

Why Do Some Battles Never Go Away?

by Carter Conlon

The sermon explores the concept of battles that never go away and how they can be used by God to teach us how to fight and rely on His strength.

Duration: 49:32

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:11, 2 Corinthians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 12:7

Topics: "Victory"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that the fallen nature of humanity is defeated by the power of Christ within believers. The devil tries to convince people that their battles are greater than the strength of Christ, leading them to captivity. The preacher references 2 Corinthians 6:14 to highlight the importance of not aligning with unrighteousness and darkness. The sermon encourages listeners to recognize their freedom in Christ, to fight against their fallen nature, and to obey God.

Transcript

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And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, or that means three times, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong.

It's not a debatable issue that the Apostle Paul was without doubt a New Testament pattern of a victorious Christian. Paul's life was a life of victory. His legacy is a legacy of victory.

The testimony of the things that God in the Holy Ghost was able to accomplish through him only point to a victorious Christian. Even at the end of his days, he had the courage to hear God take a pen in his hand and begin to write down what we know to be much of our New Testament today. He finished out in victory.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, in verse 1, he exhorted the church to follow him in the manner in which he was following Christ. That's an incredible boast, really. Such a confidence in God.

He had such assurance that the path that he was on was a pathway of victory and truth that he could look back to the churches and the people he had led to Christ and say to them confidently, follow me as I am following Christ. In other words, there's no deficiency here, there's a complete victory here, and you will know everything that God has ordained for your life in this pathway. And near the end of his days, he wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 4, in verse 6 and 7. He said, I'm now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand.

Now, here's Paul's own words. I've fought a good fight. I've finished my course.

I've kept the faith. I've fought and I've finished and I've kept the faith. And Paul knew it.

He would not have written a lie. The Holy Spirit would never have endorsed a lie coming from his pen or an exaggeration or an embellishment. God bore witness to this, man.

And the Holy Spirit bore witness as he wrote these words to Timothy. He had fought a good fight, not a deficient fight, not a partial fight, but a good fight. He had finished the course that God had prescribed for his life and he had kept the faith.

The faith being, of course, confidence in a finished and completed work on Calvary. Paul knew his righteousness was of God. He knew his wisdom was of God.

He knew his pathway was ordained of God. Paul knew that everything that was allowed into his life was allowed there for a purpose, whether he could see it or not see it. He chose to believe God.

And because of this, he fought and he finished and he kept the faith right to the end. But in our opening text today, Paul speaks of an ongoing battle, which God allowed to remain as a part of his life. He believed it to be there to counteract the rising of pride in him or around him because of the knowledge which he had been given of God.

Paul said, it was such a struggle that three times Paul went to God in prayer and asked that it might be taken away from him. Now, I don't believe for a moment these are casual prayer times. It could have involved a day or two of fasting, a sincere prayer.

And Paul coming to the Lord and saying, God, I'll serve you. You know, I'll serve you. But this is a terrible battle that is going on in and around me.

And I'm asking you to take this away from me. And the Lord responds to Paul and he says, my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in weakness.

Now, this is an instance of the benevolent love of God. It's the love spoken about in John chapter three and verse 16, where it says, for God so loved the world. The word there implies it's a love that gives us not what we want, but what God knows we need.

It is conceivable, I suppose this is only conjecture on my part, but Paul was a Pharisee and the best of them. And certainly pride is at the root of everything that exalts itself above the knowledge of God. To the point of condemning, as it is, the church of Jesus Christ and standing and giving his approval when Stephen was stoned to death in the book of Acts.

A pride, perhaps, that was an inherent thing in Paul. And God knew that there had to be something given to him to keep him in a place where his ears were open and his eyes could see where real power and real victory was. Paul, later on, goes on to boast and say that God has set in me a pattern for those who follow after.

He has shown that he is strength and weakness, that he is the key to the provision that you and I need to get through every day in this life. It may not always be clear sailing, and certainly it wasn't in Paul's life. Sometimes sailing involved hanging on to a piece of wood and letting the tide bring you into shore.

Paul knew this. He knew it every day. He knew struggles and trials and difficulties.

But the Lord said to Paul, you've been freely given of my kindness. You've not earned it. It has come to you because I've accepted you.

Paul, I accepted it when you called me Lord and you opened your heart to me and you became a recipient of my kindness and my kindness will be in you every day. And in my kindness, you'll never be overcome by any of your enemies. You will have struggles in your life, but these struggles will never overpower you.

You see, Paul knew this. Paul knew he would have victory. This is sufficient, Paul.

This is what the Lord said to him. This is all you need. I have promised that you will not be overcome by any of your enemies.

Now, the question we ask ourselves today is for what reason would God allow a battle to remain in my life? Over which he could clearly give me the victory in a moment of time. And I know that question is here this morning. Many, many people never really want to vocalize it, but the question is there.

God, you could give me the victory over this in a second. It could have happened this morning during one of our worship songs. You could have taken this thing out of my life and I could never have to struggle with it again.

God, why do you leave this in my life? And why are there some battles that simply just never go away? Now, Paul gives us a hint. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 11, let me just read it to you. He's speaking of the children of Israel.

And he speaks of the pattern of God's dealing with his people as he brought them through the wilderness. And Paul says, all these things happen to them for examples and they are written for our admonition. The word admonition means our instruction so that something may come into our minds.

There are patterns in the Old Testament of how God deals with his people. And we can learn about the way God deals with his people by understanding the entirety of Scripture. Scripture is interpreted by

Scripture.

It's absolutely necessary that you know the whole Bible. In the knowledge of this, you're going to see it. It's really one story from Genesis to Revelation.

You see the handprint of God and the identification of Jesus Christ all through the Scriptures. Now, we see historically the pattern of how God deals with his people. Now, Paul said, there was a thorn given me.

He called this thorn a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet me. You look up the word messenger and it means angel. Really? It means messenger, exactly as it's translated in the King James.

He said, God allowed this thing, even if it was from the devil himself, to come and to buffet me or bounce me around, lest I should be exalted above measure. Now, Paul identifies again in verse 10 some of the manifestations of the struggle that he had to go through. He said, therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution and distresses for Christ's sake.

Now, these are five things that Paul said that were in his life. Infirmities mean bodily weaknesses or sicknesses. Reproaches, Paul had to suffer injuries quite often.

He was beaten up very severely from time to time as he preached the gospel. And insults were a constant part of his life. The word necessities means distresses or needs.

Or it also can refer to that which fights within a man against the new nature that has been given him in Christ. We have a nature. We have a sin nature.

It's a fallen nature. Now, in Christ we have a new nature, but the old nature is still very much there and still wants to rise and still wants to rule. And the necessities can speak of that inward fighting.

Paul spoke about it at one point in his life, and he said, without were fighting and inside were fears. In other words, we were encompassed on all sides by this warfare that is so powerful and so strong that only in Christ could we ever even hope to stand against it. He also speaks about persecutions, which means exactly that.

Paul was persecuted by even his own brethren for what he stood up for. And lastly, Paul talks about distresses, which are crushing afflictions. Really, afflictions which would destroy an ordinary person.

Somebody who didn't have the resource of God within them would not be able to stand in the midst of these things. And it's true. There are people here this morning that you are going through some of these things and you wonder why they're there.

But in spite of the wondering, part of the victory at least begins when we begin to acknowledge that Jesus, without your presence in my life, I know I would never get through this. But I have an inward strength to get through this. I am going to make it to the other side.

This is a valley of the shadow of death, but it's not going to overpower me. Your rod, your staff are with me and they give me comfort. I'm going to come through.

And at the end of my life, I'm going to look back and see the goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. I'm going to know this God. No matter what I have to go through on this side of eternity, you are going to sustain me and you're going to keep me.

Now, let's go to Judges chapter 3. Right after the book of Joshua is the book of Judges. Now, in Judges chapter 3, we've moved out of Joshua. And Joshua is about Moses' successor taking the people into the promised land.

Now, they have conquered the promised land. There were 31 kings in the promised land who could offer resistance that they would have to overcome to inherit the promised land. And there were two kings on the other side of the river, Og and Bashan, that they had defeated before going in.

But once these 33 kings were defeated, it was really a mop-up operation from here on in. All legitimate resistance as it is had been destroyed. It was just a matter of going in and claiming the land.

And that's what Joshua said to the people at one point. He said, how long will you be slacking going in to claim what is rightfully yours? These resistant kings that had the power to stop us are now all gone. They're all defeated.

Now, just go in and claim your inheritance. There was resistance there, but it was not a resistance that had the power to stop the people of God from claiming this land of promise. But you see, an interesting thing now in the book of Judges, right after Joshua, in chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, the scripture says, now these are the nations which the Lord left to prove Israel by them.

This is in the promised land. Even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan. Verse 2, only that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war, at least such as before knew nothing thereof.

Now, namely, verse 3, five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites, the Sidonians and the Hivites that dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baalharmon on to the entering in of Hamath. Now, it speaks about five lords and all of their followers that God allowed to stay in the promised land. Isn't that an amazing thing? Now, the promised land is a type in the Old Testament of you and I as believers in Jesus Christ.

The promised land was a physical place, but we know today for the New Testament believer, the promised land is Jesus Christ. It's his salvation and it's his life being lived within us. Now, in this Old Testament shadow play of what is now ours in the new, God left five kings.

Now, these are not kings that have the power to defeat. These are more like nuisance kings. They are left there to prove Israel and to teach those who had not formerly experienced it how to go to war.

If we had no problems, we'd be impossible to live with, with people who are outside of the Lord. We'd have all these pat answers. We'd be throwing little trite scriptures at everybody.

We'd be an impossible people to live with. Imagine if we had no problems whatsoever. Well, if anybody here has no problems, I'd be interested in speaking with you after finding out how you got there.

But one of the reasons these kings were left in the promised land is to teach those who had not formerly experienced it how to go to war. God says, I need something in there to teach them that they're going to be another generation to rise. They're not Joshua's generation.

They're going to be the children of Joshua's generation. And there has to be something to teach them how to fight or they will never know what it is to win a victory. They will never know what it is to have to rely on

the strength of God as their forefathers did.

So there will have to be something left there that they have to go against and they have to conquer it. But yet you have to understand these are defeated kings. These are not kings that have the power to defeat them.

Folks, we have battles in the New Testament. But the battles that we face are already won. We are more than conquerors, the Scripture says, through Christ who loved us.

There is no angel or power or depth or height. There is nothing that can come against us that can separate us from the love. And may I add the victory that is ours in Jesus Christ.

We are more than conquerors. Christ did triumph 2,000 years ago. And because we trusted him, the triumph of Christ is now ours.

But yet in this place of promise, there are still battles that have to be fought. There are still struggles. There are still wars we have to go into.

But we are fighting against defeated enemies. They don't have the power to defeat us. They are only to teach us that we need him.

We need Jesus Christ every day. We need the power of the Holy Ghost to live the Christian life. Now, for many years I lived on a farm.

And we had a lot of cats in the barn. And I used to see something rather humorous once in a while. The mother cat would go and corral a mouse out in the field or a mole.

And play with it sufficiently so that the thing is exhausted. And it has no power left. It's still a mouse or a mole, but it has no power.

It's out of gas, literally. And then bring this thing in her mouth and lay it down where her kittens were. To teach the kittens, of course, they have to learn how to chase this thing.

They have to learn how to conquer it. They have to learn how to fight with it and everything else that goes along. But it's a mouse.

And the humor of it all is that this mouse will stand up on its hind feet. And bring its little claws out and show its slimy yellow teeth. And try to make a noise.

And hoping somehow that the kittens will not realize what it is that they're dealing with. And his only power is to try to convince those things that should be conquering him at this moment. That, you see, the victory has been brought to them.

They don't have to procure it. The victory is already theirs. It's been laid right at their feet.

Now, the only thing that keeps them from taking this victory is if this mouse can convince them that it is other than what it is. That it is more powerful than it is. That it has more authority than it has.

And if it can convince them in doing so, then it will, of course, escape. But it will never escape the mother whose eye is on it the whole time. And these kings were left in the Promised Land to teach the children of Israel how to fight.

Folks, there are problems that we have to face. There are battles in all of our lives. You do have a fallen nature.

And the fallen nature always wants to rise and take preeminence in a certain area. But this is a defeated nature. You now have a stronger one than this nature that was given you before Christ.

You have Christ now living within you. This nature is defeated. The only way it can ever rise to any type of supremacy is if you can be convinced in your mind that somehow this battle is greater than the Christ within you.

And that's what the devil will try to do. And that's how he captivates sometimes many, many of God's people and puts them behind a prison door. Also, in verse 4, it says, So these kings were left in the Promised Land to prove the people to see whether or not they would obey God.

In 2 Corinthians, let me just read it to you. Chapter 6, verse 14. What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? Or what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? You are the temple of the living God, as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. Come out from among them.

And this is what God was trying to teach the people in Judges chapter 3. First of all, you have the power to fight these kings that have been left in the land, and they are already defeated, but still you need to go to me to get the resources. You still need faith. You still need to stand.

You still need to learn how to fight these things, but you need to know they're already defeated. And secondly, it's to prove whether or not you will obey me. Will you stay separate? Will you be a holy people to me, says the Lord? Will you be a people to whom I can point and say, these are my redeemed? These are a special people of God.

These are a people in whom is the spirit of the living God. These are a people who cannot be conquered. They refuse to be intermixed with the things and the ways of this world.

They shine as lights in the darkened place. And through them, the mercy of God is shown to a generation who are headed for hell. Through them, the way of God is known, is made known.

Now, it's interesting to note that in this instance, obedience would be learned through conflict. It's an amazing thing, really. We think that we're just naturally prone to obey God.

That we open the New Testament and everything we read, we just would be nice if that were the case. But we will just instinctively obey everything right down to the letter. But it's speaking about Jesus.

In Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 8, the writer says, Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. Speaking of Christ himself. That suffering brought or aided, as it is, this measure of obedience that was necessary in him as the son of God.

Ultimately, to go to the cross. We too have to learn to obey in conflict. Well, folks, we don't have to choose to forgive until somebody has wronged us, do we now? It would be nice to say, I forgive everybody.

I forgive everybody. I read in the scriptures that I'm to do this. I just a blanket absolution.

I just forgive everybody until I walk out of the church and somebody says some nasty thing to me. Or a parking control officer puts a ticket on my car or something like that. Or somebody does something really nasty.

And now I'm put in a conflict situation. And it's really in conflict where we see whether or not we are going to obey God. Everybody would like to obey God.

I would in all situations. But it's in a situation of conflict where we find out whether or not obedience is truly sewn into us. And we are willing to obey him.

I would like to think that the people of God in this situation understood why these kings were left there. Understood that this was to prove them. To teach them how to fight.

And to see whether or not they would obey God in these difficult times. But the scripture doesn't bear witness that that's what happened. In verse 5 it says the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites.

And they took their daughters to be their wives and gave their daughters to their sons and served their gods. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and forgot the Lord their God and served Balaam and the groves. Actually the groves is another god whose name was Ashtaroth.

It's amazing. They became focused. They learned the ways of the people around them.

And instead of standing in the midst of the battle and trusting God, they became focused on obtaining their own provision. And they gave in to their own sensual natures. And that's exactly what happens to many people who can't answer the question.

They say, Lord, why does this battle in my life never go away? And not feeling that they satisfactorily have gotten an answer, they become intermixed with the reasonings of the people around them. And they start to lose confidence in God and they begin to try to find a way out in their own strength. Somehow I'm going to defeat this.

They turn to reasoning and logic that is not the word of God and really it's a controversy against the Lord. They have bought a lie. They don't understand why God will allow a battle to be there in a Christian person's life.

And ultimately they end up led by their senses because they turn away from the living God. They begin to be intermixed with the reasoning and logic of a fallen society around them. And the end result is they begin to follow their own sensual natures.

And they end up back in the very things they hate. They end up back doing them. Thieves go back to thievery.

Immoral people go back to immorality. Liars go back to lying. Fearful people go back to fear.

And all the time this grievance against God. Lord I wouldn't have done this if you wouldn't have allowed this battle to remain in my life. But that's really not the issue.

The issue is the Lord says I allowed that. It was to lead you to something but you never learned what it was to lead you to. And therefore you became focused on your own provision and you gave in to your sensual nature.

You see they didn't realize that that which God had left in their midst had been left there to make them stronger. In effect in Judges 3 these were war games. That's what they were.

In a time of peace our own military form into groups and they have mock battles one with another to keep their skills sharp. And these were nothing more than war games. These were defeated kings.

They were a nuisance and an annoyance but nevertheless they were in the land of promise. They had to be planned against as it were. And they had to be fought against.

And the victory that was already theirs had to be realized. But the people failed to understand this. And they looked to these kings and they looked to their ways of doing things as if deliverance was going to come to them through the fallen kingdoms as it is all around them.

And subsequently left them in defeat and intermixed with the people of the land. Now I believe with all my heart that the thorn in Paul became a schoolmaster to teach him to stand in the battles that were yet to come his way. As much as the law was a schoolmaster Paul said that led him to the knowledge that he needed a savior.

The thorn was a schoolmaster because greater battles than this were coming Paul's way. And Paul had to learn how to stand in the battle. Folks, don't think you're going to stand in some great cosmic spiritual conflict at the end of time if you can't stand now in the little things that you and I have to face every day.

Paul, there were things coming Paul's way. And God allowed this in his life so that he would learn that these things did not have mastery over him. Paul got to the point, he said, I glory when people curse me out.

And I glory when I suffer in my body. And I glory when this old nature wants to rise up and begin to dominate me again. I glory in this because I know that these things are defeated by the grace of God that is within me.

The weaker I am, Paul says, the stronger I become. I have a sense of death in myself. I don't look to this natural man for anything.

He can't give me anything. You see, Paul would have otherwise ended up defeated in prison at the end of his days. Can you imagine Paul ending up in jail not writing what he wrote or else writing something else? Can you imagine Paul could have ended up physically standing yet defeated in his mind? Can you imagine if our New Testament epistles were all about defeat? They were all about how hard the battle is and how difficult it is for anybody to make it through.

Can you imagine if Paul was standing but defeated in his mind? And he didn't have this victory that he was living in? When he took a pen and could write words that I could speak to the Ephesian church? Oh, he says that your eyes would be opened. That you would see this Christ who sits at the right hand of all

authority and all power. If you could understand that every name that is named is under his feet.

He is the fullness. He is the one who fills all in all. And we are his church.

We are his body. We live on the victory side. Paul says, oh, that you could see that we're more than conquerors.

I am persuaded. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor powers, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the Paul of the Scriptures.

This is the Paul who had a thorn in his flesh and there's no evidence it was ever taken away from him. It was there all of his life. You see, those who struggle with a personal thorn in your flesh, it may never go away.

But if you can see it in its proper perspective, it will become the very catalyst that makes you stronger. Your choice is to say, I will not marry this thing in my life. I will not give myself to this thing.

I will not take its sons. I will not take its daughters. I will not be intermingled with it.

I will not marry it. It will not come into my house. It will not come into my mind.

It will not come into my life. It will not become part of who I am. I stand against it in the name of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And in the power of His name, I stand against it. I will not be governed by pride. I will not let its roots get back into my life.

I will not let it take over me. I will not be bent to certain behaviors or attractions that were once in my life and are now defeated by the life of Christ within me. I will not give myself to fear.

I will not give myself to a lying tongue. I will not allow despair to come in and begin to dominate my life because I am more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ. Now, Satan is always there.

And he says, cast yourself down as he did to Jesus in Matthew chapter 4 and verse 6. If God is for you, should there not be some kind of a miraculous and instantaneous deliverance from this situation? Not so. You see, folks, the only ground of victory, as with Christ, is to withstand being intermarried with the thoughts of the devil himself. And to stand and withstand him on the ground of what God has spoken.

I know what God has spoken. I know, Paul said, whom I have believed and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have entrusted to him against that day. I know who I have believed.

It is written. I am loved. God said to Isaiah, I have loved you with an everlasting love.

God said through John, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. I am loved. That question is settled.

The enemy can't come and try to tell me I'm other than what God says I am. I know who I am in my Savior. The Bible tells me that I am righteous.

The righteousness is of me, says the Lord. The enemy can come against them any way he wants, but they will not be overcome. I have given them a righteousness, a cleanness, and it's of me, the Lord says, and it cannot be taken away.

Therefore, every tongue that rises against you in judgment, you have the right and the power to condemn that tongue. You have a righteousness. It has been given you of God Almighty himself.

Yes, you have battles. But these enemies have already been overcome. And you have a righteousness.

You have a cleanness. It doesn't mean that you don't struggle. I'm free from the dominion of sin.

Thanks be to God. Now, it doesn't say in the Scripture I'm free from battles. I'm free from struggles.

The Scripture says I'm free from the dominion of sin. That means sin has no right to rise and govern my life anymore. I'm secure.

Jesus said, you're in the Father's hand. And nobody can take you out of the Father's hand. I'm secure in my Christ.

And I am victorious. That's why Paul said we're more than conquerors through him who loved us. So Paul could say, I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches, necessities and persecutions, and in distresses.

For when I am weak, then I am strong. I have a grace of God upon me that is sufficient to bring me through any trial or struggle that I will ever face in my life. But the Scripture goes on in Judges and tells us in chapter 3, verse 9, that when the children of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer.

They were intermixed, and they failed to understand why these kings were allowed to be in the land. And they failed to obey and stay separate from the ways of the societies around them. And they ended up intermixed and snared.

But then they cried to the Lord, and the Lord gave them a deliverer. You see, folks, you might be one who says here today, my enemies are all around me. But you don't have to give yourself to them.

You don't have to. You simply don't have to. You don't have to seek your own provision.

You don't have to be given over to sensuality because you have a deliverer. You have today a deliverer. You have one who stood in the temple, opened the Bible, and said, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for these reasons, to set free those that are oppressed, to give sight to the blind, to heal those that have been bruised in heart, that the poor may have the treasure of Christ preached to them.

This day, said the Scripture, is fulfilled in your ears. You have a deliverer. He will free me from the dominion of my oppressor and give me power to withstand my enemies.

That's what he will do. I want to conclude with one psalm. If you'll go to Psalm 18 with me, please.

This is a psalm of David, when he felt like he was being overwhelmed by the battle that was all around him. And, folks, that is a feeling that will come upon many. And I believe that there are many here today that are going through this.

In Psalm 18, verse 3, David says, I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised, and so shall I be saved from mine enemies. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me

afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about, and the snares of death prevented me.

In my distress I called upon the Lord, and I cried unto my God, and He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him even into His ears. And there are people here today, that's exactly why you've come to this church today. You feel like you're being overwhelmed.

You feel like you're being defeated. You're going down for the last count. You came in here, and even in your praises, there was a cry to God.

God heard your cry. Then the channels of waters were seen, verse 15, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. 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, and He brought me forth into a large place. He delivered me because He delighted in me. Verse 27, For thou wilt save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks.

Thou wilt light my candle. The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. For by thee I've run through a troop, and by my God I've leaped over a wall.

Do you see this in the Scripture? There's no weapon formed against you that can prosper. If you will turn to God in faith and confidence, not looking just to get out of the battle, might I be bold enough to even suggest you might thank Him for the battle? And whether it does or never goes away, Lord, I'm not going to be defeated. With you in my life, I can run through a troop.

If the enemy seems to be setting insurmountable numbers of the ranks of the enemy against me in the promised land, I know that because of my Christ within me, these are already defeated enemies. They can't stop me from going forward. They can't stop the work of God from advancing in my life.

Because of God within me, I can run through this troop. They have to part, just like the Red Sea parted. They have to let me go through on dry land.

They can't stop me, because Christ is in me, in the fullness of His victory. And by my God, I've leaped over a wall, in spite of how the enemy has boxed me in, in spite of what he's told me, and how he's got me, and how I'm not going to advance. I have the living Christ within me.

And by the power of this Christ in my life, I can leap over any barrier that the enemy has put before me, or beside me, or behind me, for that matter. It is God, verse 32, that girds me with strength and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like hinds feet and sets me upon my high places.

He teaches my hands to war. This is what David is saying. This is what the people should have learned.

This is what Paul knew. He teaches my hands to war. He teaches me how to fight by raising my hands to Him, and giving Him honor, and giving Him glory, and thanking Him for His victory.

He teaches me that I don't go through this by reaching out and grasping for straws of knowledge from this world to gain my freedom. I get out of this struggle by lifting my hands and giving God praise for His victory. You've given me the shield of Your salvation, and Thy right hand hath holden me up, and Thy

gentleness hath made me great.

Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, and my feet did not slip. I've pursued my enemies and overtaken them, and neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise.

They are fallen under my feet. Verse 41, 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.

I cast them out as dirt in the streets. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people, and hast made me the head of the heathen. The people who I have not known shall serve me.

As soon as they hear me, they shall obey me, and strangers shall submit themselves unto me. This is David now. The Holy Ghost is all over him.

And he says, The Lord lives and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted. David says, No, I'm not going to be conquered. I'm not going down unto this battle.

I have the living Christ within me. I have the power of God to bring me through to the end of this journey. I am persuaded.

I am persuaded. And even if this battle never goes away, it will not take me down. I had a sense in my heart before standing in this pulpit today that there were prison doors that were going to open, and people held captive by that very thought that the devil plants in people's hearts.

If God was truly for you, this would not be in your life. I'm sure he tried to plant that in Paul many times, but Paul resisted it and refused it. That's why James says, Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Resist him. Resist him. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. I want to give an altar call for those who are surrounded by enemies and you're in the battle of a lifetime. I want to tell you today that you have a deliverer.

You have a deliverer. He will bring you through this. He'll bring you through.

If the Lord has been speaking to your heart, as we stand at the balcony of Maine Sanctuary, we're going to pray together for this inner knowledge that Paul had that I cannot be overcome. Just slip out of your seat. Please meet me here at this altar.

We're going to pray. God, renew your strength. He promises to do it.

If you would stand, please, and let people exit in the annex. If you could just stand between the screens. It's time.

If you're in a prison, get up and get out. It's as simple as that. Just get up and get out.

Make your way here. It's time. It's time to lay hold of the freedom that Christ says he'll give you and learn from the battle.

Learn. Learn to fight. And learn to obey God.

Hallelujah. Please move in closely. Let people come who are coming.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord.

God, we give you praise today, Lord. God Almighty, thank you, Lord, that you are delivering a multitude. Lord, you said you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

Lord, we are free from the lies of the evil one. We're free from his roarings. We're free from all of the insinuations about God.

God is faithful. He will not allow anything to come into our lives that will overwhelm us, but with the trials will make a way to escape that we might be able to bear it. That's what your word says, Lord.

That's what we believe. We believe that in everything you will be honored. You will be glorified.

Thank you, God, that you teach us how to fight here so that we get into other situations ahead, that we can stand as more than conquerors, that we can stand with a confidence in our heart, God. Oh, God, thank you, Lord, that you're not calling this church to go to Africa, never having fought a battle on this side, never having to understand, Lord, these issues in our hearts before we go and stand against deep demonic power. God, thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Jesus, for the hard places. Thank you, Lord, for every valley. Thank you, God.

Thank you, Lord, for every enemy that we have to fight. Hallelujah. Thank you, God, for this knowledge that we will not be overcome.

We will not be triumphed over. Oh, God, we give you praise. We give you glory, as David did.

Lord, you teach our hands how to war. You teach us how to fight. God, you teach us how to stand.

That having done all, having done all, we'll still be standing and we'll still be victorious. We'll still give you glory at the end of our days. Hallelujah, Lamb of God.

We bless your name. We praise your name. We give you glory, Lord.

We give you glory, oh, God. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, God. Oh, hallelujah. When I get to the end, I will not have been triumphed over.

That's your testimony today. You will not have been triumphed over. You will have come through this battle.

And even if you're still fighting it, you'll have the mastery over it in Christ. You will know that Christ is victorious. You will know that your enemies have no power.

You will not bow down to that which has already been defeated on the cross 2,000 years ago. No longer. No longer intermixed.

No longer being given to these things. But trusting in the living God. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Lord. God, I thank you today that prison doors are opening. I thank you, Lord, that you do truly give sight to the spiritually blind.

I thank you, God, that you always show us the way out and the way into your life. The way into your strength. The way in, oh, God, to the victory that you won for us on the cross.

Oh, Jesus, thank you. I give you praise, oh, God, for the testimonies that are gathered at this altar and down both of these aisles and in the education annex that are standing. Lord, we give you praise that we're not going to be defeated.

We are living in victory in our Christ. My God, thank you. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, God. Thank you, Lord. The more the enemy comes against us, the more we will raise our hands.

The more we will praise our God, the more we will shout about our victory in Christ. Hallelujah, Lamb of God. We'll give you the praise, the honor, and the glory.

You will sustain us. You will carry us. You will bring us through to victory.

Jesus, thank you for this. God, we give you thanks. We give you praise.

We give you glory. We are not defeated. We are not defeated.

We stand victorious in our Christ. Hallelujah. We stand with strength.

We stand with power. We stand with honor. We stand with glory.

We stand in our God. Bless the holy name of Jesus. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, mighty God. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, God.

I hope this morning you understand why some battles don't work. It teaches our hands to fight. It teaches our hearts to trust.

It keeps us humble before God. We're going to finish with a sense of God's purpose, a sense of His glory, whether or not you understand the circumstance. Paul didn't have to understand.

He just learned to obey God. And he learned that there was a much bigger plan going on in him than anything he could understand with his natural mind. He did what God gave him to do.

And it has become an encouragement to us who live almost 2,000 years later, still reading His words, still given life by that which comes through the pen of an obedient man. Hallelujah. Now, Father, I thank you, Lord.

God, that you are opening the storehouse of understanding. You're teaching us, Lord, things that we need to know, that we might be a people who stand in these last days. God, thank you, Lord.

I thank you, Lord, for the hard times. I thank you for the good times, but I thank you for the hard times. I thank you, Lord, for the valleys.

I thank you, God, for the rough roads. I thank you, Lord, for it has produced in my heart a dependence on you. I need you.

I need you every day. I need you every morning. I need you every afternoon.

I can't do a single thing without you, Lord. And I thank you for that knowledge. For now I know that nothing can stop that you've determined to do.

The enemy can't come against it because it's not about us. It's about Jesus Christ in us. Oh, Lord, be glorified, please, through this church in the last hours that we live in.

Be glorified through us, oh God. Be the source of our life and the source of our strength. Protect us from being intermixed with the ways of the people around us.

Keep us from giving ourselves to sensuality and giving ourselves to despair and depression and all of the things that plague a world that knows nothing about you. God, keep us from these things. I pray like Paul and Silas, no matter how bad it gets, we can still sing songs of praise to you.

We can still give you honor and glory. We can still thank you, God. We will obey you, Lord, in the hard places.

God, teach us to obey you in the hard places. Teach us, God, not to cast away our confidence in you, Lord. Father, thank you.

I praise you, God, today. I know you've delivered a multitude of people in this house. God, I give you praise from the very depths of my heart.

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ. With everything that is in us, oh God, we just put our hands together and we say thank you today. Thank you, God.

This is the conclusion of the message.

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