

Acts of Faithfulness

by David Ravenhill

Hezekiah's faithfulness and obedience to God allowed him to prosper in the sight of God, despite the attacks of the enemy.

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Scripture: 2 Chronicles 32:7

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Faithfulness"

Description

This sermon focuses on the story of Hezekiah facing the invasion of Sennacherib, highlighting the importance of prayer, repentance, and using the armor of God to overcome spiritual battles. It emphasizes the need to be vigilant, rely on the Word of God, and seek help from fellow believers in times of attack. The message encourages believers to confront personal 'Philistines' and grow in maturity to face greater spiritual challenges.

Transcript

Well, it's good to be here. You're all spread out all over the place. If you feel like moving up to the front, you can.

I know the Bible says the Pharisees loved the utmost seats in the synagogue, but we will not make that a hard, fast rule. You're welcome to come closer. If you have your Bible, turn with me to 2 Chronicles, chapter 31, the last two verses, and then we'll be looking into chapter 32.

One of the problems these days is, as you travel, people post your messages, and then people say, oh, I've heard that already, and so on. I remember Jack Hayford many, many years ago. He had prepared a brand new series, and it was the first time he ever gave it.

He gave it in his church there in California, and a week later, he flew to Australia. Well, maybe it was two weeks later, flew to Australia, and he gave the same message again. It was only the second time he ever gave it, and somebody, he said, came up to him at the end of the meeting and said, oh, I've heard that message before.

She was in his church just a week prior to that, but you know, we live in a media age where things get posted. If you've heard this before, that's fine, but this is the portion of Scripture I felt to share with you. It's the story of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah, one of the great spiritual leaders in the Old Testament, one of the men that brought about one of the greatest revivals that we have in the Old Testament, was brought about by this man at the time. He was just a young man. Years have gone by now, and his life is summarized for us in verse 20 and verse 21 of chapter 30.

One, and it says, and thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah. He did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God. Every work that he began in the service of the house of God and law and in commandments, seeking his God, he did with all of his heart, and he prospered.

I think that's a pretty good summary of somebody's life. Caleb asked me a question I don't think I've ever been asked before as we had dinner tonight, and he said, how do you want to be remembered, basically, was the gist of the question. And I said, well, ultimately, you know, I want God to be able to say, well done, that good and faithful servant.

But I have said over the years, and my wife has heard me, that if the tombstone was big enough, and if we can afford one, and if I die first, I would love these two verses on it. Now, obviously, it would be modified a little bit, and it would read like this, and thus David did throughout all America. He did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God.

Every work that he began in the service of the house of God and law and in commandments, seeking his God, he did with all of his heart, and he prospered. That is a pretty good summary of somebody's life. Everything this man did, God put his blessing upon, it prospered.

Why? Because he did that which was good and right and true before the Lord his God. Now, one of my pet peeves in the Bible are chapter divisions, and so let me just keep on reading. I'll read verse 21 again.

Every work that he began in the service of the house of God and law and in commandments, seeking his God, he did with all of his heart, and he prospered. And after these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib, who happens to be the enemy, the king of Assyria came and invaded Judah, besieged the fortified cities, and thought to break into them for himself. Notice, after these acts of faithfulness, not after these acts of stubbornness, not after these acts of rebellion, not after these acts of perversion, not after these acts of disobedience, but after these acts of faithfulness, the enemy comes.

A good sign that you are prospering spiritually is that you are under the attack of the enemy. Let me say that again. If you are prospering spiritually, you should be under the attack of the enemy.

In fact, I would go as far to say if you are not being attacked by the enemy, you need to ask yourself the question, why? I think too many Christians have made terms of detente, if you like, with the enemy. You know, they've gone to his office, so to speak, and made an appointment and said, devil, I know you're incredibly busy running back and forth on the face of the earth, seeking whom you can devour, and so I'm here to make your life easier. If you don't trouble me, I won't trouble you.

And they shake on it, and that's the deal. And the enemy, as they walk out of his office, said, well, you never trouble me anyway. But, you know, we've sort of made terms of detente, or terms of peace.

My father was raised a Methodist, back when the Methodists had some life. All right, thank you. And he sat under the ministry of a man by the name of Samuel Chadwick.

Samuel Chadwick was a great revivalist, a real fiery preacher. The school that he went to, he only went for one year. It was an all-male school.

And on the weekends, they would be teamed up and sent out to little Methodist churches all over the Yorkshire area, where the school was in England. And the old man, Samuel Chadwick, would give them a word of exhortation, encouraging them to, you know, seek God and go out in the power of the Spirit of God, and so on and so forth. He'd give them a little word of exhortation.

And then he would pray. And at the end of his prayer, pronounce the benediction. And then he would pause.

And after the benediction, he would say this. My father said, go and may the devil go with you. And then he would pause again and say, because if the devil doesn't go with you, you are not worth sending.

There's a good Methodist. In other words, our job as believers is to give the devil a headache, so to speak. We are to ransack his camp.

We are to be on, as my father used to say, I want to be on the top 10 most wanted list in hell. How many of us aspire to that? So here is a man that is doing what is good. He's doing what is right.

He's doing what is true in the sight of the Lord. And as a result, the enemy comes, and he mounts an attack against him. And so tonight, we're going to look at how do we resist? How do we overcome the enemy? I find so many Christians that live defeated lives.

In other words, the enemy has got them in his clutches, and they just go from one crisis to another, so to speak. Now, before we get into this chapter in any sort of depth, let me take you to the book of Exodus for a moment. And I want to talk to you for a moment.

About a situation here. Exodus chapter 17. Exodus chapter 13 and verse 17, I think.

That may help. Right. It was a little dyslexic there.

Verse 17. Now, it came about when Pharaoh had let the people go, the people being the children of Israel, that God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was nearer or closer. For God said, lest the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt.

Now, the children of Israel have just been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. In typology, they are just babes in Christ. Moses, of course, has had some experience with this God.

He knows this God. He's had some encounters with this God. But the children of Israel basically are sort of living off Moses' experience.

And they're putting their trust in Moses because he's done a few signs and wonders and so on. But in typology, they're just babes in Christ. They've only just been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

And like any babe, a babe is not sent out to war. A babe is not sent out to battle. You don't send your five-year-old, you know, to enlist in the, you know, the Mounties or whatever it is that you have up here, I guess.

But, and so God has a purpose, and that is to take the children of Israel from where they are into the Promised Land. And the straightest way to get there goes right through the land of the Philistines. And God looks down and He says, you know, if I take them on the shortcut or the straightest route, we'll go through the land of the Philistines.

And if we go through the land of the Philistines, there will be war. And then He looks at the spiritual stature, if you like, of His people and He says, they're going to turn. As soon as they encounter war, they're going to head back into Egypt, and it's going to thwart my whole purpose.

And so God bypasses the problem. We do that as parents. If you have a two-year-old that can, you know, just beginning to walk a little bit, hopefully by two, but anyway, walking around, and you are downtown right in the middle of, you know, Victoria, you don't send that little two-year-old across the street by himself.

He is not capable of grappling with the Mack trucks and logging trucks and so on and so forth. What you do, you pick that little one up, let's say a year old, you pick that little one up and you take that little one across that difficult stretch of highway, and then you may put him down on the other side. That's a good parent.

And God does the same thing. Now, turn with me to the book of Judges, Chapter 3. Now, this is the same children of Israel, the years have gone by now. And notice it says, now these are the nations, verse 1, which the Lord left.

He left them in order to test Israel by them. That is, those who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan, in order that the generation of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formally. These nations are, and notice number one, the Philistines.

In other words, there is a time when God will bypass the problem, take you around it. There's another time when God will cause you to face a Philistine and he will leave it directly in front of you and he says, I want you to learn to fight. I know you didn't come to hear that good news.

But God wants us to mature. He wants us to fight. He wants us to rise up and overcome.

The whole book of Revelation is about overcoming. Well, not the whole book, but quite a number of references there. God wants you to overcome.

He says, even as I overcame. In fact, in the book of Revelation, the bride comes down out of heaven in the form of a city. That city has got 12 gates.

The way you get into that city, obviously, is through the gates. Those gates are made of one substance, not made of silver or brass or gold or aluminum or wrought iron. They're made of what? Pearls.

What is a pearl? A pearl is a problem that's been overcome. Every single pearl has at the core of it a problem. I have never been an oyster.

But that little bit of grit or sand or whatever becomes an irritant, gets in the shell. And that oyster, I guess, can either get bugged to death or it can secrete a substance and overcome and turn that negative into a positive. And people will pay a great price for genuine pearls.

I don't think it's coincidental that God chose gates made of pearl because He's looking for an overcoming company. You and I, one day, are going to be married to the king of kings. And therefore, we've got to learn how to reign.

We're going to be married to the great physician. We've got to learn how to bind up one another's wounds. We're going to be married to the great shepherd of the sheep.

We've got to have a love for the flock. We're going to be married to the judge of all the earth. We've got to know how to pass righteous judgment.

This is our training ground. That's why God leaves us here rather than annihilates us the moment we get saved and He doesn't take out His 45 and say, bang, and okay, go to glory. Now you're saved.

No, we've got to mature. And part of the maturity is that God allows us to face problems in order that we can overcome. And so He will leave us with a Philistine to teach us.

Now, we don't like that. My, I should say, our oldest daughter is a missionary in China. Her first year of school was in New Guinea.

My wife and I were missionaries there in the early 70s, 71, 2, and we left in 73. She started school in a place called Murray Barracks. It was an Australian school at that time.

New Guinea was under the sort of auspices of Australia. It's now independent. And she came home from school one day with a sheet of problems.

Her first assignment. And major problems, 2 plus 2 equals 3 plus 2 equals 4 minus 1 equals and so on and so forth. And she said, Daddy, I've got all this homework to do.

You know, help me. And I understood now that she was in a new phase of life. She was now in school.

And she was learning to develop the gray matter between her two years. And it was no longer time to be jumping on the trampoline and playing with dolls and so on and so forth. Now, she had to begin to grapple with these major problems.

And I said, Lisa, what is 2 plus 2? I don't know, Daddy. I don't know. Can I go out and play? And after a while, we solved that major problem.

And then, you know, it was 3 plus 2. And then 4 minus 1 and so on and so forth. I could have done that sheet of problems in literally 15 seconds. It took us well over an hour.

She has a degree today. I don't. But what I'm saying is if I would have kept on doing her assignments, I would have been getting letters in the mail from college.

Dear Dad, here's your next assignment. Have it in by the end of the month. It counts for a third of my entire grade.

And there's a project due. I'll give you the information at the end of next week when we get the thing so you got plenty of time to work on it and so on. Now, we laugh at that.

And yet, that's really what the average minister does. That's why we pay him to solve our problems. Pastor, pray for me.

You know, we traipse forward at every chance we can to get somebody to lay hands on us and do our assignment. That is not a good pastor. I passed not too far from here, down in Tacoma for five years, at least across the bridge in a little place called Gig Harbor.

And on more than one occasion, I would have people come into my office. I made Monday available just as a day where people could drop in without an appointment. Sometimes they had to wait.

Sometimes they didn't. And they would come into my office expecting me to lay hands on them and impart something or depart something and walk out, you know, with the answer solved. And I would say to them, because I knew the individual having been pastor to them for a while, I would say, I'm not going to pray for you.

It's time you killed your Philistine. You need to fast. You need to pray.

You need to use a concordance. You need to get along with God, blah, blah, blah. Now, I did it in a nice pastoral way.

But basically, I was not going to do their homework because they will never, ever grow. They will be constantly dependent upon me. There was a time in my own personal walk with God where I made a, wasn't a vow, but I made a promise, I'm not going to go forward to another altar call, not ever, ever, ever, ever type thing.

But the people that are up there that are giving me counsel and whatever, why can't I have that knowledge? They obviously attained it some way. Why can't I get my own answers? And I made that commitment, and so I would grapple and get into the Word of God, get a concordance or whatever, look things up, and so on. And that's the way you grow.

Here then, let's go back to this story now, because here is a man that has a problem. His problem is a king by the name of Sennacherib. This king has got something like almost 200,000 troops, according to Isaiah.

There's a cross-reference here. You can read a little bit more detail in Isaiah 36 and 37. But let me go back now.

It says, after these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib the king of Assyria came and invaded Judah, besieged the fortified cities, and thought to break into them for himself. The enemy and God both want your life. God wants you for himself.

The enemy wants you for himself. And the enemy will do everything he can to undermine what God is doing in your life and try and reclaim you, if you like, for his purpose. Now notice, the enemy has already invaded Judah.

He's already besieged certain fortified cities. In other words, he's already got a track record amongst the people of God. And now he is heading towards Jerusalem, where Hezekiah lives.

So what does Hezekiah do? Verse 2, now when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to make war. So the first thing he recognizes is, number one, he's got an adversary. He's got an enemy.

You and I need to take seriously the fact that you have an adversary. Doesn't matter how old you are spiritually, there is an adversary. Your adversary, the Bible calls him, goes around as a roaring lion

seeking whom he may devour.

And his whole job is to undermine, again, the grace of God and what God is doing in your life. And so that's the first thing in overcoming is recognize that you have an adversary. The second thing, it says in verse 3, he decided to do something about it.

In other words, he wasn't passive. He wasn't sort of, well, it'll resolve itself. I don't have to worry.

I'll just sit back and relax. No, it says he decided with his officers and his warriors to cut off the supply of water from the springs which were outside the city. And they helped him.

Now, one of the strategies of war in, especially in the Bible, in the Old Testament was to fill in the wells of the person that you wanted to take over their land. For instance, the Bible tells us that Isaac had to re-dig the wells that his father dug because they had been filled in. We get so used to turning on the faucet and there's a water supply, we don't think of it.

But if you travel to third world countries, you've got entire towns or villages built around a well and they spend most of their day traipsing back and forth, children with these huge water pots on their head and so on. I mean, that is their life source. If that well fails, that entire village then has to move off somewhere else.

And so what Hezekiah does is this. He realizes we have a vast supply of water outside the city of Jerusalem. And if the enemy comes, he will be able to sustain himself because where there is water, there is life.

And so he decides that he is going to cut off the supply of water. Number one, he begins with the springs. Now, I tell people I'm going to tell you the truth because I'm not an evangelist.

Evangelists put a spin on everything, make it sound like, you know, the moment you come forward and accept Christ, everything, you know, you're going to turn into a millionaire overnight, everything's going to be rosy. And us teachers sit there thinking, boy, these guys don't have a clue what's going to happen to them. The moment they get to the altar and accept Christ, He's going to put them on that wheel, He's a master potter, spin them up, you know, until they don't know what's going on, apply pressure on the inside, begin to mold and fashion them and so on.

But if we told you that up front, you'd never get saved. So, you know, the evangelist comes along and he paints this sort of rosy picture and, you know, it's almost irresistible. Let me say this.

It is not easy to cut off a spring. There is life there. These are not puddles where you take a wheelbarrow full of sand and just mop it up, so to speak.

There's life. It takes effort. It takes, as it says, He decided.

Not only that, but it says in verse 4, and many people assembled and they stopped up all the springs and the stream that flowed through the region saying, why should the king of Assyria come and find an abundance of water? So not only does He fill in all the springs, but He diverts a river. Now, that's not an easy task. I think you would agree with me that takes a tremendous amount of effort to block up a stream.

I'm sure with the beauty of this area around here, you've gone camping somewhere and there's some little stream and maybe you try to take some rocks and make a little wading pool for the kids, you know, when

they're four or five or six years old. And you know how almost impossible it is. The water just seems to trickle through.

You imagine trying to divert a river. But such was the determination of this man. And you say, well, what on earth does that have to do with, you know, you and I living in the 20th century, living here in Victoria and so on? Well, the principle is that you have to remove anything that will sustain the life of the enemy, what we call in the New Testament repentance.

You see, when you've got sin in your life, it is an attraction to the enemy. In fact, it is legal ground for the enemy. You know that if you, let's say, you're growing marijuana in your basement, I assume it's banned here, although it's, you know, not in a lot of places in America now, but let's say it's banned.

And if the police find out that you're growing marijuana, they can legally come into your house and arrest you. The enemy, the same thing. He has a legal right.

That's why the Bible says, don't give place to the devil. Don't give grounds to the devil. Jesus said, Satan cometh, he has nothing in me.

He can't touch me because he has nothing in me. And so what we've got to do, we've got to take very seriously, what is it that is coming out of my life that is sustaining the life of the enemy? And I need to cut it off. And you've got to be very, very deliberate, very, very honest, and very, very determined, just as it was not an easy thing here, it's not an easy thing in the natural.

And you know what it's like, maybe some of you, I'm sure the older people here on an occasion have opened the door in a winter's morning and there is a little stray kitten of some sort. And you may not be much of a cat lover, but, you know, it's 20 degrees below or something. And so you go to the refrigerator and you pour a little bowl of milk and you put it down to feed that poor little critter.

And guess what? You have created a problem. Every time you open that door, that thing is sitting there. Why? Because you fed it.

And the enemy is exactly like that. If you feed him, he is going to hang around. And we have got to cut off, again, repentance is getting rid of that which sustains the life of the enemy.

The next thing that he does, verse 5, he took courage and he rebuilt the wall that had broken down. Now, rebuilding a wall is not an easy task either. But first of all, in order to rebuild a wall, you've got to be brutally honest about the condition of the wall.

In other words, like Nehemiah, maybe it wasn't quite as bad, I'm sure, as Nehemiah this day, but he has to go around the wall of Jerusalem and he's got to look at that wall and say, listen, we're vulnerable right there. There is a low spot. If the enemy comes, that's an easy target.

Over here, there's a lot of loose bricks and so on. That needs fortifying. Here's another area there where there's a hole in the wall.

That needs to be plugged up. And he's got to be honest about the condition of the wall. And then they have to set apart time and say, listen, that's got to be strengthened, that's got to be strengthened, and so on.

Every one of us in this room have areas of vulnerability. And the enemy long ago discovered your area of vulnerability. And the way he does that, not because he's omniscient, in other words, he doesn't know everything, but he does know everything about your life.

And since you live up here near the water, I imagine we have a few fishermen here, so let me use a fishing illustration. You know, you go out fishing and you've got your tackle box. And you have in that tackle box a number of different lures.

And you put a lure on the end of the line and you begin to cast it out there and maybe you do it for, you know, a few minutes, five, 10, 15 minutes, nothing's happening. And you think, you know, they're not attracted to this particular lure. And so you change the lure and you cast out again and wham, you think, aha.

And that happens two or three times. What do you do? You keep on fishing with the lure that works. You don't go back to the old lure because you know the fish are not biting on that.

The enemy long ago has come into your mind, so to speak, and he's got a tackle box. And he pokes on that lure, you know, maybe lust, and he casts it out, wham, okay, got this guy. Maybe somebody else tries anger, nothing.

Tries anger again, nothing. Tries anger again, nothing. Okay, this guy doesn't respond to anger.

Let me try something else. And after a period of time, he knows exactly all your areas of vulnerability and that's why you are constantly harassed with the same thing over and over because he is smart. Why should he fish, if you like, with something that doesn't attract you? And he knows you.

He knows you well. And he will never leave you alone until you make a decision, I'm not going to keep biting that thing, so to speak. I'm going to resist.

I'm going to cut that thing off, and so on and so forth. And so here is a man that begins to rebuild the wall that is broken down. Let me show you how you rebuild a wall.

Turn with me for a moment over into the book of Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 4, beginning, let's say, verse 26. Be angry and do not sin.

Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Do not give the devil an opportunity, or do not give, it says in the margin, literally, don't give the devil a place. Verse 28, let him that steals, steal no longer.

Now, here is a person whose area of vulnerability is stealing. Now, this is not just a sort of a casual type stealing. This is not a bunch of guys on a weekend, you know, just hanging around some corner.

And one kid says to the other, I bet you can't go into that store and walk out with a six pack or something. The other guy said, I bet I can. You know, and five minutes later, he comes out, and he opens his coat, and there's a six pack, and they get a little bit of a kick out of it.

Obviously, that's wrong, and it's stealing. But this person was not stealing just for the fun of it. This person was stealing in order to live.

And they decided that, listen, it's easier to steal than it is to work. And so what Paul says, let him that steals, steal no longer. In other words, stop stealing.

But that doesn't rebuild the wall. Then he says, but rather, begin to labor. In other words, the way you rebuild a wall is to do the very opposite of what you have been doing.

Instead of taking, you now are beginning to work and earn your own living. You can imagine the chaos, if you like, if that's the word, or the pain that this man caused through the two or three or four or five years or whatever he'd been stealing. My wife and I, when we got married, we worked with David Wilkerson after a two-week honeymoon.

One of my jobs was to do a prison ministry in a place called Rikers Island, one of the islands in the New York area. There were 6,000 inmates, and 80 or 90% of them were in for drug addiction. Back then, the choice of drug was heroin.

And the average heroin addict had to steal over \$200 or \$300 a day to support his habit. In other words, if you had a \$100 a day habit, and it was expensive in those days, you'd break into a church like this, and you would steal the guitars and the PA system and so on. And it may be worth, if you would have replaced it, it may be worth \$600, let's say.

But on the street, it's only worth \$200. Otherwise, why not go buy a new one? And so you can imagine 6,000 addicts, and that was the tip of the iceberg, the pain inflicted on New York City in just one day, as they had to steal in order to support that habit. Here is a man who's made people's life absolutely miserable.

If I could monetize it, they get their new flat screen TV, and 24 hours later, it's gone. They buy their kid a skateboard, come home, and the skateboard's gone, you know, and so on. This guy has been stealing.

Paul says, stop stealing, get a job. But he doesn't stop there. He says, performing with your own hands what is good.

In order that, notice this, in order that you may have something to share with the one who has a need. In other words, you've been ripping people off, now start giving back. Let's say this is a young man, 18, 19 years of age.

He comes to Paul. He's under conviction. We need to understand somebody described the New Testament church like an island in a sea of iniquity.

And so people were coming in. They were hearing the word of God for the first time, and they were coming under conviction. Here is a man.

He spent his life stealing, doesn't think anything of it. Paul is speaking about don't steal. He comes forward at the end of the meeting.

He says, listen, I've been stealing all my life. What am I supposed to do? Paul says, stop stealing, get a job. So he gets a job.

He comes to Paul a couple of weeks later. He says, man, I've got more money now than I've ever had before. What should I do with it? And Paul says, I'll tell you.

See that lady on the back row back there? Just lost her husband a number of weeks ago. She's got three little kids. I know one of them is going to have a birthday this week.

He's expecting some rollerblades. Obviously, not 2,000 years ago, but you know. And Paul says, why don't you go buy the rollerblades, wrap them up, and write a little note.

Johnny, sorry to hear that your daddy is no longer around, but you have another daddy that was promised to look after you. Happy birthday. Paul says, by the way, don't put your name on it.

In essence, that's what Paul is saying. Start meeting the needs of people. You've been ripping off.

That's how you rebuild a wall. Now, hopefully, that's not your problem. The next verse may be, verse 29.

Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth. Here's a person, the margin of my Bible says, literally, let no rotten word come out of your mouth. Here's a person that every time they open their mouth, they're tearing somebody apart, ruining somebody's reputation, degrading them, spreading rumors around the church or whatever.

And so Paul says, stop it. And then he says, you need to have a word that is good for edification. Instead of a word that is destructive, begin to build up, begin to edify, begin to minister life according to the need of the moment that you may give grace to those that hear.

Have grace. That's how you rebuild a wall. You do the opposite of what you have been doing.

The next one is verse 30. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. How do you grieve the Holy Spirit? By having verse 31.

All bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, put it away from you along with all malice and be kind one towards another, tenderhearted, forgiving. We grieve the Spirit of God when we walk in unforgiveness and instead we allow all sorts of bitterness and anger and wrath and so on towards that person, we project that. And Paul says, listen, Jesus Christ forgave you.

The least you can do is forgive somebody else. So stop doing that and begin to forgive. Now those are three examples, if you like, of how you rebuild a wall that is broken down.

Let's go back to this portion of Scripture. The Bible says in Proverbs, let me give you the reference here if I can find it. I thought I had it.

Proverbs 25 and verse 28. It says, like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man or a woman who has no control over their spirit. In other words, the Bible likens you and me to a city with or without walls.

Now I grew up in England and not too far from where I grew up was the city of York. York is one of the oldest towns, at least it goes way back, and it still has part of the original wall. And the old way of protecting a city, obviously, was to have a wall around it.

And as long as that wall was intact, you could go to bed at night, totally safe, knowing that nobody could penetrate that wall. You were in control of your city. But if that wall was broken down, you were vulnerable, and instead of you being in control, you could be controlled.

Somebody else could come in, invade that city, set up their camp, and you were now under their dominion. And the Bible says, like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man or a woman who has no control over their own spirit. I have pasted long enough that after a while, I could look at my

congregation and say, with walls, without walls, with walls, without walls.

This person's controlled by tobacco. This person's controlled by lust. This person's in control.

This person's got a problem with their temper. This person's in control. You know, in other words, you are either in control of your spirit or you are being controlled.

And what we've got to do is got to take that back. We've got to rebuild the wall. The next thing he does in verse 5, he erected towers on it.

He erected towers on it. Hezekiah, or maybe it was Uzziah, was the first one to build the towers. But he comes along and he either rebuilds or he erects them.

But what was the tower? The tower was an early warning system. Today, we would call it radar. You would have, depending on the size city, you would have different towers.

And the watchman stood in the tower, and it was his job on his particular shift to look at a section of the horizon. This guy would take this area. This guy would take that area, and so on.

And they would constantly be vigilant. And if there was a cloud of dust on the horizon, they had to discern, is this the wind blowing? Is this an advancing army? Is this a bunch of merchants coming to the local marketplace to sell their wares, whatever? And once they discerned that it was an advancing army, they would take their trumpet, and they would blow and sound the alarm. And if it was daytime, the people out in the fields around about the city would all of a sudden grab their stuff, maybe bring in some extra produce, and so on, and head into the city.

They'd close the gates. And they were safe. Why? Because somebody sounded the alarm.

Now, the same thing. If we are going to overcome the enemy, we have to be vigilant. The New Testament says, watch and pray.

Your adversary, the devil. In other words, we should be on the alert. Be on the alert.

Your adversary, the devil, goes around as a roaring lion. Jesus said to Peter there just before the crucifixion, Peter, watch and pray. In other words, the enemy is after you.

Peter falls asleep. A few minutes later, maybe within an hour or whatever, you know, Peter's already betrayed the Lord. Jesus knew what was coming.

He warns him, but he falls asleep. In fact, he was bragging not too long before that, I'll go down with the ship, basically. When you chose the rest of these disciples, Lord, I'm not sure you made the right choice.

But when you got me, you obviously did. I mean, he was pretty bold about his faith and his loyalty to the Lord, and yet it was only, you know, the finger of a little girl. You're one of his disciples, aren't you? I'm sure I've seen you with him.

No, never seen him in my life. And we need to watch and pray. We need to constantly be vigilant.

This nation, what, how many years ago now is it? 2001, 13 years ago, we were invincible. After all, we were the great United States, you know. Nobody's ever invaded us and so on and so forth.

And then all of a sudden, 9-11 happened, and now we are, you know, overly vigilant. It's a pain. I travel every week and, you know, you got to go through the TSA and all that sort of thing.

And, you know, now we're extra vigilant about the fact, listen, it could happen again. And we have to do that spiritually. We need to erect our tower.

If we were at war tonight, if we were in some sort of combat zone, you would not simply walk out of there and get into your car. There would be somebody there saying, hold on a minute, you know, it's all clear. Come on, right now, you know.

We would have a totally different way of leaving this building. And spiritually, we need to do the same thing, you know. Where am I vulnerable? I can't afford to go into that area.

I can't afford to listen to that sort of music, watch these sort of movies or whatever it is. This is where I get trapped, you know. I've got to get a filter on my computer because I've had a problem with pornography in the past.

And, you know, everybody's going to bed now and the temptation, no, you know. In other words, we have to guard. We have to constantly protect ourselves.

The next thing he does, again in verse 5, it says he made weapons and shields in great number. Now, so far, he has been on the defensive. He has been rebuilding the wall.

He's been erecting towers. He's been cutting off the water supply and so on. But now he is prepared to fight.

He is prepared to engage the enemy. And he makes weapons and shields in great number. When I was living in New Zealand, I got a call to minister in Malaysia, a little place called Penang.

It's sort of a pearl of that region. And we were staying with a Chinese doctor. My wife and I and our youngest daughter was with us at the time.

And one afternoon, we're just sort of sitting there twiddling our thumbs, basically. And the doctor came in. He said, would you like to watch a video? And I said, sure.

And he took a VCR. There were no DVDs in those days. He took a VCR and he put it in.

And I was introduced to the ministry of a woman by the name of Suzette Haddock. Some of you may know her. She worked for many, many years with Reinhard Bonnke.

And in fact, she was the one that went ahead of all his crusades, got the churches together to pray. And she's got an amazing ability to teach on prayer and intercession. And you can get that tape series that she put out.

I used to have a copy of it. But she's one of the best. She's been down in the trenches and is just a remarkable lady.

And this particular VCR was recorded at a big church in London. Called Kensington Temple. And she is ministering.

And she's talking about putting on the whole armor of God. And she has a little toy plastic outfit. And she solicits the help of one of the young team members.

And she said, would you come up here? And she puts the helmet on. And she talks about putting on the helmet of salvation. She puts a breastplate on.

Put on the breastplate of righteousness. And after a while, she clothes this guy with the full armor of God. And the last thing she gives him, she gives him a shield.

And she gives him a sword. And she said, now, that is the way we are supposed to be dressed as Christians. We should constantly have on the armor of God.

Why? Because we have an adversary. And she said, I'm gonna be the devil. And she reaches over, I remember, onto the keyboard.

And she picks up some sort of a dagger. And she said, okay, I'm gonna be the devil. You're gonna be the Christian.

Let's fight. And she begins to stab away at him. And he moves his shield.

And she stabs away. He moves his shield. It goes on maybe for 10, 15 seconds or something on the tape.

And then she says, okay, okay, stop, stop. And she turns to the congregation. And she says, see, he never used his sword once.

And it was worth my entire trip to Malaysia. She said, most Christians, all they do is plead the blood. All they do is hide behind a shield.

Not that that isn't legitimate. But she says, we never go on the offensive. We're always in a protective mode when it comes to the enemy.

Sort of always sort of dodging the bullets and hiding. You know, we never sort of give him a black eye. We're just afraid of getting a black eye ourselves.

And we've got to use, again, the sword of the spirit. And we've got to learn to use it effectively. Now, since you did so well on coming up with the material that the gates are made of, I'm going to ask you another little test.

When you put on the armor of God, what is the difference between your loins being good about with truth and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God? What's the difference between truth and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God? Two separate parts of the armor. See, I told you, as you get up into 12th grade, the tests get harder. Okay, one is offensive, the other is defensive.

Anybody else? Okay. Well, the Bible says, the sum of thy word is truth. The totality of God's word is truth.

Is that right? Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, the sum of thy word. And our loins good about with truth is where the sword, the scabbard hangs. It's where you draw the sword from.

But you don't just use the sword in any sort of a way. For instance, let's say you're a young man, you've got a little bit of a problem with lust, and here comes a beautiful, you know, Miss Canada, walking towards you. And you think, I can't let this get me down.

And so you take out the sword and you say, Jesus wept. That's the truth. That's the word of God, right? Now, you see, you've got to be skillful with the sword.

This is the logos, the sum of thy word. This is the rhema, a specific word that you draw from the totality. So you wake up in the morning, you just feel lousy.

You don't think it's the flu. You can't understand it. What is it? Condemnation.

So what'd you do? You take that sword and say, He makes me to lie down. And no, there is therefore now no condemnation. In other words, we need to specifically use the word of God.

Use it accurately. When Jesus was tempted and the enemy comes along and he says, turn these stones into bread, what does Jesus do? Takes that sword, man shall not live by bread alone. In other words, he counteracts it with a specific promise, if you like, concerning that particular thing.

And we have got to become skillful. And the only way you can do that is to get a good knowledge of the word of God. Find out who you are in Christ, what the cross has done and so on and so forth.

And so we have weapons. The name of the Lord is a weapon. At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow.

The blood of Jesus Christ. It's not that we use it as a rabbit's foot in that sense. We don't just sort of plead the blood.

It's on the basis of what that blood accomplished 2,000 years ago. Jesus stripped Satan, made an open show of him, triumphed over him. And we remind the enemy, Satan, it was dealt with.

It is a finished work. It's not just some sort of magical plead the blood, plead the blood. We've got a name again that is above everything.

And so we have weapons and we need to begin to use those weapons. Hezekiah makes weapons and shields. We do need the shield, but we also need the weapons.

And he made them in abundance. In other words, he is prepared to fight. Tied in with that, it says in verse six, he appointed military officers over the people, gathered them in the square of the city, and he spoke encouragingly to them saying, be strong and courageous.

Do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the multitude that is with him. For the one with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.

And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah. In other words, Hezekiah knows the word of God. And he is using the word of God.

He has found a promise that is appropriate or applicable to this specific thing. Where did he get that promise from? Deuteronomy chapter 20. Let me show you what he is quoting here.

Verse one, when you go out to battle against your enemies and you see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you. That's what he said. Remember, when they are more numerous than you.

Let's face it, if you're walking down the street at night time by yourself and there's a gang of guys that are drunk and out of control coming towards you making threats, you're going to panic. Why? Because you're

outgunned. You're outnumbered.

On the other hand, if you've got six or eight guys with you and there's one drunk coming towards you, you're not that worried about it because you've got the manpower, so to speak. And the times we panic is when we're outnumbered. And so God has a specific promise.

When you go out to battle, in this case the battle has come to them and you see chariots and people more numerous than you. That was the situation. Do not be afraid.

For the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt is with you. In other words, remember past victories. And it will come about when you're approaching the battle.

The priest shall come and speak to the people. This is what Hezekiah was doing. And He shall say to them, Hear, O Israel, you're approaching the battle today against your enemies.

Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid or panic or tremble before them. For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies and to save you.

So He uses almost the identical words here as He begins to encourage the people. Don't be afraid. Don't panic.

The God is for us and He will bring us through this. Now, we overcome the enemy again by knowing the Word of God. In the Book of Romans it says, These things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction that through the perseverance and encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

I have a good friend. His name is Winky Prattney. Some of you may know him.

He's a Kiwi. And Winky is brilliant. I mean, he came in the top of the entire nation in science in New Zealand.

And I've heard him pick up the Bible and say, Listen, I have studied this Bible thoroughly. And I want you to know this Bible is full of mistakes. People sort of, wow, how did he get to preach here? He says, No, I'm serious.

I can prove to you this Bible is just full of mistakes. It began with Eve's mistake, followed by Adam's mistake, followed by Noah's mistake, followed by... Now, aren't you glad the Bible is full of mistakes? Because imagine that you come out of a life of sin and debauchery and, you know, I mean, you've done everything there is in the book. And somebody says to you, You need to read the Bible.

It will really encourage you. And so you turn to Genesis and you begin reading. And everybody you read about, perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect.

Now, wouldn't that be encouraging? I don't think so. Isn't there anybody that ever, you know, did anything, nobody ever got mad, nobody ever committed adultery, nobody ever stole, nobody ever got discouraged, nobody, you know. The Bible is full of before and after stories.

It's a book of redemption. You've got people that disobeyed. You've got people that committed adultery.

You've got drunkards like Noah who uncovered himself and, you know, a thousand other sins. And yet you see the grace of God manifest. And through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

And so there's always somebody that you can find that you can relate to. Let's say that you've had a call of God on your life. Maybe when you were 15, you had a real distinct call of God to go to the mission field.

And over the years, you know, you've just forgotten it, got married, got settled. And yet the enemy comes along and he, you know, keeps saying to you, you know, you disobeyed God, you blew it and so on. Well, you know, a good book to go to is the book of Jonah.

Because Jonah had a very distinct call of God to go to Nineveh. And what did he do? He disobeyed, went in the opposite direction. As a result, he ended up in the belly of a great fish.

Whether it was a whale or not, we don't know. But he was quick to repent. And the Bible says, and the word of the Lord came, what? A second time to Jonah.

Now that's encouraging. God is the God of the second chance. Or maybe you're like Peter, you blew it three times, denied the Lord three times.

You can imagine how he felt. And he was warming himself around a charcoal fire. It was cold.

Jesus had been betrayed. There he is warming himself. A soldier says, aren't you one of his disciples? Then a little girl says the same thing.

And you know, three times he blew it. And the next time he sees Jesus, he's so discouraged, he's gone fishing. He's taken the whole bunch of them with him.

They toil all night and caught nothing. They come in early in the morning. And standing on the seashore is a stranger.

At least initially. And then he realizes it's Jesus. And Jesus has got a charcoal fire.

And he says, Peter, before we do anything else, basically, I need to talk to you. Do you love me? Yes, Lord. Are you sure about that, Peter? Yes, Lord.

I'm going to ask you one more time. Do you love me, Peter? Yes. You see, Peter has three chances to affirm his love for God after three denials.

That's encouraging. That's encouraging. I love the teachers that gave us a second chance.

You know, if you fail the exam on Tuesday, you can sit it again Friday if you come, you know. Yes. Thank God, you know.

Mercy there was great and grace was free, you know. But the Bible is full of situations where we can be encouraged. And so here is a man, obviously in those days, they didn't come into the square of the city with their Bible tucked under their arm.

Only the king and a few people. Everything was meticulously copied by hand. And so even in the New Testament, that's why it says, give attention to the public reading of the Word of God.

Jesus went into the synagogue, opened the scroll and said, you know, about himself, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me and so on. Paul would write his letters. They would be read in the church.

They weren't mimeographed off on the photocopy and everybody got a copy when they walked in like the church bulletin, you know. That was long before the days of printing. And so here is a man who begins to read and encourages people.

We need to get into the Word of God. It is a source of life. It is a source of encouragement.

The next thing that happens is the enemy arrives. After this, verse 9, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, sent his servants to Jerusalem while he was besieging Lachish with all of his forces with him against Hezekiah, king of Judah, and against all Judah who were in Jerusalem, saying, Thus says Sennacherib, king of Assyria, on what are you trusting that you are remaining in Jerusalem under siege? In other words, they've surrounded the city. Is not Hezekiah misleading you? To give yourselves over to die by hunger and by thirst, saying, The Lord our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria.

In other words, he's making fun of the leadership. Don't listen to this crazy king of yours. You know, he says God is going to protect you.

You know, you're going to die of hunger if you keep on like this. You know, basically open the door and let us in. Has not the same Hezekiah, verse 12, taken away his high places and his altars and said to Judah and Jerusalem, You shall worship before one altar, and on it you shall burn incense.

My understanding of that is Hezekiah tore down all the altars and so on as a part of the revival that he brought about. And this king, of course, doesn't understand that. He says this king of yours is crazy.

You used to have all sorts of gods you could put your trust in. And now all you've got is one altar and one God. You know, that's not going to do you much good.

And then he begins to brag, verse 13. Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the people of the lands? Were the gods of those nations or those lands able to deliver their land from my hand? Who is there among the gods of those nations which my fathers utterly destroyed who could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? Sometimes the enemy raises his voice. Sometimes he begins to brag about, you know, how powerful he is and who do you think you are? You've never been to Bible school.

You've only been saved six months. You know, I took Jimmy Swaggart out. I took Ted Haggard out.

I took, you know, this person out and that person out. And, you know, who do you think you are? And so he begins to criticize. He begins to call out to those that were sitting on the wall.

He wrote letters of insult in verse 17. It goes on and on. Verse 18, and they called out with a loud voice in the language of Judah and the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall to frighten and to terrify them so that they might take the city.

In other words, the enemy has just got an all-out attack now mounted. What happens? Verse 20, and King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, prayed about this and they cried out to heaven. And the Lord sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria.

And so they returned in shame to their own land. And when he entered the temple of his God, some of his own children killed him there with a sword. And so the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of

Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others and guided them on every side.

Now Isaiah's account, Isaiah 37 verse 36, tells us that Sennacherib had 185,000 troops and one angel destroyed them, one angel. Jesus on the cross said, I could call 12 legion of angels. A legion was about 5,000 troops.

So you multiply 60 by 186. That's a lot of people, you know. In other words, there are more people for us and against us.

Thank God. I know we talk about demons a lot, but there are angelic forces as well. But see, the final thing that Hezekiah does is pray.

He prays. Now I would love to rewrite this chapter. And this is the way I would like it to read.

After these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, came and invaded Judah, besieged the fortified cities, thought to break into them for himself. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib would come and that he intended to make war, he prayed with Isaiah the prophet and the Lord sent an angel. That's the way I'd like it.

I don't want to have to divert rivers. I don't want to have to fill in springs. I don't want to have to rebuild walls.

I don't want to have to fight. I don't want to have to read the Word of God. I just want to say, God, take care of it.

And that's the way we've become as Christians. There's nothing wrong with prayer, but there are times when prayer will not do the work of repentance for you. You can pray from now till kingdom come.

If you've got, you know, a river flowing out of you of lust or whatever it is, you know, you've got to repent of that thing. When the enemy comes, God has given you the armor. You've got to pick it up and fight.

God supplies us with the tools, so to speak, but we have to use them. There's nothing wrong with prayer provided having done all stand. He did all and then finally he stood.

The thing I like about this is the fact that here is a king that was willing to solicit the help of a friend. In other words, many times we try and do it alone. And the Bible says one will chase a thousand to ten thousand.

And here is a king that is not proud enough to say, listen, I am under siege. I am under attack. I've done everything I know to do in order to ward off the attack of the enemy, but the enemy is calm and he's surrounded and so on.

Hezekiah, pray with me, would you? There are times when we need to be honest enough to go to a brother in Christ or a sister in Christ and say, listen, I am going through the worst time of my life. I am under an attack. I don't know what it is physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially or whatever.

Would you agree with me in prayer? And thank God here is a man that is even though he's a king, he is humble enough to go and solicit the help of another friend. And we need to learn how to overcome the enemy. It's one thing to chase principalities and powers, but you've got to kill the lion and the bear before

you kill Goliath.

Because if you haven't learned to kill the lion and the bear, Goliath will devour you, believe me. And sometimes we're crazy enough to tackle things that are way too big for us, and yet we're still battling in our own life with a lion and a bear. If you can't overcome lust or pride or tobacco or whatever, it is battling, you know, don't go against the principality of Victoria.

You'll get chewed up and spit out. We go from what? Strength to strength, victory to victory. And so God wants you to overcome.

There are some of you tonight where God has put a Philistine in your path, and he will not destroy it for you. He said, I've left that thing so that you can learn war. God is smart enough.

No level of maturity. There are some where no doubt God is bypassing the problem because you're infants in Christ, so to speak. Maybe you haven't been saved very long, and you're still experiencing the honeymoon and so on.

But if you begin to mature, God will leave you with a Philistine of some sort, and he says, listen, rise up and kill that thing. Let's just close in prayer. Father, we thank you, Lord, for your word.

Lord, you know each and every situation here. You know our down sittings. You know our uprisings.

You know every detail of our life. Lord, I pray for those that right now are under the attack of the enemy, not because of sin, not because of disobedience, but because they're doing the will and the purpose of God, and all hell is breaking loose around them. Lord, you would take this word and use it as a source of encouragement.

Lord, they would go again from grace to grace and from victory to victory, and they would increase in the knowledge of God and grow and become men of maturity, women of maturity. Father, we want to reach that day where we can come against principalities and powers. Lord, we want to see your church come to that place where, Lord, no weapon formed against us would prosper.

Lord, we have to begin. Right on our own doorstep of taking care of that Philistine that stands there defiant. Teach us how to use that sword.

Teach us how to be honest and rebuild the wall, cut off the supply of water. So, Lord, take this word tonight. Use it again, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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