of his glory, to have his truth as our shield and our buckler. Thank God.

Thank God for the high tower of Jesus Christ. Thank God for his mercy. I hope that you thank him for his mercy every morning and you thank him before you go to bed at night, every night, because we stand by

his mercy, we stand in his grace.

I'm going to speak this morning about taking the strongholds. If you'll go to the book of 1 Samuel chapter 14 and just open your Bible, leave it there for a moment. Taking the strongholds.

Father, I just want to thank you for the understanding that I stand before you by grace today as always, I stand before you and it's only your loving kindness that lets me live. Oh, Lord, I thank you for the privilege of speaking the eternal reality of your word. I thank you, God, for your word, which is a lamp for our feet, a light for our path.

Jesus, you said that you came to set the captives free and open prison doors to those that are bound. God, I would ask today that that's exactly what you would do in this house. Did you send your word as a key and as a healing oil to give courage and faith to those of God who are idle in the marketplace at the eleventh hour? God, to those who are trembling under the powers of darkness pitted against them.

God in heaven, I ask now that your word have a weight and a power behind it. Lord, that you deliver and demolish every stronghold of the enemy that is in this house today. God, besetting sins, attitudes of heart, Lord, things that people have kept hidden in their lives, thinking that no one knows, but God, you know, thinking that no one cares, but Lord, you care.

You came to set your people free. You came to bring us into an inheritance that was bought for us by the blood of Jesus Christ. Lord, you made an open display of the powers of darkness and you triumphed over them.

We ask, Lord, that that triumph be made manifest in this house today. The absolute triumph, Lord God, that can only be achieved and understood through faith in the finished work of Calvary. God in heaven, I ask that your kingdom come, that your will be done, that you work in sovereign delivering power in this house today.

God, let there be a shout of freedom from the heart of everyone who's come into this house, who's been captivated by the powers of darkness. God in heaven, I ask that through your word that you give an understanding of how to take these strongholds from the enemy and to be released into the liberty and freedom that is ours in Jesus Christ. Father, I thank you for this.

I praise you for it, O God. Enable me today, Holy Spirit, to speak this word and to hide behind the cross that no man can be seen in this house. But Jesus, we want you to be seen and to be heard, to be loved and to be exalted, to be desired.

Lord God, thank you that as you're lifted up, you said you will draw all men unto you. Draw in this house today, O God. Draw to the pathway of life.

Draw to that river of water that sets the captive free. Father, I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

First Samuel chapter 14, beginning at verse 13. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armor bearer after him. And they fell before Jonathan.

These are the Philistines now. And his armor bearer slew after him. And that first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men, within as it were a half acre of land which a yoke of oxen might plow.

And there was trembling in the host, in the field and among all the people, the garrison and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked. So it was a very great trembling. And the watchmen of Saul and Gibi of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another.

Then said Saul to the people that were with him, number now and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armor bearer were not there. Hallelujah, thanks be to God that they were not there.

The passage of scripture we just read ends with Saul, the king of Israel. Now you don't remember the history of Israel after Joshua went in and conquered the land. They went in and they conquered the land, and the instruction of God was to conquer everywhere.

God told Joshua, he said, everywhere your feet go, he said, I've given you the land. And Joshua was able to convey that to the people who went in. This time not with an evil report, but with a heart filled with courage that God was able to do everything that he said he could do for them.

And I hope that's your heart today. It's really of no avail to sit in the house of God, even where the truth is being preached about freedom from captivity and an abiding life of the Holy Spirit given to us through Jesus Christ. If you are not willing to believe and in believing to reach out and apprehend that for ourselves.

God has given us this place of promise. It is all found in Jesus Christ. In him is healing, in him is life, in him we have liberty.

In him we live, Paul says, we move and we have our being. After Joshua's triumph and the triumph of the initial tribes of Israel in the land came a period called the Judges, a period of 350 years where there were 13 judges raised up in Israel at this time. A succession of turning to God and then when God would raise up a judge to lead them back into truth then they would have a season of prosperity, then they would backslide, then an enemy now would be raised up against them.

And this succession repeated itself over and over and over again for 350 years until finally the people sinned really, the Bible says a great sin. And they asked for a physical king, just like the nations that they had defeated. Now isn't that ironic when you think of it? They said we want a king to go and fight our battles for us, just like the Amorites and just like these other nations whom they had just defeated.

We want a king just like their king. And they rejected the last of the judges really who was Samuel and they said we don't want, in effect they didn't come right out and say it, but in their hearts they were saying we want a physical king, we don't want this invisible king over us anymore. We don't want this God that we cannot see and we're tired of Samuel, his representative.

Samuel's sons now are not walking in Samuel's ways and now we want a king. And so they got their king. And this king they got proved to be eventually a fearful, man-pleasing, self-willed man who would lead those who followed him into further spiritual decline, away from the true pathway of God's power and eventually into witchcraft and defeat.

And folks, that's the way it always is when man begins to look to man for solutions and for answers. And if we're foolish enough ever to allow men to be exalted or to exalt themselves in the church of Jesus Christ, that will always be the end result of allowing somebody in the pulpit who wants to be exalted. And we have

no shortage of that throughout the church today.

Men and women who stand and they are really just nothing more than a charismatic circus in the house of God, full of flesh and leading the people of God into witchcraft. Now, I know that sounds like a strong statement, but that's exactly what Saul did. He had such a lust for his own will that he lost touch with God.

And in losing touch with God, the only way he could even have any semblance of direction was to go to a witch at Endor and seek manifestations. He sought a manifestation of Samuel so that he could get direction for his own future, for his own life. This is the end result of flesh being exalted in the house of God.

We'll always take the people of God farther and farther away from the truth that can set them free. The end of this passage of Scripture ends with Saul beholding a spectacular spiritual victory. An incredible victory is happening in Israel.

It's the victory of type of which he was neither capable of orchestrating himself and he absolutely couldn't comprehend what was happening. He's looking among the host of the Philistines who were encamped against the children of Israel who vastly outnumbered really the minuscule army that he headed at that time. And he was seeing a great discomfoting.

Actually, the Philistine swords had turned against one another. And the Scripture says they were melting away. They had amassed, the Scripture says, just like the sand on the seashore for multitude.

Thousands of chariots and fighting men and soldiers had amassed against the children of Israel after Jonathan had taken a thousand men and slain a garrison of the Philistines. Now they've amassed themselves against Israel under Saul's leadership. The people are now weaponless.

There are no weapons in Israel. Only Saul and Jonathan had weapons, the Scripture says. And Saul sitting under a pomegranate tree is now looking out and he sees this melting away of this vast army.

And not only are they melting away, but they are slaying one another. Their swords are turned one against another and he's looking at this thing and he can't comprehend it. He's so out of touch with God.

He's not even capable at this point of saying, praise God for the victory. All he can say is, who's not here with us? Now that's an incredible statement, because where were these people? They were sitting with Saul under a tree. Their hearts were all trembling.

Those that were not with Saul under the tree, he had only 600 men left with him, were all hiding in caves and thickets and some had even gone into other areas of the country to try to find safety. Where were they? They were all at a time of terrible spiritual declension. And we see now King Saul saying, who's not here with us? Oh folks, I thank God.

My heart's cry for you in this coming year is that you'd step out of the ranks of the fearful. Step out of the ranks of those who are hiding their sin in the house of God. Step out of the ranks of those who have created comfort zones, thinking that these things are going to bring times of safety.

And let it be said among you, even though it backslidden in God's house. Who is not among us? Where did this victory come from? It's an incredible thing, because Saul knew instinctively that the victory that was being experienced was not because of anything that had come from his leadership. Now chapter 13,

if you want to go back there just for a moment in 1 Samuel, tells us that after one year of reigning as king, Saul faced his first major test.

Verse 5 tells us, as I've already spoken about, an incredible opponent, whom all knew were too powerful to defeat, had gathered. And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel. 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude.

And verse 6 says, when the men of Israel saw it, they were in a strait, for the people were distressed. And then the people hid themselves in caves and in thickets and in rocks and high places and in pits. I mean, these are the people of God.

That's an incredible thing when you think of it. Here are the people who were brought out of Egypt with a high hand. The people who had the testimony of God's faithfulness.

The people who had seen, at least through the history of the judges over the last 350 years, a time when God had raised up judges and given them powerful, mighty deliverances. And here are the people of God hiding in caves and thickets and rocks and high places and pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.

And as for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him, trembling. Now, we know the story that Samuel had told Saul. He said, now just wait.

All that is required of you is that you obey God. And I'm going to come at the end of a certain point in time, and I will offer sacrifice to God. He will begin to speak to us what we're to do.

But Saul was to begin to prove himself to be a self-willed man who couldn't come under the authority of God. By his own testimony, he said, I forced myself, therefore. And I was afraid because the people were scattering from me.

And he said, I offered a burnt offering. In other words, he took an office that was never given to him by God. In verse 13, Samuel said to Saul, thou hast done foolishly.

Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee. For now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. That's an incredible thing when we look at it.

Some people think about King Saul when we read about him, and there's a tendency to think he was doomed from the start. He was established to be king, and there was really no hope for him. But that was not the case.

God spoke to him through Samuel and said, had you obeyed me and had you honored me, I would have given you a victory that would have established your kingship and your lineage forever. If you would have obeyed me and if you would have chosen to honor me. What an incredible price to pay to cast off faith and let fear begin to reign in your life.

It's an incredible price that all of us will pay the day that faith goes out the back door and fear comes in the front. And we begin to give in to fear. And the first thing that happens when fear gets a hold of your life is you begin to hide from God, just like Adam and Eve did.

And even in the house of God, there are people who are hiding in caves and thickets and rocks and high places and pits, even in the house of God and among God's people. Israel has no weapons, as I've

already shared with you. They're weaponless.

Now, in verse 17, it says, And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual. And another company turned the way to Beth-horon.

And another company turned to the way of the border that looked to the valley of Zeboiim towards the wilderness. Now, the spoilers now, the Philistines, are freely roaming throughout the land. There is no army there to challenge them.

There is no man of faith at the helm. The spoilers now are roaming. And these spoilers are quite significant because if you'll look with me just for a moment, you begin to understand that these are representing powers of darkness that are let loose in the land or let loose even in the house of God.

And they can be let loose in the house in the life of a Christian who chooses really to live by fear and not by faith and begins to hide from God and sits under a tree. The cross, in a sense, is the type of that tree that should give us the power, should release in us the victory, should cause us to stand when everyone else is falling around us. The word of God is sufficient for us.

He has given enough promises to keep us and sustain us and to give us courage and power over all our enemies. But yet, when a child of God chooses to sit under that type of a promise, those promises, and yet not believe in their heart, but let an evil seed of unbelief begin to get a hold of their life, then the spoilers are loosed and there is no power there to stop them. There is a group of spoilers in the Scripture that says they went three ways in the land.

First of all, to Ophrah. Now, Ophrah was the native place of Gideon, which tells us that God chooses just ordinary men. Ophrah was the place where Gideon lived after his ascension to power, and Ophrah was also the place where Gideon was buried.

And here's really what this tells us. The spoilers went after this place for a specific reason, because Ophrah represented the history of God's faithfulness to his people. And whenever fear gets into the heart, the very first thing that comes against the mind are thoughts taking away the past history of God's faithfulness, removing the history of God's faithfulness as if it never existed, as if he's never been there all along.

You see, Ophrah represented the fact that God chooses ordinary men in ordinary places to live and die, having accomplished extraordinary things in the power of God. That's what Ophrah represented. It's that God will reach down and can reach down anytime, anywhere, to any heart that cries out to him.

And no matter where you live or who you are, what your lineage is, how much education you have or don't have, how much money you have or how much money you owe, God can touch you and God can raise you. God can use your life for His glory. He can set you against armies of the powers of hell and south and cause it to fall before you.

When fear gets into the heart, the enemy, the spoilers come against that truth and it robs that truth from the hearts of God's people. And God's people end up sitting under a tree, really, which is a place of promise, trembling and fearful before an enemy that should be trembling and fearful before them. Hallelujah! Now, the second group of spoilers headed to an area of the country called Beth Horon.

Now, this area was one of the areas in 1 Chronicles 6 given to the Levites or the priesthood. Beth Horon contained cities of refuge. It contained a key road from the coast to the rest of the country.

In other words, you really couldn't travel the length and the breadth of the country without going through this area called Beth Horon. And this today, I believe, to us represents truth. And it's the truth that is a road, a pathway that leads us to a city of refuge.

And when fear begins to reign among the people of God, the spoilers come out and first go against the priesthood, those that are called to stand and boldly proclaim the truth of God's Word. You see, God is a God who calls things that are not as if they are. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by things that did not even exist.

They were framed simply by the Word of God. And the true call of you and I as kings and priests of the Lord is to stand and to our generation, first of all, live it and believe it, but then make that proclamation to our generation. God is not limited by your circumstance.

God is not limited by your character. God is not limited by what you can or can't do. And He's not hindered by what you have done in the past.

He is God. He is God. His Word can recreate you.

That's why the Bible says those who are in Christ are a new creation. All things pass away. How are we recreated? We are recreated by the Word of God, just like this universe was created.

It was made of nothing but the Word of God. Hallelujah! When unbelief gets into the heart, the spoilers come out and try to obscure that truth and try to block that truth and take us away really from the city of refuge. Because that truth will lead you and I to a place of refuge, a place of rest, a place of trust, a place where we can say like the Apostle Paul, I know I've said it a thousand times and I hope I say it a hundred thousand before I die, I believe that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purposes.

And the last group of spoilers went to a place called Zeboiim. And it was a valley or a pathway that was leading through some of the uncultivated mountainous areas of the country. Now remember, the land was to be completely subdued and every area brought to fruit bearing by the promises and power of God.

This was the heritage of God's people. God said, I'm sending you in and you're going to conquer the land and you're going to conquer every part of the land. And when the spoilers come against an understanding of the faithfulness of God, when the spoilers are allowed to come and create questions and doubts about the truth and the integrity of God and His Word and the creative and recreative power of the Word of God, the next thing that will be happening is that the inroads into other areas of the life that the Holy Spirit wants to come and begin to rule and to reign in our lives will be blocked, they will be stopped.

We can be redeemed yet powerless and fearful at the same time. This is a tragedy in the house of God and it's a tragedy for any Christian not to lay hold of God in the manner that allows us to rise to the place that God destined us to be and to be the people that He calls us to be through Christ Jesus. Now into this perilous situation comes Jonathan, the son of Saul, a young man who possesses in his heart an understanding of God that we would do well to take heed to today.

Now in chapter 14 verses 4 and 5, well let's start at the beginning. Now it came to pass upon a day that Jonathan, the son of Saul, said unto the young man that bears armor, Come and let us go over into the Philistine's garrison that is on the other side. But he told not his father.

And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree, which is in Migron. And the people that were with him were about six hundred men. And Ahiah, the son of Hetab, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the Lord's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod, and the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.

Now Jonathan did well not to tell them where he was going. Here's Saul under a pomegranate tree, trembling in his heart. This is the king that's supposed to go out and fight their battles.

He's just as afraid now as the people are, if not even more. Six hundred men are with him and he has a priest with him who is, in a sense, the scripture defines him, links him in with Ichabod, which when the ark of the Lord was taken during Eli's priesthood, there was a son born to one of Eli's sons and he was named Ichabod, which means the glory of the Lord has departed. And so here's Saul sitting under a tree with six hundred fearful men and a priest of the lineage of the departed glory of the Lord.

Jonathan did well not to tell them where he was going and what was in his heart. And verse four says, In between the passages by which Jonathan sought to go over into the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side. The name of the one was Boaz and the name of the other Senna.

And I will get back to that in a minute. The forefront of the one was situated northward over against Mishmash and the other southward over against Gibeah. Now, to get to the Philistine stronghold, this was what was in Jonathan's heart.

We'll see this in a moment, because in verse six, Jonathan says, Let's go over to the garrison. Now, the word garrison in the original text means the stronghold, the fortified position. The Philistines have a stronghold here.

And Jonathan said, Let's go over to it. And it says, It may be the Lord will work for us, for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few. You see, Jonathan had something his father didn't have.

There was an understanding of the history of God, the faithfulness of God that had not been taken away from him by any of the spoilers. He knew that God could save by just two or two thousand. It really made no difference to God at all, and Jonathan knew that.

Jonathan said, Now, let's go over to the stronghold and let's take it. I love that this young man for the integrity, the truth that was in him, caused him to begin to move in the sovereignty of God. Now, to get to the Philistine stronghold, he had to pass between two identifiable places.

And the Bible doesn't tell us if there are any other passageway given through which he had to travel to approach his enemies. There are two particular rocks that are named, and he had to climb up the side of a hill between these two identifiable rocks. Now, one was situated over against a place called Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.

Now, this is significant. Now, you'll understand why in a moment. First of all, Gibeah, what did Gibeah represent? And I believe these two rocks represented the choice that every one of us in our generation

also have to face if we are going to go in the power of God and see the strongholds in our lives broken.

There's a choice that we have to make, just like Jonathan had to make a choice. Gibeah, which one of these rocks faced, was Saul's birthplace. It was Saul's residence after becoming king.

Gibeah had a history of terrible backsliding among God's people. For example, in Judges chapter 19, it was in Gibeah that the Benjamites raped a traveling man's concubine, and because of it, the whole tribe of Benjamin was nearly exterminated. Gibeah was also the place where the Gibeonites eventually hanged Saul's descendants.

You can see that in 2 Samuel chapter 21 and verse 6. This is Gibeah. Ironically, the modern site today is called Tel El Ful, which means Hill of Beans. I thought when I read that, this must be where we got that expression from.

His life didn't amount to any more than a hill of beans. And this is Saul. Gibeah is all about Saul.

And I can see Jonathan now looking at the Saul and looking at the soldiers and looking at the camp, and there has to be a determination in his heart to say, this is going to amount to no more than a hill of beans. And that's exactly what it amounted to. I'm not going to be part of this.

And folks, I want to tell you something. If fear is in your heart, if there's doubt and unbelief that's causing you to tremble before your enemies, there's got to come a recognition in your heart that what I've now possessed, what I'm now doing, where I'm now living, is not going to amount to anything. In the end result, it's going to be looked back on, and if anything is said about it, it will be just, in effect, a joke or a mockery.

And this is not how I want to live my life. This is not what I want my life to end up being. Just a hill of beans when it's all over.

I want to live for God. I want to step out of this mediocrity. Folks, you will never know victory unless you want to step out of mediocrity.

You have to have a desire to step away from sin. It's got to be in your heart. You cannot ever know the victory hiding in caves and holes in the house of God.

There has to be a desire in the heart to say, I'm getting out of this mediocrity. I'm not ending up like this. I'm not going to join the succession of alcoholics in my family.

I'm not going to be an abuser like those that have gone before me have been. This has got to be in your heart. I'm not going to be a thief.

I'm not going to be a liar. I'm not going to carry on the succession. I'm going to step out of the crowd and let God begin to take my life in a direction that sets me free from the powers of hell.

Now, the other stone that he had to pass through was called Michmash. And there is really very little in history about this particular place other than one thing. Its name means something hidden.

Something hidden. Now, this was Jonathan's choice. It's to remain with the trembling encampment, walking only by sight and in the power of the natural man, or to lay hold once again of the unseen hand of God.

This was his choice. To stay with man and the ways of man. That really amounts to nothing.

And folks, if you're here today and you don't know Christ, you're just, if you're walking along with the ways of this society, the ways of man, your life will amount to nothing. No matter what anybody says about it. And Jonathan had to make that choice.

Do I live my life like these people? Do I sit under the promises of God, trembling and fearful before the enemies of God? Or do I move in the direction of something hidden? Something hidden from those who don't want to walk with God, but reveal to those who do. The covenant keeping promises of God. Do I move in that direction? That hidden hand of God.

The unseen hand of God. The hand that parted the water and brought our ancestors out of captivity into glorious freedom. The hand that took off the chariot reels of the pursuing army so that they could not catch the children of Israel going over to the other side.

Who do I choose to follow? Do I follow the ways of the flesh or do I follow the ways of the spirit? Do I live for man or do I live for God? Thank God Jonathan makes a clear choice, because verse 6 says it clearly. He said, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be the Lord will work for us, for there's no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.

Now his armor bearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart. Turn thee behold. I am with thee according to thy heart.

Oh, folks, it only takes one or two to start a victory rolling. It doesn't take a whole army anymore. It hasn't since the days of Calvary, where one or two are gathered.

Jesus said, there I am. I'm in their midst. The conqueror, the creator of the universe is there.

The one who spoke and things that were not became into existence. The one who triumphed over the powers of darkness is in our midst, where one or two are begin to gather and begin to seek God. Then said Jonathan in verse 8, he said, Behold, we will pass over.

Now, this is an interesting word, because in the original Hebrew text, the word is *avar*, and it means to cross over, to go beyond or to violate a natural law, such as water overflowing its banks. To go beyond what is humanly possible, really is the context of this word. In this case, it means to confront a situation, which in one's own natural ability to succeed is beyond its own capability and possibility.

That's really what the word means. Jonathan said, we will pass over. We're going to defy natural laws.

It's like a river overflowing its banks. We're going to go to a place where everyone around us says it can't be done. Where everyone around us says, how are we going to win the victory? Jonathan says, I know somebody who's with me.

I know that he's going to give me the victory. He's going to give me the power to do what needs to be done. And then he says, later on in verse 8, he said, And we will discover ourselves unto them.

Now, the word for we'll discover is *gela*, which means to be unveiled, to stand completely uncovered and in the open. And this is the way to the victory, folks. You can't go halfway with God.

There can't be a half a confession of a half a sin. It's got to be all or nothing. Folks, you just have to get up out of your seat sometime.

How close is the victory? The victory, I guess, for those downstairs, can't be a whole lot more than about 20 yards away. That's where the victory is. If we were to take the altar to be this place of victory, that's where you're going to find the victory.

But the victory is found when we get up and are not intent on trying to win it in our own strength. For we know that in our own strength, the victory can't be won. It's got to be that unseen hand of God coming down and beginning to fight for us.

But on our part, there has to be an unveiling, a complete openness, a complete uncovering in the presence of God. Really, what it means is a confession of who and what we are, where we stand, how we're living. An honest heart before God.

That's all God has ever looked for from His people is an honest heart. No religious games in His house. This is what I am.

This is the stronghold that's in my life. Instead of trying to justify it, instead of going home and making excuses for it, coming into the house of God, and if it's sin, call it sin. Calling it what it is and saying, God, I stand before you unveiled.

In verse 9, he said, Now that's an interesting thought. If they say, Terry, Jonathan says, we've not got the victory. We're not going to go.

You see, this is the plan of all the wars against your soul. This is what the enemy would like to happen to you in this new millennium, this new year. Convince him or her that God is not with him.

Cause him to stand still. Remember that faith without works is dead, being alone. Bring him to a place of inaction, of hearing truth but never acting on it, of sitting and comprehending, but never moving.

Not even taking that first step of faith, just stepping out of the ranks, coming into the open, and beginning that climb, a very short climb, mind you, to tearing down the strongholds. Bring him to inaction, then we will come to him and swallow him up. If the devil can get you doing nothing about your sin, be sure that something is already happening.

If he can get you to do nothing, just to sit still where you are, and not move upon the word of God that's been spoken to you, that can bring you to freedom, then you can be sure your enemies are already coming your way. The psalmist says in Psalm 71, verse 10 and 11, My enemies speak against me, and they lay wait for my soul. They take counsel together, saying, God has forsaken him.

Persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him. Now Jonathan says something else, though. But if they say thus, Come up unto us, then we will go up, for the Lord has delivered them into our hand, and this shall be a sign unto us.

If they say, Come up unto us. I like this guy, Jonathan. He's a young man looking for a good fight, really.

If they challenge us. Remember, later on it was David that came into the army. And what happened when Goliath challenged the army of Israel, David said, He's challenging the honor of God.

There's a cause here. And if they say, Come up to us, come on up, and we'll show you a thing or two, they're challenging the honor of God. And Jonathan is saying to his armor bearer, he knows in his heart they've challenged the honor of God.

Therefore, God has given them into our hand. The moment they say, Come up to us. You know, I tell you, there are some besetting sins already at this altar this morning.

And they're speaking already to some of you sitting here. And they're saying to you, Come up to us, and we'll show you a thing or two. We'll show you the futility of your faith.

And Jonathan says, No, sir. If they say that to me, I'm going, I'm heading right up there, right up the mountain towards them. I'm passing through these two stones, and I'm heading right to this stronghold of the Philistines because God has given them into my hand.

They've challenged his honor. They've challenged his honor. I want you to know this.

Any lying devil of hell, every power of evil that tries to tell you that you cannot escape captivity has challenged the very honor of God. You need to understand that. They've challenged the integrity of God, the character of God.

Something has got to rise in your heart. Something like rules in the heart of Jonathan to say, How dare these things challenge the honor of God? How dare these lying thoughts think they can exalt themselves above the knowledge of Almighty God? Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

And the men of the garrison, verse 12, answered Jonathan and his armor-bearer and said, Come up to us, and we will show you a thing. The word show is yada, which means knowledge gained through the senses. This is all the Philistines knew.

That's all every demonic power knows. It's all about knowledge gained through the senses. They were saying, From all that we have learned to trust in, we believe that we have the upper hand over you.

And Jonathan said unto his armor-bearer, Come up after me, for the Lord has delivered them into the hand of Israel. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet. Now, folks, I want to tell you something.

Sometimes the first 20 yards is the hardest when we're going towards defeating a stronghold in our lives. He had to climb up on his hands and knees. He was going upwards towards a stronghold with faith in his heart.

I'm just hoping with everything in me that you can get a hold of this picture in your mind this morning of this young man, Jonathan, that's climbing up to this stronghold of trained soldiers that are mocking him and mocking his God. And he's climbing up with just an armor-bearer behind him. At an absolute disadvantage, really, in the natural.

They could just lean over the cliff and cut his head off, in a sense, as he's coming up. But he has the victory in his heart. They have mocked God.

They've challenged the integrity of his God. And he knows he has the victory. And he climbs up upon his hands and feet.

And, folks, however you have to get there, get there. If you have to lean over to the person beside you and say, push me to the altar, get there. However you have to get there, get there.

Pride has to be destroyed. All of unbelief has to be damned and crushed underfoot. And we step out from our place of bondage.

We step out from our captivity and say, God, be honored. Let every power of hell be damned. Be honored, O God, in my life.

Be honored. Hallelujah. And his armor-bearer after them, verse 13, and they fell, that's the Philistines, before Jonathan.

And his armor-bearer slew after him. Verse 14 says, That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made was about twenty men, within, as it were, a half acre of land which a yoke of oxen might plow. Now, some would say today, well, that first slaughter may seem small compared to the host that's encamped against you.

You go up and there's thousands upon thousands upon thousands that are encamped against me. And you call this a major victory, climbing up a hill and killing twenty men, which is really a drop in the bucket. But, folks, you've got to see something here because there's a spiritual application.

The moment a man of faith arrived on that scene, all of Israel is captivated. Saul's under the tree. The people he's leading are trembling.

Ichabod's relative is probably prophesying to the wind to no avail. And into all of this scene, and there are people hiding in caves and dens and holes all over the place. And into the midst of this, one man, with faith in his heart, with an armor-bearer, who's also got faith in his heart, steps into the camp of the Philistines, the very first point of stronghold, and challenges them by the very integrity of his God.

And yes, he slays the first twenty, but something begins to happen. There's a chain reaction. It's like an earthquake begins to happen.

It starts at a certain point and begins to spread outward, like a tidal wave. And there was a trembling in the host in the field. And among all the people, the garrison, the spoilers also began to tremble.

They also trembled. And the earthquake was a very great trembling. You can see all these powers of these people that are amassed against Israel, that are motivated by demonic powers and powers of hell.

And a fear, an unexplicable fear, begins to grip their hearts. And a trembling comes into the whole host. A confusion begins to overpower them.

Why? Because the army has risen up. A new garrison has come. More swords have been found.

Five thousand reinforcements have come in. No! One man, one man, has climbed a mountain. One man with faith in his heart has stood up to the powers of darkness and said, God has given you into my hand.

One man. And a trembling goes through the whole host. Hallelujah! And the watchman, verse 16, of Saul and Gibeon, Benjamin, looked and behold, the multitude melted away.

The people began, the powers of darkness began to flee. And they went on beating down. Actually, the original text says they were destroying, they were virtually annihilating one another.

That's an incredible thing. You look over the top of the hill, you see this formidable army that's been encamped against Israel. And the testimony of God having drawn their swords now.

And they were thrusting one another right through the heart. And as they were melting away, they're blindly slaying one another. And this is the type of what happens to the powers of darkness pitted against your life when faith begins to arise in your heart.

You've got to see that today. Hell has no stronghold over you when you begin to turn to Christ. Go with me very quickly to one last scripture, Psalm 18.

Psalm 18. Beginning at verse 1. Hallelujah. I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.

The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised and so shall I be saved from mine enemies. The sores of death compassed me and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

The sores of hell compassed me about. The snares of death prevented me. In my distress, I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God.

He heard my voice out of His temple and my cry came before Him, even into His ears. Then the earth shook. What did we read? It just happened to the encampment of the Philistines.

The earth shook and trembled. The foundations also, the hills moved and were shaken because He was wroth. Verse 16.

He sent from above. He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy and from them which hated me for they were too strong for me.

They prevented me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place. He delivered me because He delighted in me.

Verse 28. For Thou wilt light my candle. The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

For by Thee I have run through a troop and by my God I have leaped over a wall. Verse 33. He makes my feet like hinds feet.

In other words, He gives me the power to climb. He gives me the power to ascend to where He is and to tear down the strongholds of darkness and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war so that a bowl of steel is broken by mine arms.

Thou hast given me the shield of Thy salvation. Thy right hand is holding me up and Thy gentleness has made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me that my feet did not slip.

I have pursued mine enemies and overtaken them. Neither did I turn again until they were consumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise.

They are fallen under my feet. For Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle. Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies that I might destroy them that hate me. They cried, but there was none to save them, even to the Lord, but He answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind, and I did cast them out as dirt in the streets.

My brothers, my sisters, beloved of God, the choice is yours. We can stand as ministers in Times Square Church and bring you this truth. We can preach it, we can speak it, we can teach it, we can publish it, we can defend it.

But unless you lay hold of it, it is of no avail. The choice is yours. Hide in holes, hide in caves, deal dishonestly with one another with God, and live with the fearful, or step out and say, God, this is what I am.

This is what's in my life. This is the stronghold. And meet Him face to face.

And whatever the climb is, begin it. You'll find it's a very, very short walk to freedom. And it begins a work in your life, that line upon line, precept upon precept, little by little, the kingdom of God begins to advance, and strongholds begin to be destroyed.

And then one day you come into this house, and you can rise to your feet and sing that song, I am free, I am free. And you can be singing it in truth. Not just humming along with the music, but truth has found a lodging place in your heart.

We're now entering a new millennium, and we're drawing closer to the day of His coming. Our choice is to stay among the fearful and unbelieving, hiding from both our enemies and the complete triumph of Christ, or to begin the short journey of faith towards freedom. It requires a discovery of oneself before God, that we step out of all self-made excuses, and step up to the fight.

If you only knew how much God longs to show Himself strong for you. If you only knew it. If you only could see and sense and feel the waiting of God, to show Himself strong.

Vanquishing, demolishing every power of darkness that's pitted against you as His son or His daughter. Setting you free. By His spoken word beginning a process of change, that one day you can stand, and not only by your own declaration, but all around you would say, only God, only a God in heaven could deliver after this sort.

No one else could do this. No one else could have carried you through this trial. No one else could have given you the victory, when everyone around you would have crumbled.

How God longs to show Himself strong for His people. To give you a voice in your community. To give you a voice in your home.

To give you influence among your children. The greatest way to lose influence among your children is let them see something else at home than what they see in church. That's all you have to do to lose them, folks, to the devil.

It's really simple. Just live differently at home than you profess to be in church, and you guarantee you'll lose your children. But God wants to show Himself strong, so that we don't have to come to the house of

the Lord and put on a pretense.

That it can be spirited in truth. We come into the house of God and say, Lord, I'm walking in the Spirit and I'm living in truth. By the grace of Almighty God, I know victory in my life.

This is 2000. I don't really feel it's very long until Christ's coming. And if He's not coming soon, then it's not too long before our going to Him.

Either way. Either way, destiny awaits us. My little call is very simple.

We enter the new millennium. Do we enter it fearful? Trembling? Afraid? Defeated? Hiding? Or do we step out of the crowd? He didn't tell His Father where He's going. It's not necessary to tell anybody here today where you're going.

It's nobody's business but yours and God's. You may have come into this house today. You're sitting beside somebody that thinks you're a saint.

But in your heart, you know you're not. There's a stronghold in your life. Nobody needs to know where you're going.

It's nobody's business but God's. But you say like Jonathan, I'm leaving this place. I'm leaving this hill of beans.

And I'm going with God. I'm going with the unseen hand of God. That's a simple altar call today.

I don't know how else to make it. You might be a sinner today who don't know Christ. I'll tell you, this world is a hill of beans.

The Bible says it's going to amount to nothing. It's just going to burn. You're wise to get up and get out of it now.

While you still have a chance to do that. A Christian person who are in the house of God and you're hiding sin in your life, you're wise to get up and get out now. Get away from the strong.

Don't listen to the lie that you can't get free. If you're thinking that, then you bought the lie of the devil that can keep you in captivity. Remember that the enemy who tells you you can't get free is challenging the integrity of God.

Remember that. You can get up with confidence today. You can boldly come to the throne of grace to find help in your time of need.

Now, Father, I just thank you, Lord, that you have in effect really issued a challenge to this body. Oh, God, I pray that you give us the courage to get up and go forward out of all darkness. Lord, all fear and unbelief.

Every place of hypocrisy and hiding. Lord, that we get up and make the choice in our heart to go with you. Father, I thank you that today that you're going to release a multitude of people from strongholds in this house.

You promised me, Holy Spirit, that a trembling would begin in the heart of the very powers of darkness that are pitted against many in this house. Generational strongholds will be broken. Powers of darkness will be devastated and defeated.

And a new beginning will happen for many people who choose to walk in honesty and integrity before God. Now, Father, I take you at your word today and I thank you for that. Lord, we don't have to prove you.

You've already proven yourself. I thank you for the number of people today that are going to be set free in this house in Jesus name. Amen.

Would you all stand, please, if the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart and you'd like to come to this altar. In the balcony, you can go to either exit and make your way down here. Remember, nobody needs to know where you're going.

Nobody needs to know why. Just be honest with God today. Please make your way down here.

Pull in close to the altar and make room for those that are going to be coming. The education annex, you can go right forward to the screen that's in front of you. And there'll be a pastor there waiting to meet with you and to counsel with you.

This is a day of freedom. Folks, this is a time to rejoice for those that are going to make the choice to step out of darkness and come into the light of Christ. Hallelujah.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, Jesus said, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives. And they're recovering a sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

He closed the book and gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

This day is the day of your release from captivity to the powers of darkness and the besetting power of sin. If you will lay hold by faith of the promises of God to set you free. This day, the enemy can't foment your mind anymore.

This day, the chain of iniquity that may be passed, have been passed from generation to generation in your family is going to be broken. This day, this day, because these things challenge the integrity of your God. Let that get deep in your heart and say, Lord, as these things choose to challenge your testimony in my life, they are challenging your integrity.

God has given them into your hands. They are absolutely defeated at Calvary. Now let's pray a simple prayer together.

Lord Jesus, I thank you for the victory that you won for me. When you gave your blood and your body for my behalf. I understand that you triumphed over every power of oppression, captivity and darkness that would try to hold back your life from reigning within me.

Today, I yield my life to your purposes. And I thank you for setting me free from the power of sin and death. I receive your life.

I receive your promises to me. And from this day forward, I understand that you have given my enemies into my hand. They cannot oppress me.

They cannot torment me. They cannot prosper against me. They cannot destroy your testimony.

Because you have made great promises to me. And by these promises, I am a partaker of your divine nature. Now I thank you for setting me free from all the power of sin and death.

And giving me the ability to be a new person in Christ Jesus. I receive it. I believe it.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Now thank you.

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