

The Habitation of God

by David Ravenhill

Believers can maintain a victorious life by recognizing the enemy's presence, making a decision to resist him, and seeking God's guidance and strength.

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Scripture: 2 Chronicles 32:7

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Victorious Living"

Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of maintaining a victorious Christian life, using the example of Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 32 who successfully resisted the enemy's attacks. It emphasizes the need for believers to actively engage in spiritual warfare, exercise their willpower, and put on the whole armor of God to live victoriously. The message encourages maturity in faith, conquering sin, and becoming overcomers through God's power and grace.

Transcript

It's a joy again to be with you tonight, and if you were in the meeting last night, I want to continue looking into the life of Hezekiah, if you have your Bible, if you'd turn with me to 2 Chronicles, and let's go to the 32nd chapter, and I want to look at how to maintain a victorious life. I think one of the great tragedies in the house of God is that people can point to an experience of salvation, and yet live far below the standard that God intended them to live. They're like spiritual yo-yos, one moment they're up, the next moment they're down, in fact most of the time they're down, and they don't really know how to stand and live victoriously.

And this is a chapter that deals with how Hezekiah resisted the strategy of the enemy. The enemy's intention was to come in and to captivate the city in which Hezekiah was the king, and to dominate it, take over it for himself, and we want to look at how Hezekiah successfully withstood the attack of the enemy. Now if you're not familiar with Hezekiah's life and ministry, let's go back to chapter 31, to the last two verses, and we have a summary of this wonderful man's life.

In verse 20 it says, 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, in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all of his heart and he prospered. I think you would agree that that's a pretty good summary of somebody's life.

I've told my wife, Nancy, who's here tonight, that if I die first, and there's enough money left in the checking account or savings, that I would love those two verses on my tombstone. Obviously it would have to be modified a little bit, but it would read something like this, and thus David did throughout all America. He did what was good and true and right before the Lord his God.

Every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all of his heart and he prospered. I don't think you could add anything to that. That's a very powerful summary of an individual's life.

Everything he did, God put his hand of blessing upon. God caused him to prosper. Why? Because he sought God.

And he did what was good, what was right, and what was true before the Lord his God. I love those statements in the word of God. He doesn't do it again before his leaders, his elders, his deacon board, his congregation.

There's nothing wrong, of course, with those individuals or groups of individuals, but he is God conscious, and he is aware that one day he will stand before God, and so he lives his life in the light of eternity. Now, I head peeves as a teacher of chapter divisions, and so let me read it the way it is written. Originally, let's just pick it up from verse 21.

Every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all of his heart and he prospered. And after these acts of faithfulness, the Necherib, who is the enemy, the king of Assyria, came and invaded Judah. Notice that after these acts of faithfulness, the enemy shows up.

Not after these acts of stubbornness, not after these acts of rebellion, not after these acts of perversion, not after these acts of lawlessness or sinfulness, but after these acts of faithfulness. A good indication that you are doing well spiritually, that you're prospering, will be that you're under the direct attack of the enemy. And in fact, if you're not, something is wrong.

I think way too many Christians have come to terms of detentions, if you like, with the enemy. You know, they've made an appointment with the devil, gone into his office and said, devil, I've got a proposal I'd like to present you with. I know you're busy roaming to and fro, trying to deceive the people of God and so on.

I want to lighten your burden a little bit. So, here's my proposal. If you don't bother me, I won't bother you.

And the devil says, sounds fine to me. If you don't give me any trouble, then I won't bother you. My father went to a Methodist school for one year.

Wonderful old revivalist was the head of that school, a man by the name of Samuel Chadwick, back in the thirties, wrote numerous books on prayer and revival. It was an all-boys school training for the ministry. And on the weekend, they were given preaching assignments where they were sent out over the Yorkshire area in England to preach and get a little bit of training experience.

And he would assemble them in the chapel and give them their various assignments and then he would pray. And my father said, invariably at the end of his prayer, after pronouncing the benediction, he would pause and then he would say, go and may the devil go with you. Then he would pause again and say, because if the devil doesn't go with you, you're not worth sending.

That was a good Methodist. He understood the descriptions are job description, if you like, is to go into the kingdom of darkness and bring people out of bondage and to, if you like, upset the apple cart of the enemy, to set captives free, to witness, to testify, to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and so on. And of course, once we do that, the enemy gets upset with us.

Of course, if we're not doing that, then he doesn't care too much. But here is a man that is prospering. Here is a man that is doing the will of God, pursuing God with all of his heart.

And so the enemy shows up on his doorstep. And it says in verse one that he had already invaded Judah. He has already besieged many of the fortified cities of Israel.

And so there are those believers in the Old Testament sense, people of God that are in bondage or in captivity. They come under the domination and destruction of the enemy. He now rules and reigns over their life.

He's the one that holds the upper hand. And he is advancing now towards Jerusalem where Hezekiah is the king. Notice it says, the last little phrase of verse one, he thought to break into them for himself.

God wants you for himself. The enemy wants you for himself. God wants you as a vessel that he may flow through.

A vessel, as the Bible says, unto honor, meet for the master's use. The enemy also wants you as a vessel for his purposes. And he is a poor loser.

And once God gets a hold of your life, there's nothing that upsets the enemy more than wanting to try and get you back so that once again you may be, if you like, a pawn in his hand to use to advance his kingdom, just as God wants to advance His. In verse two it says, when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, that he intended to make war around Jerusalem, the first thing that Hezekiah does, he recognizes that he is in a spiritual warfare, that he has an adversary. And that adversary is out again to try and dominate his life and the life of the city in which he lives.

And so he is going now to strategize and he's going to plan, how do I successfully overcome the strategies of the enemy? Now if you will, keep your finger in this portion of Scripture and go back with me to two verses. The first one is in Exodus chapter 13. Exodus 13 and verse 17.

It's speaking here about the children of Israel. They have just come out of the bondage of Egypt. They've come out under the power of the blood.

The blood of the Lamb has been slain. Blood has been sprinkled on the doorpost. God has redeemed them again with an outstretched arm.

They've come out of bondage, out of servitude. And God's purpose, of course, is not just to take them out of Egypt, it's to take them through the wilderness and eventually into the Promised Land. And God looks ahead and He says, the quickest way to get to where I want to go and where I want to take my people, the fastest way, the shortest way, means that we have to go right through the land of the Philistines.

And while that is no problem with God, it is a problem for His people. You see they, in spiritual typology, they are just born again, they're immature, they're just new Christians, babes in Christ in the New Testament sense. And so the verse says, it came about when Pharaoh let the people go, that God did not

lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was nearer.

For God said, lest the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt. You see, God knew something was going to happen if He took them on this short route, if they went through the land of the Philistines, there was going to be conflict, there was going to be warfare. They were not ready yet to fight, they were just spiritual babes.

And therefore, rather than allow them to face that conflict, He bypasses the problem. He takes a longer route, He goes around the land of the Philistines. You see, God is a Father and like any Father, He is sensitive to the spiritual level of maturity.

Those of you who've got young children, you know that when you're in town you don't just, you know, send your little toddler across the freeway or whatever by himself, or the highway. Rather you pick that little one up, cradle that little one in your arms and you go across the road, maybe place him down on the footpath on the other side. But you know that that little one is not mature enough to handle all the busyness of the traffic and so on.

He's going to get run over. And so you are, again, protective. God is the same way as the ultimate Father.

He says, I can't allow little kids to face Philistines. They're going to get annihilated, they're going to get wiped out, so we have to bypass the problem. Now turn with me to the book of Judges, Judges chapter 3, verse 1. This is the same God, of course, the same children of Israel some time later, obviously.

And verse 1, it says, Now these are the nations which the Lord left to test Israel by them. That is, all 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, notice number one, the Philistines. Now this is the same God, and now He changes His strategy, and He says rather than bypassing the Philistines, I am purposely leaving the Philistines in your path. Because some of you, He said, have never learned how to fight.

And I want you to grow up and I want you to learn how to fight. Now I know you didn't come to hear this good news tonight, but you're here anyway, and it would be embarrassing to get up and walk out right now, so you're stuck. God has pulled a mean trick on you.

You see, in the years that I pastored, there's been times when I've had somebody come into my office for counsel, and I've honestly looked them in the face and said, I refuse to pray for you, because I believe God has left you a Philistine and I'm not going to slay it for you. You are now mature enough, or should be mature enough, to handle this problem yourself. You need to learn to use a concordance.

You need to learn to open your Bible. You need to learn to fast and pray. You need to learn to set some time aside.

God has put this Philistine in your path, because He's wanting you to learn to overcome. My wife and I have raised three daughters. We have a daughter who is a missionary in China, been there for many, many years now.

She had her first year of school in New Guinea, when we were doing missionary work there back in the very early seventies, seventy-one and two. And she came home one day with a page of problems, math

problems, her first assignment. And the problems were major, three plus two equals, you know, four plus one equals, three minus one equals, and you know, so on.

And she said, Daddy, I've got some problems here. Would you help me? Now, I could have taken that sheet of paper and literally, in a matter of thirty seconds, solved her problems, done her homework for her, handed it back and said, Lisa, go and play. But I realized, as a father, she was now in a new phase of life.

The first five years of her life, she was at home playing with dolls and doing whatever she wanted, carefree and being able to just play around. But now she was in a stage of development. And so I said to her, Lisa, I'm not going to help you.

What is two plus two? I don't know, Daddy, I don't know. And the tears flowed, because she was now learning to exercise this gray matter for the first time, at least in these, this area. And about three minutes later or five minutes later, we solved problem number one, we moved to problem number two, and about an hour later, we solved all those problems.

Now, of course, she has an earned degree today. I don't. But you see, if I would have continued to do what I was doing, doing her problems for her, I would have been getting letters in the mail, Dear Dad, here's your next assignment.

Have it in by Friday of next week. It's got to be, you know, two thousand words on nutrition, double spaced and so on and so forth. And by the way, Dad, in the next letter, I'm going to be giving you some details as to the project that's supposed to be in at the end of the semester, and I want you to have plenty of time to work on it, because it's going to count for at least a third of my grade.

And so I'm, you know, hoping that you'll have plenty of time to get stuck in and do it. Now, obviously, we laugh at such things, a smile. But we do that, don't we? That's why we employ men like this, pastors.

They're there to do our assignment for us. And we say, Pastor, you know, I've got this problem. Would you solve it for me? You know, counselor, I've got this problem.

Would you solve it for me? And we go through life, never growing, never developing, never learning to touch God, never learning to tap in, if you like, to the wonderful counselor. Instead, we remain spiritual babes because somebody else is fighting our battles. Well, God is not that sort of a father.

He says, listen, there's a philistine, you take care of it. There's a time when he bypasses it. We call it the honeymoon period of a Christian life.

It doesn't last very long normally. Honeymoons don't, two weeks and it's over sort of thing. But spiritually speaking, God says, okay, the honeymoon's over, there's a philistine.

I put it there because you've never learned war. And I want you to learn how to fight. You see, one day you and I are going to be the bride of Christ.

We're going to marry a military man, the captain of the host, and he doesn't want a wizened up little fearful bride clinging to his sort of apron strings, you know, fearful of everything. He wants somebody that is going to be a counterpart, meet for him, somebody that can reign and rule with him. And so, he gives us a little bit of experience in this life how to overcome.

We're going to marry a king, we better learn how to reign. We're going to marry the great physician one day, we better learn how to bind up one another's wounds. We're going to marry a shepherd, got to have a love for the sheep.

And you can go on and on. It's going to be a wonderful day, but we need to know who we're marrying, what sort of a man he is, if you like. He's a military man, he's a shepherd, he's a, all of those things, he's a king.

And so, God is looking for those that will overcome. The book of Revelation exhorts us over and over and over, overcome even what? As I had to overcome. Jesus had his own Philistines, so to speak, and we don't get off the hook.

He's going to bring many sons to glory. He is a patterned son. He's left us an example.

It's fascinating to me in the book of Revelation we have the bride of the holy city that comes down out of heaven. And that city, of course, has got twelve entrances, twelve gates. And those gates are only made of one substance.

They're not made of brass, they're not made of gold, they're not made of silver, they're not made of precious stones, rubies or sapphires. Every single gate is made of one substance, and only one substance, pearl. What is a pearl? A pearl is a problem that's been overcome.

There is no such thing as a genuine pearl without, at the heart of that pearl, there is a problem. And I think God knows what He's talking about in the symbolism. He's looking for a company of people that are overcomers.

And God gives us a little grit, if you like, whether it's a Philistine or a neighbor or whatever it is, that maybe in the natural would work away at us, and we've got to learn to, if you like, secrete the grace of God and the love of God and the patience of God and so on and so forth, and out of that situation that otherwise would be inerrant, we transform it into character in our life. That's what God is looking for. So let's go back now to see how Hezekiah overcame the strategy of the enemy.

This is a little bit of grit, if you like, in his oyster. So how's he going to handle it? The first thing is in verse 2, I've already mentioned it, he recognized that he had an enemy. You and I need to recognize as believers that we have an adversary, an enemy, a very real person.

There are two realms that you can talk about when it comes to the devil. We have in theological circles what we call higher criticism. Those are men that have got more gray matter than faith, and they try and reason everything away, and they will tell you there's no such person as the devil.

That 2,000 years ago, you know, they didn't have terms for mental illness and depression and so on and so forth, so they blamed it all on this sort of mythical figure called the devil. That is not biblical. There is a devil.

But that's one extreme. The other extreme, of course, is to blame the devil for everything. My father used to tell the story when I was a little boy of the devil sitting by the side of the road overcome with grief, and a believer coming up, putting his arm around him and saying, devil, what's wrong? And the devil, between his sobbing, says, it's you Christians, you blame me for all the things I'd love to do, but I don't have time to do them.

Sometimes we blame the devil for too much, you know. We go outside at night without our coat on, wake up in the morning with the flu or something, and blame the devil. No, it's your own stupidity.

You should have, you know, put something on. You know, don't give him too much credit. But between those two extremes, there is a devil.

The Bible says he's your adversary. Not the person on the left of you, not the person on the right of you. He is your adversary.

He goes around seeking to devour, to destroy, to steal from you, to undermine what God is doing in your life, to take away the joy, to take you into all sorts of temptation and so on and so forth, and to try and sabotage your Christian life. That's his job description. He's good at it, but we need to recognize, as Hezekiah did, number one, that we have an enemy.

The second thing he does, he makes a decision in verse three. In other words, he doesn't just have his theology down pat and say, well, I know there's a devil. No.

He decides to do something about it. I think one of the greatest things that God has given us, apart from the grace of God, is willpower. That we can align ourselves with God.

We can choose, and the Bible is full of choices, choose you this day whom you will serve and so on. Here is a man that made a choice. I am not going to allow the enemy access into my life, into the life of this city over which I am in control.

And we need to make that same decision. I'm tired of being the sort of Christian I am. I'm tired of being on a spiritual roller coaster.

I'm tired of always being whipped around by the enemy, being under a cloud of condemnation and doubt and fears and insecurities or whatever it is that controls your life, unbelief and all the other things, and I'm going to do something about it. By the grace of God, I'm going to face this Philistine and I'm going to slay that thing. I'm not going to allow that thing to slay me.

That thing is no longer going to dominate my life. I'm going to have the victory. The Bible says who always causes us to triumph.

At least that's God's intention. He wants us to live a triumphant Christian life. That doesn't immune us from problems and trials and so on, but it does give us the grace to live victoriously.

We can overcome. And so he decides with his officers, according to verse 3, and his warriors to cut off the supply of water from the springs, which were outside the city, and they helped him. And many people assembled.

They stopped up the springs and the stream, which flowed through the region, saying, Why should the king of Assyria come and find an abundance of water? Strange thing, or it may seem strange, but we need to understand one of the strategies of war in the Old Testament was if you can turn off the tap, so to speak, and there's no water supply, obviously the enemy can't survive without water, and therefore he's going to have to leave you alone at least for a period of time to go and get something to quench his thirst, so to speak. But as long as there is a supply of water, the enemy can come, surround your village, surround your city, and indefinitely mount a siege against it. Why? Because he has a supply of life.

And so Hezekiah sets out to destroy that which will sustain the life of the enemy. In other words, whatever is flowing out of your city that sustains the life of the enemy has to be dealt with. That's what we call repentance in the New Testament.

If there is bitterness, if there's resentment, if there's pride, if there's anger, if there's lust, whatever it is, there is, if you like, issuing out of your life, then the enemy is going to camp indefinitely around you and harass you morning, noon, and night. Why? Because you're feeding him. The Bible says don't give place to the devil.

In other words, don't provide him a landing strip or don't feed him. Once you feed him, you'll never get rid of him, so to speak. And so Hezekiah recognizes that there is a problem.

He has word that the enemy is advancing towards Jerusalem. He is honest enough to say, listen, if he comes, there is a supply of water there, there's a supply of water there, there's a spring over here, here's another spring, but there's also a river flowing through the region, and we will never get rid of the enemy if he comes. No matter how thick the walls are, how high the walls are, how well fortified we are in this city, he can ultimately starve us to death as long as he can sustain himself.

And so we have to destroy or cut off that which sustains the life of the enemy. Now, this is not an easy thing. I am a teacher, not an evangelist, so I'll tell you the truth.

I think evangelists sometimes have a sort of a special dispensation from God to sort of stretch things a little bit, and they tell you, you know, if you come forward tonight to this altar, all your problems are going to be solved and all your hangups and so on, you know, God's got a wonderful plan for your life and so on. Us teachers sort of cringe a little bit and say, listen, if you come forward tonight, all your problems just begin. You know, God's going to get a hold of you, slap you down in the middle of that wheel, he's the potter and he's going to spin it out of control and apply pressure on the inside, and he's going to get out his chisel and mallet and he's going to conform you to his image and so on.

Those are the obviously chastens and so on. But you see, if we were told that up front by the evangelist, none of us would get saved. But since you are saved, at least I assume most of you, I'm going to tell you the truth, this is not an easy thing to do.

But Hezekiah is determined. It isn't easy to fill in springs. These are not puddles where you can just take a barrel load of sand and sort of dump it in and it just absorbs it.

This is a spring, there's life. This is a river that flows through the region. But such is his determination, there is not going to be one single drop of water that is going to sustain the life of the enemy.

That's when we get serious with God. That's when the decision that we make is going to get us somewhere in our spiritual life. I am tired again of the enemy mounting an attack against me and a sustained attack.

I've got to get rid of whatever it is. I see the enemy knows you. He's not omniscient like God, he doesn't have those attributes, but he does know you nevertheless.

And he is very, very familiar with you. How does he know you? Because he's a fisherman, if I can use the analogy. And he takes his fishing rod and he opens his tackle box and he puts a lure on the end and he casts it into your life and he trolls it through your mind a couple of times.

And if there's no bite, he removes that lure, puts it aside, puts another lure on there, throws it into your mind again, reels it through your mind and gotcha. And he writes down in his little palm pilot or whatever, you know, Johnny Smith, uh, lust. Maybe he tries a few more lures, pride, anger, you know, Susan Smith, jealousy, envy.

She doesn't have a problem with lust, but she's got a problem with this. And that's why he always fishes with the same thing. He's a master fisherman.

And when your day comes, so to speak, he knows exactly your area of vulnerability, your area of weakness. And he will fish away at that thing because why waste bait and if you're not going to bite on it, he is a master. And that's why he always attacks us along the same lines because he knows our areas of vulnerability.

And we've got to cut off whatever that is. We've got to be honest and say, listen, this is my Achilles heel. If you like, this is my one besetting sin or two or three, whatever it is.

This is the area that the enemy always gets me on. I'm always vulnerable on this one thing. I'm so tired of it that God, I'm going to stop doing this thing once and for all.

Again, this is not an easy thing. I was born again at the age of 18. I started Bible school that same year.

And in the mornings we would be in class listening to the word of God and I enjoyed the chapel times and so on. Of course, you'd be on a sort of a spiritual high. And then in the afternoon, I worked in a print shop in the drafting department, designing stuff.

And my mind would just be full of all sorts of pollution. The enemy would come in and I would be there, you know, sort of serving afternoon tea or coffee or whatever to the enemy and just dwelling on those things. And my spiritual life again would be like a roller coaster in the morning.

I was on a sitting under the word of God. The afternoon I was totally defeated. I thought, how can I ever prepare for the ministry when my mind is so filled with filth and pollution and so on? And I made up my mind one day sitting there behind that drafting table and I said, I am going by the grace of God to slay this Philistine.

Oh, I didn't put in so many words, but that was the basic thought. And I remember the first day I resisted the devil at least a thousand times. And I guarantee the second day it was 999.

And the third day 998 and the fourth day 997. I'm being honest with you. In other words, these things don't happen overnight, but I was determined.

I was determined to remove that river, if you like, that issued forth out of my life that gave access to the enemy. In about three months time, I could honestly, by the time a fort came, I just had it like that. That door would close and by the grace of God to this day, because I exercise my will like any muscle and with the grace of God backing it, if you like, I have not had a problem along those lines, thank God for it.

But many of us do. You know, we mull those things over, we open the door, we invite the enemy in, you know, and it's 10 minutes later before we realize, why I shouldn't even be thinking this way and so on and so forth. And a pattern gets established.

And here is a man that is about now to take care of one part of that. I'm going to remove the river, the stream. And so he does it.

The next thing he does is in verse five, he took courage and he rebuilt the wall that had been broken down. Now he begins to look at the condition of the city that he is a part of. I noticed this requires honesty.

He doesn't just superficially look at the wall and say, you know, things in pretty good shape. I think I'm okay. No, he goes and he makes a thorough inspection, somewhat like Nehemiah.

And he goes around, he says, listen, there is an area of weakness. There's a hole in the wall right there. There's loose rocks and so on.

The enemy could very easily get in. There's a big, huge, gaping hole over there. That's got to be repaired.

Here's another area of weakness. Here's an area where we're vulnerable to attack. Here's another area.

And he identifies the areas of weakness. And he rebuilds those areas that are weak. We have to do the same.

Again, this takes time. These things don't happen overnight. Now, let me give you a verse in the book of Proverbs, Proverbs 25, verse 28.

It says, like a city that is broken into and without walls, there's a man or a woman who has no control over their own spirit. In other words, the Bible says every single one of us is like a city. That's why this can be taken the way it is.

If we don't look at it just as a natural city, we're looking at now as your city, your life. And the Bible says, like a city that is broken into and without walls, there's somebody who has lost control of their own city, their own spirit. In other words, they're dominated by anger.

They're dominated by lust. They're dominated by pride or whatever it is. And that thing dominates and masters their life.

And instead of them being in control of their city, they are being controlled. They're under the bondage of that thing. They're a servant to that thing.

He that, you know, yields himself to those things becomes a slave to that thing. I was born in England. Not too far from where I was born is the city of York.

And you can go there to this day, beautiful old Tudor houses dating back hundreds of years. And there's still the original wall that goes at least partly around the city. And of course, hundreds of years ago, that was their only means of defense.

And as long as that wall was intact, you were secure inside the protection of that wall, that walled city. And you could go to bed at night knowing that that wall would protect you. It was impenetrable because it was, you know, maybe 30 feet high or whatever and 10, 15 feet thick in some places and so on.

But if the wall was broken down, you didn't sleep very well because if the enemy came, he could get through. And Hezekiah now again is being honest. And honesty is what God looks for in our life.

The Bible says the seed that fell into the ground and brought forth 30, 60 and a hundredfold fell into an honest heart, not a spiritual heart, not a pure heart, not a successful heart, not a righteous heart, as good as all of those things may be, it fell into honest ground. And it's when we become honest that the Word of God can have an impact. Lord, I've got lust in my life.

Lord, I've got anger in my life. Lord, I've got pride in my life. I'm being honest.

I'm being transparent. And once we do that, then of course, God's grace can begin to operate in our life. So here He is now, and He's going to rebuild the wall that had been broken down.

Now turn with me to the book of Ephesians. Keep your finger there if you have your Bible, and we will come back to this. But let me look into how you rebuild a wall.

Ephesians 4, verse 28. Let him that steals, steal no longer. Now here is an individual, his problem, his weakness, if you like, his wall is broken down in this one area.

He's always stealing. Now his stealing is a major problem. Any sort of stealing is, but he's not just stealing to show off to his friends.

He's not just going into a 7-Eleven store and walking out with a packet of cigarettes and sort of flashing them around and say, see, I told you I could do it. You know, getting a little bit of a kick out of it so his friends admire him. No, this man's theft was greater than that.

Obviously that's sin. But this man stole instead of worked. In other words, it was a pattern of stealing.

How do we know that? Because what Paul says, let him that steals, steal no longer, but rather let him labor, get a job. And so this man is in the house of God, and as I think it's William Barclay said, we need to understand the church 2,000 years ago was like an island in the sea of paganism. It was surrounded by paganism everywhere.

People, of course, were getting saved coming into the church, and maybe Paul or Peter was preaching on, you know, thou shalt not steal, and suddenly he comes under conviction and thinks, man, my whole life I've spent stealing. My father used to steal. I mean, that's the way we've been raised.

That's what we're known for. And he comes under conviction. He comes up to Paul afterwards.

He said, Paul, I didn't know stealing was wrong. I mean, you're telling me stealing's wrong. I mean, it's just been a part of my life.

Paul says, well, it's wrong. He says, well, what do I do? He says, well, number one, you stop doing it. But you see, all that does is identify the problem.

Now he says, get yourself a job, labor. Not only does he say, get yourself a job, but he says, performing with your own hands what is good in order that you may have something to share with the one that has a need. You see, Paul takes this now to the other extreme.

This man has spent his life, to use a modern expression, ripping people off. They come home from work after working eight hours, hard work, and television's gone. If I can modernize it, stereo's gone, kids' rollerblades are gone.

You know, your bicycle, you know, mountain bike is missing, and you're devastated. You think, my goodness, I just bought that mountain bike, cost me \$400, and somebody's had the audacity to break in and steal it. You know, maybe a priceless heirloom is missing.

And you can imagine over the course of maybe 10 or 20 years, this man, the amount of misery that he's brought. Nancy and I started our ministry working with David Wilkerson in New York City back in 1964. In those days, the drug addicts that we were working with, the drug of choice was heroin, and the average drug addicts in New York City had somewhere between \$100 and \$200 a day habit.

That was average, which meant in order to come up with \$100 to \$200 a day, they had to steal something in the vicinity of \$400 to \$600 worth of material. By the time they pawned it off on the street, that's all they would get for it. And there were literally thousands upon thousands upon thousands of drug addicts in New York City.

You can imagine in one day alone, the amount of misery inflicted on one city. And this is the sort of individual. And so Paul says, hey, stop doing it.

Number two, get a job. Number three, now that you've got a job and you're earning some money, start to look out for needs and begin to meet some of those needs. You see, I can see Paul saying to this young man, after a few weeks, he comes to Paul, says, Paul, I've got a testimony.

You know, God's provided me a wonderful job and I've got money for the first time in my life. I mean, I don't even know what to do with it. And Paul says, I'll tell you what to do.

Why don't you stop blessing the body? You've been ripping people off for all these years. Now I want you to do the opposite. See that lady back there? She lost her husband a few months ago.

She's got three little toddlers and one of them is having a birthday this week and he's been running around telling everybody he's going to get some rollerblades. And you know, she can barely make ends meet. We as a church have been helping her out.

And I'll tell you what you do. You go down to Walmart, you buy some rollerblades, you wrap them up in a nice package. You write a little note to Johnny and say, Johnny, I understand your daddy has died.

I'm so sorry, but Johnny, I want you to know you have another daddy, a greater daddy in heaven. And he's promised to take care of every need. And he wants you to have this as a birthday gift.

Happy birthday. And Paul says, by the way, don't put your name on it. Just drop it off at the house.

I mean, this is the essence of what Paul was saying. You see, that's how you rebuild a wall. You don't just say, I've got a problem here.

You operate in the opposite spirit. He goes on to say, let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth. This is a person now that has another problem.

Let no, the margin of my Bible says, let no rotten word proceed out of your mouth. In other words, your problem is gossip. You're always critical of others.

You're always tearing people down and so on. Paul says, number one, acknowledge what your problem is and then stop doing it. But then he says, but rather have such a word as is good for edification, according

to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those that hear.

In other words, you've been destroying people's reputation. Now start to bless them. When somebody comes up with somebody's name, you know, all of a sudden you turn the conversation.

You know, they're great people, aren't they? You know, take the wind out of their sails. That it may give what? Grace to those that hear, not justice. You see, the reason we criticize so often is we think we've got the facts, somebody tells us about something, but it says here that we give grace.

I remember Steve Hill saying in the revival in Pensacola, he said the number one hymn in the world, as far as the unsaved are concerned, the most popular is Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound. He says, we don't sing Amazing Justice, how sweet the sound. It's amazing grace, isn't it? Because if I should mark iniquity, who would stand? And so often we criticize, maybe accurately and legally and justly in that sense, but there's no mercy, there's no grace.

And so Paul says, listen, stop the rottenness, that root of bitterness or whatever it is, and that foul mouth and tearing people down and stop blessing. The next thing, and the first one, stealing may not be a problem. This one may not be a problem, but here's another problem.

Verse 30, do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Verse 31, let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander be put away from you along with all malice. Here is somebody full of bitterness, envy, again, wrath.

Paul says, put it away. Then what does he say? And be kind one towards another. That's the opposite of being bitter and envious and jealous and so on.

Tenderhearted, forgiving. In other words, you're no longer holding that grudge, that resentment. Now you are compassionate, you're merciful, and so on.

You see, that's how you rebuild a wall. It's not easy, but it requires honesty, number one. It requires work, number two.

I am going to cooperate in obedience to the word of God. And God, I'm going to begin to consciously think when I open my mouth or whatever it is that your problem is, I'm going to think in terms of the opposite spirit. Let's go back to 2 Chronicles.

Not only does he rebuild a wall, but he erects towers on it, verse 5. In other words, something was missing in this particular city that had no towers. Towers, of course, were the early warning system. Today we have satellite dishes at strategic places in America, huge satellite dishes constantly scanning the heavens in case some rogue nation launches an attack and we see a little blip on the screen and hopefully we can mount a counter-attack and blast that thing out of the air, you know, somewhere over the Pacific or the Atlantic long before it causes damage on the North American continent.

In those days they didn't have that sort of sophistication and so they had towers. These towers would go up another 10, 20, 30 feet on top of the wall and in the tower there was the watchman and they would have towers at certain locations depending on the size of the city. And the watchman's job was to constantly be on the alert, constantly scan the heavens.

He had to be a man of discernment. If there was a cloud of dust on the horizon he had to discern, is this the advancing army or is this a bunch of, you know, mules coming or camels coming selling spices, some

traders? And he had to discern. If he discerned that it was an army he took that trumpet and he blasted that trumpet and then it was picked up by another tower and another tower and another tower and that signal went around and people out in their fields would hear it.

They would gather their children, their belongings, come back into the city. The last one in they closed the gates. Why? Because somebody was able to alert them to impending danger.

Now the Bible says in the New Testament, of course we don't have a tower in that sense, but it says watch and pray, be on the alert, your adversary the devil goes around as a roaring lion. You see the reason so many of us succumb to the strategy of the enemy is that we have no understanding of his plans. The Bible says we're not to be ignorant concerning his devices, his way of operating, and we need to constantly be on the alert.

A year ago almost exactly, America was not on the alert. We were invincible, you know, we thought listen, but he would ever, I mean after all we're Americans and we've never had any major war here. It happens in Israel a lot of places, but you know boy things have changed haven't they? In one year we are on heightened alert.

We have watchmen so to speak almost everywhere and we've got to do the same thing spiritually. You have an enemy. That enemy knows you inside out.

He knows your areas of vulnerability. He knows your areas of weakness and he will do everything within his power to bring you down and you have to be on the alert. You see if we had a literal enemy outside tonight, we wouldn't just go barging out of these doors as though there was nothing wrong and just sort of waltz across the street.

No, we'd go out totally different. We'd look around that corner, we'd be very, you know, we'd look around very carefully making sure and then we'd sort of proceed to where, you know, we could get into our car and so on, but we would, you know, be just aware that the enemy could be anywhere. Spiritually we need to have that sort of awareness.

Whatever your problem is, there are times, there are seasons, there are places where the enemy is going to come into your life when you're alone, whatever it is, again depending on what the problem is. Do you recall the story of Peter in the New Testament? Peter was the one of course who was always bragging, said to the Lord, you know Lord when you got me you've really got a good one. You know I'm not sure about the other guys that you chose.

I don't know if I'd have picked them, but Lord I want you to know I'll go to death for you. I'll go to bat for you. It doesn't matter what time of the day or night.

I'll stand there and defend you to the end and go down with you if necessary. Of course, just a matter of days later, Jesus is betrayed and prior to that rather he's in the garden, says to the disciples, you guys pray. I'm going a little further in.

He comes back. They're all asleep and he says to Peter, Peter watch. Be on the alert Peter.

Watch and pray. Three times within a matter of an hour or two hours at the most, Jesus is betrayed. Peter follows at a distance, comes down there to the little fire.

He's warming himself around the fire and a soldier looks at him and says, I've seen you somewhere. You're one of his disciples. Peter immediately denies it.

The little girl looks at him and says, yeah, I've seen you too. Three times denies the Lord and yet Jesus specifically said, Peter watch. We need to be on the alert.

We need to build a tower in that sense. We need to change the way we live as Christians. Again, when we're alone at night, if you've got cable television or if you're on the computer or whatever it is, the things you listen to and so on, when nobody else is around, check up on you.

Again, there's landmines everywhere, spiritually speaking, so to speak. Verse five again. He now goes on to make weapons and shields in great number.

You see what he's been doing so far has been defending himself. Now he is going on the offensive. He's been dealing with the problems and if you like sin, getting things right, cleaning things up, repairing, fortifying his life, strengthening the areas of weakness.

But now he's making weapons. He is prepared now to face the enemy and we need to do the same thing. The Bible says that we have weapons, the weapons of our warfare and our carnal, the mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

In other words, they're more than adequate. They're mighty through God and we've got to know how to use those weapons. My wife and I, about 15, 16 years ago now, were in Malaysia doing some ministry, staying in the home of a very wealthy Chinese doctor up in a place called Penang at the top of Malaysia.

And one afternoon he said to us, we were sitting around, I didn't have meetings until that night, and he said, would you like to see a video? We said, sure. And he slipped a video in, the cassette player there, video cassette, and we were introduced to a lady I'd never heard before, come to know her, met her personally now. Her name is Suzette Hadding.

She's a lady from South Africa, resides in Germany, travels all over the world, speaking on prayer, very gifted intercessor. And she was speaking in a large church in London, a church of several thousand people. And on the stage were a couple of associate pastors and the pastor.

And she calls up one of the young associate pastors and she has with her a little toy outfit, armory, or what's it, armor. And she's talking about Ephesians 6, putting on the full armor of God. And she takes the breastplate and puts it on him.

She puts a helmet of salvation on his head and girds his loins about with a belt and shoes on his feet, gives him a sword and a shield. And then she said, this is the way we're supposed to be as Christians. We're supposed to clothe ourself again in the full armor of God.

And she goes into detail, at least not detail, but a little brief description of each piece of armor. And then she says, you know, the reason for that is because we're going to need to protect ourselves. There's an enemy.

And she says, I'm going to be the enemy. I'm going to be the devil. You're the Christian.

She reaches over to the top of the piano and she brought with her a little sort of a dagger, knife. And she says, okay, let's fight. And she proceeds to stab away at this Christian in his armor.

And he moves his shield all over and she stabs away and he moves his shield. She stabs away. It goes on for 30, 35 seconds or more.

She says, okay, stuff's up. Then she turns to congregation. She says, see, he's like most Christians.

He never used his sword once. And that was worth my trip to Malaysia. It really was.

You see, we're always defending ourselves, aren't we? And yet we've got to learn how to fight. When Jesus was confronted with the enemy, it is written. He took out that sword and he used that sword effectively against the enemy.

We've got to use the sword effectively. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Now, that's why it's important that we get into the Word of God and we study and we pray and we meditate and we know the Word of God.

Let me ask you a question since most of you look pretty mature. What is the difference between our loins 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 being the Word of God? Well, I won't keep you in suspense, but the Bible says the sum of thy word is truth. Jesus said, I am the truth, the totality.

And we are to gird our loins with truth. We need to have the sum of God's Word. And it is from that Word, that belt that the sword hangs, and we draw that sword from that sum of truth.

But we take a specific truth out of it, the rhema Word of God, from the logos Word of God. The logos means the total Word of God, if you like. The rhema is a specific part of that Word that addresses a particular problem.

In other words, when the devil comes to you and tempts you about something, say about stealing, you don't just quote Jesus wept. You know, in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. That's the Word of God.

But it doesn't do any good. You know, you need to quote a specific part of the Word of God. The Word of God says, thou shalt not steal.

You see, when Jesus was tempted to turn the stones into bread, what did He say? Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word. He took from that belt of truth, if you like, a specific sword of truth, and He used it accurately. And so here is a man, he is ready now to fight.

He's got swords, he's got spears ready, and he is prepared to go on the offensive, not just the defensive. And we've got to do the same thing, to effectively stand as Christians and mature as Christians. We've got to start using the Word of God, what God's Word says about us.

If you're subject to condemnation and so on, you better memorize some scriptures. There's therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, you see, and begin to use it against the enemy. If you're full of fear, then God has not given you a spirit of fear.

You've got to begin to use that against the enemy. The next thing He does is, in verse 6, He gathers together the military officers, and He gathers 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 the multitude that is with him.

The one with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only an arm of flesh. With us is the Lord our God.

Help us in the fight our battles. And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah, the king of Judah. Now He is encouraging Himself with the Word of God.

The Bible says in Romans 15, through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. Let me say that again. Through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

I have a friend, a good friend, called Winky Patney. Winky has written numerous books, very gifted speaker. And I've seen Winky stand before a huge congregation of people and say, I believe the Word of God is full of mistakes.

And, of course, people look at him like shocked. Who let this heretic in here, you know? And he'll say it again. I believe the Word of God is full of mistakes.

How many of you believe the Word of God is full of mistakes? Of course, nobody dare put up their hand. And he says, well, I do. He said, I want you to know I believe the Word of God is full of mistakes.

It began with Eve's mistake, followed by Adam's mistake. Now, aren't you glad the Word of God is full of mistakes? Because imagine if the Word of God did not have any fault in it whatsoever, in the sense of people that backslid, people that were involved in adultery, people that, you know, were murmuring, people that, you know, and you start reading in your devotional life in the, you know, first day of January, you open to Genesis 1 and you begin reading. And all the way through to the end of the book of Revelation, there's not one single individual that ever had a problem.

None whatsoever. Every single person you read about is perfect. Nobody ever doubted God.

Nobody ever disobeyed God. Nobody ever sinned. Nobody ever committed adultery.

Nobody ever got drunk. Nobody ever got discouraged. I mean, the Word of God is absolutely without fault.

Now, how encouraging that would be. Wouldn't that be encouraging? Finally, I found somebody just like me. Now, you see, the beauty of God's Word is this is a book of redemption, and it's full of before and after stories of people that made mistakes, people that fell into sin, and then we see the grace of God lifting them.

As the psalmist says, He lifted me also out of a horrible pit, set my feet on a solid rock, put a new song in my mouth, and so on. That's encouraging, because you can say, Lord, I fell this week. The Bible says, though a righteous man falls seven times, the Lord will raise him up.

Lord, I thank you that there's grace. Peter, we talked about it a few minutes ago, three denials after the resurrection. Jesus is standing there on the shore, and Peter comes in from fishing all night and catching nothing, and Jesus says to him, hey, Peter, I need to have a word with you.

And Jesus there is made of charcoal fire, and He says, Peter, do you love me? Peter says, yes, Lord. And asks you again, Peter, do you love me? Yes, Lord. One more time, Peter, do you really love me? Yes, Lord.

Now, that's encouraging, isn't it? Three make-up tests for three failures. Denied him three times, now he gets a make-up test. Oh, don't you love make-up tests? God is the ultimate make-up test man, teacher.

David, you fail me. Here's your chance to make up. You have men like Jonah, clear mandate from God to go to Nineveh.

What does he do? Go the opposite direction. What does the Bible say? The word of the Lord came a second time to Jonah. Oh, isn't that encouraging? Through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

And you can always find somebody that's got your problem in the word of God, or had your problem, and the way God brought him out of it. That's encouraging. And so he gathers the people.

Of course, they didn't have Bibles in those days. They were written by hand by the scribes. You know, they were meticulously done, one little jot or tittle, and they started all over again.

And so, you know, there were very few of them around, but the king had them. And he maybe brings them out of the temple, I don't know, and he begins to read, and he finds a specific portion of scripture related again to their specific situation, and he says, listen, don't be afraid when the enemy comes, because the one that is with us is greater than the one with him, even though he may outnumber us. He says, be strong, courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of the multitude that is with him, for the one with us is one with him.

Now, you see, you get fearful when you're outnumbered. When you're walking down the street at night, and you're with your friends, and there's six or seven of you, maybe your buddies are great big linebacker sort of guys, and there's a guy coming towards you, you know, drunk and making all sorts of threats, you don't fear too much. I mean, you've got all these guys with you, and there's, you know, poor guys outnumbered.

But when the other, when it's the other way around, and you're the solitary man walking down the street, and there's a bunch of guys coming towards you, then you fear, don't you? But you see, in Deuteronomy chapter 20, God gave them a very specific promise for this thing, and this is the very promise he quotes. Let me read it to you, Deuteronomy 20 verse 1, when you go out to battle against your enemies, and you see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, notice more numerous than you, do not be afraid, for the Lord your God who brought you up from the land of Egypt is with you. It shall come about when you're approaching the battle, the priest shall come and speak to the people.

He shall say, hear O Israel, you're approaching the battle against your enemies today, do not be fainthearted, do not be afraid or panic or tremble before them, for the Lord your God is the one that goes with you to fight for you against, fight for you against your enemies and to save you. And so Hezekiah takes that because it fits that immediate situation, and he says, listen, we may be outnumbered, but with us is God, with him is only the arm of flesh. So don't panic, don't be afraid, you don't have to worry.

Now the enemy shows up, if I can quickly draw this to a close, and of course the enemy does exactly what they have been reading about. It's always good to have this, you know, when we have our devotional life and you store away the word of God, then invariably when the enemy comes along that line, you you're already prepared. And he comes and notice what he does.

Verse 10, thus says Hezekiah king of Assyria, on what are you trusting? That you're remaining in the in Jerusalem under siege. In other words, he's already arrived, he's mounted a siege against them, and he says, listen, what are you guys trusting in anyway? He says, has not Hezekiah the king, has he not misled you to give yourselves over to die by hunger and by thirst? He said, you guys are crazy to stay here, ultimately we're going to move in and attack you, so why don't you just give up now? Don't listen to Hezekiah, the guy's deceiving you. Why is he deceiving you? He says, this Hezekiah, verse 12, has taken away the high places and his altars and said to Judah and Jerusalem, you shall worship before one altar and on it you shall burn incense.

He said, you know, at least one time you guys had plenty of gods to look after you. And he says, this Hezekiah has destroyed all of your gods, you've only got one. What makes you think one god is going to help you against us? Then he says this, do you not know, verse 13, what me, what I and my fathers have done to all the people of the lands? Were the gods of the nations able to deliver their people from my hand? Who was it among all the gods of the nations which my fathers have now utterly destroyed who could deliver his people out of my hand that your god should be able to deliver you? Boy, talk about bragging.

Listen, you guys don't understand who you're dealing with. My father, we have liquidated city after city after city after city. I mean, you guys are crazy.

You got rid of all your gods that could have helped you, now you've only got one god. What makes you think that one god can stand against our track record? Boy, I mean, the enemy is ruthless when he wants to be, isn't he? He can bombard us, he can assail us with all sorts of thoughts and so on. Verse 15, don't let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you like this.

Don't believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people from my hand or from the hand of my fathers. How much less shall your god deliver you? Boy, he knows how to sort of rub it in. And then they write letters of insult in verse 17.

They cry out to the people trying to provoke fear. Verse 18, they called out with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall to frighten and terrify them so that they might take the city. Again, the enemy wants to try and get you fearful.

He wants you to believe that somehow the enemy is so much bigger than your god that he can, you know, seduce you and overcome you and so on. We've got to have faith and believe that, listen, our god is the god that brought us out of Egypt. Remember past victories.

The greatest military power of its day, the Egyptian army, and God just simply liquidated them, if you like. Liquidated them more than one cent. Anyway, some of you are getting sleepy.

Finally, in verse 20, and we'll draw this to a close, but King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, prayed about this and they cried out to heaven. The last thing that Hezekiah does now, after doing all these other things, he joins with another man of God and he begins to pray. And God responds to his prayer.

Verse 21, the Lord sent an angel. He destroyed every mighty warrior, commander, and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria, and so he returned in shame to his own land. When he entered the temple of his god, some of his own children killed him with a sword.

So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. See, prayer, having done all, to stand, having done all, we've got to pray. And there are times when we need to be honest and say, listen, I am up against the wall here, if you like, and go to another man of God.

Here is a king who is not embarrassed about acknowledging that he doesn't know what to do next. He goes to another man of God, Isaiah the prophet, and he says, listen, let's pray together. Two are better than one.

One will chase a thousand, two ten thousand. And we need to avail ourselves of a brother or sister and say, brother, listen, I have been through hell lately. The enemy's come, he's harassed me, he's brought up my past, and you know, listen, I've fasted, I've prayed, I've dealt with every sin I know, but it says, oh, the enemy has just mounted a siege against me.

I've dealt with everything that there is, but I need a brother to stand with me right now. I need a sister to stand with me, to get me through this final battle. And God comes and he routs again the enemy and takes care of it.

Now, the last thing, I would love to rewrite this chapter. And I would love to write it this way, beginning of verse 21 of the previous chapter, every work, talking about Hezekiah, that he began in the service of the house of the Lord, in commandment, seeking his God. He did all of his heart and he prospered.

And 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. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, that he intended to make war on Jerusalem, he prayed with Isaiah the prophet and the Lord sent an angel. That's the way I'd like it to read.

You see, I don't want to have to divert rivers, Phillips, you know, springs. I don't want to have to rebuild walls. I don't want to have to erect towers and have to be on the alert.

I don't want to have to use weapons and encourage myself in the word of God. I just want to say, God, would you just take care of the enemy for me? Wouldn't that be nice? We are so lazy and God will not do our homework for us. We don't grow that way.

We don't develop that way. He says, you put on the whole armor, you pick up the sword, you use the shield. You know, why do we need to do that if God will do it for us? Why don't we just sit back in our lazy boy and just say, God, you watch the door and I'm just going to, you know, watch the NFL tonight.

You see, we never mature that way. And I believe there is victory. I believe God is looking for mature men and women, men and women that live victorious lives, know what it is by the grace of God to conquer sin and live a victorious Christian life.

It's possible. We have a God that is greater than all the powers and resources of the enemy. We have the word of God.

We have the blood of the lamb. We have the word of our testimony. We have all these wonderful weapons that God has given us.

We need to start using, but there's so much laziness in the house of God, isn't there? We don't pick up our Bible from week to week. We expect the pastor to do all the work on Sunday morning and sort of feed us. We don't do that the rest of the week.

If we only ate once a week physically, some of us might be in better shape, but we weren't yet. We'd all look pretty skinny, wouldn't we? And the body of Christ is pretty skinny spiritually. Not very strong anymore because we don't get into this word the way we should.

And so last night we talked about steps to revival. We talked about dealing with sin, cleansing the temple, but now this is how to maintain it. It's one thing to get revival, it's another thing to maintain that.

I'm talking about individual revival, where you can maintain a life of godliness, that intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, where He walks with you and talks with you. The word says when you wake up in the morning conscious of His presence, you enjoy again that fellowship, that communion of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says He's brought us into the fellowship of His Son.

And we can have that on a regular basis, but we've got to know that there's a price to be paid, and there's certain steps that have to be taken, and Hezekiah knew how to do it. And I want to leave you with that, and let's just close in prayer. Father, take again this word tonight, and Lord, just seal it in the very fleshy tables of our heart.

Father, teach us your ways. We're so tired, Lord, of living defeated lives. We're so tired of the enemy ripping us off.

We're so tired of, Lord, our cities being conquered. Lord, we don't rule anymore over our own spirits. We're like a city that is broken into without walls.

And Father, tonight I believe that there are those that need to make a decision, a decision to do something, to actively engage again the enemy, engage themselves in the study of your word. Lord, begin to apply these principles. Lord, we're tired of weak, insipid, lukewarm Christians that really don't amount to anything, that are no different in the world.

They struggle with the same problems and don't have any victory. They have no testimony in the community because they're no different than their next door neighbor. Father, I pray that you would raise up, even from this congregation tonight, some lights in the midst of the darkness.

Lord, some true examples, because we're epistles written and read of all men. Lord, let them not see written over our life defeat, but victory, maturity, God's integrity, holiness. Have your way, Lord, we pray.

Again, while our heads are bowed, why don't we just stand quietly, and I am going to ask if you want to come just to signify, not necessarily for prayer, but you want to come and say, listen, I am tired of being a sort of a lukewarm, insipid type of a Christian. I'm going to make up my mind tonight. A decision has to be made.

Hezekiah said he decided. It's one thing to know all this theologically. It's another thing to do something about it.

And you're one of those, maybe defeated, maybe full of fear, full of whatever it is. Your city is dominated. You say, you know, I'm going to change that by the grace of God.

And if that's you, if you just want to come forward, maybe you're not used to doing that, but sometimes it's good to take a step of faith, just to indicate to nobody else than yourself and to God, God, I'm going to step out. This is going to be a whole new journey for me, a whole new beginning. Lord, I've been a Christian now for many, many years, but really, if you were to measure my life, I'm still a baby spiritually.

Everybody's got to, you know, pick me up and change me, so to speak, and look after me and feed me and clothe me. And I want to be a mature man, a woman of God. By this time, Paul says you ought to be teachers, but you have need for somebody else to teach you.

That was Paul's great complaint. By this time, he says you should be ready to eat a steak, but I've got to give you the bottle again. He literally says that to the Corinthians.

You've never grown. You've never matured. You've got life.

You can testify that God is your father, but you're still a helpless little baby. God is wanting an army. He's wanting men that know how to can join the ranks.

He's the captain of the host. Paul says to Timothy, be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, not be a baby Timothy. Learn to please the one that enlisted you as a soldier.

If you want to be a soldier tonight, just make your way forward. We have just another clergy here that come and just pray for these ones individually, just for a moment, and just agree with them God's blessing upon their life. This really can be a milestone.

It really can change that can take place, and let's ask God. Thank you. And my wife for coming.

Thank you. Pray for this lady. Father, even as these ones have been prayed for, we pray that Lord tonight would be as Billy Graham would say, a night of decision, but Lord, a different type of decision, not just to accept you as Savior, but Lord to enlist in your army.

Father, let these be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, able to fight, able to set others free because of what you've done in their life. Strengthen them, Lord. Those areas of weakness, we pray that Lord, even tonight they would begin to strengthen those places where they're vulnerable, where they're weak.

Lord, they'd go away from this meeting with a new alertness, a new vigilance. Father, to look out constantly and realize that they're in a spiritual warfare. We pray, Lord, your blessing upon them, upon their homes, their families that are here.

And Father, for each and every one of us, Lord, give us again the grace to overcome. Lord, let this congregation be a congregation of true overcomers. The Lord can take that little bit of grit, as it were, and turn it into a thing of beauty, a thing of value.

Lord, we can become men and women of mature character. So have your way, we pray, and we'll give you all the glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you need to slip away, just feel free to slip away. There's some books at the back there, if you'd like to look. But otherwise, we just want to pray for these ones and agree with them.

If you want to come still, you're welcome to come.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/l6fU1ynafX8.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-ravenhill/the-habitation-of-god/>

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