

Matthew Ch2

by Jim Cymbala

When God begins to do something new in our lives, Satan will often attack us to destroy what God is trying to do, but we can overcome these attacks by trusting God and staying strong in the Lord.

Duration: 55:10

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-10, Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 24:16, Isaiah 54:17, Matthew 2:13-16, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 11:7

Topics: "Trials"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Symbola shares a personal experience he had with a couple who came to him seeking help. Despite feeling physically and emotionally drained, Pastor Symbola recommended them to a ministry called Teen Challenge. He emphasizes the importance of not giving up when faced with opposition or failure, as God has something good in store for us. He encourages listeners to trust in God's plan and reminds them of the story of Moses, who obediently followed God's calling to confront Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Transcript

Let's turn to Matthew, the second chapter, shall we? Matthew 2, first book of the New Testament. Matthew 2, verses 13 through 16. I'm not going to speak for long.

I want to say something very important and then we can sing and pray or however the Lord leads us and then go out in the street rejoicing in our God. Matthew 2, 13. Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Get up and take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you.

For Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him. So Joseph got up and took the child and his mother while it was still night and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod.

This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, Out of Egypt I called my son. Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the Magi, he became very enraged and he sent and he slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity from two years old and under according to the time which he had determined from the Magi. Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled.

A voice was heard in Ramah weeping in great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and she refused to be comforted because they were no more. Right when Jesus was born there was an attempt made once the baby came into the world by Herod to destroy the child before the child had reached even a few months. At Christmas time we think about this story as part of the whole Christmas narrative, the verses that we treasure so much but I want to direct it to you tonight not to talk about the Christmas story of the incarnation but to talk about the subject the baby under attack.

What Herod did inspired by Satan was something that happens over and over and over again through church history, through the Bible that whenever anything is young and new and vulnerable and not fully formed that is when Satan who is always attacking the things of God and the people of God but that is when Satan makes some very strong attacks to destroy that which God is trying to do when the baby is young. In this case it was the literal baby, it was the child, it was Emmanuel, it was Jesus. But I would like to suggest to you tonight in this brief little discourse that any time in your life when God begins to do something new and fresh, when a new calling comes on your life, when a gift of the Holy Ghost begins to operate in your life, when you say as Susan said so eloquently that you make a fresh consecration of your life to the Lord and you make a new fresh beginning, a new start of walking totally devoted to the Lord as best God can help you.

When you step out into a ministry, when you reach out for anything that is new that God has birthed there will be an attack by Satan many times right at the inception so that when the thing is vulnerable, not fully formed the momentum, the spiritual momentum that comes with the things of God has not yet been gained and when you are vulnerable to certain kinds of attacks and when faith has not fully solidified in the thing that God is doing that is when Satan tries to cut something off when it's brand new and fresh and childlike. The baby is under attack. Now this is true throughout Scripture.

I'm going to give you three brief instances but you will find out if you study the Bible that this is an occurrence and it will explain many things that happen in your life. When something is being birthed by God in your life that God wants to use to bless you, to bless others through you and to bring glory to His name, then Satan will attack you. I'm going to say it again.

Whenever God gives birth to something in you that will bless you and bless others it's true even for new believers. Some of the strongest attacks are made when a new believer is vulnerable, doesn't know the Bible, doesn't have Christian friends. The story of the Christian church is replete with instances where new converts have been attacked in the weirdest kinds of ways because Satan knows the baby is young and vulnerable.

But whenever God is going to bless you and use you to bless others and bring glory to His name through some new thing, some new gift, some new ministry, some new song, some new whatever, some new stepping out, just as you begin to do it in the first trimester, the baby comes under attack. You remember that of all the new beginnings that the world has ever known after creation itself, there never was the kind of new beginning that we read about in the book of Genesis concerning Noah. Noah had a new day like no other person ever experienced a new day.

In Genesis 9, you can look at it when you go home, we read the story of the fact that Noah stayed faithful to God, was a preacher of righteousness, trusted God, built an ark when everybody was mocking him, stood up to all of the flow of ungodliness where when God looked down on the earth, every thought of the imagination of everybody was evil continually. And Noah went against all of that and built an ark in

obedience to God. He built it by faith.

And then the rains came, Noah got his family inside the ark, and the door was shut, and judgment came upon the earth, and God wiped out and brought judgment like He never will again according to His promise, water will never destroy the earth again. He brought judgment upon all these people who were mockers of God and the ungodly crowd that were making fun and ridiculing Noah. After all of that rain and all of the flood and after all those days and weeks in the ark, the Bible says that the ark came to rest and the water subsided and Noah and his children went out into a new world.

Do you understand what was beginning? That was a brand new world. It was Noah, his sons, their wives, God was going to now have a godly seed, God was going to have people who would follow in the way of Noah. Think of the responsibility on Noah.

God had used him as a prophet, as a savior by building the ark. And now here was the beginning of a whole new day. And what does the Bible tell us happened? Noah planted some fields and began to tend some vineyards and he began to be tempted to drink wine.

There is no mention anywhere in the Bible up to that point that Noah was ever tempted to drink, much less get drunk. And now at the beginning of a brand new day, at the beginning of a brand new headship of a new race, as it were, of people who would serve God, the Bible tells us that Noah drank so much that he got drunk, went into his tent and lay naked for his own sons to see him in shame. And that is so like the devil.

When just when God is beginning a new thing in our life, he comes with temptation to try to knock us out by personal failure. You start out to do something new for God, you make a new consecration and sometimes the temptation comes from left field. You've never really been tempted by that before, but here it is.

And Noah, the man who is mentioned so wonderfully in the book of Hebrews, Noah, the man who stands out as such a giant of faith, Noah ends up drunk out of his mind in a tent, laying naked, where one of his sons has to come in eventually and cover the nakedness of his father, the one who had built the ark. So I want you to know that whenever you step out to do something for God and whenever you consecrate yourselves to God's service, there will very often come a time of personal temptation and testing because the devil wants to knock out the baby while the baby is still young and vulnerable. But I want you to know today, no matter how you failed, the righteous man can fall six times, but he gets up seven.

And Noah was drunk and Noah was ashamed, but Noah got up and served God for the rest of his life. Never let anything the devil can do in your life, if he beats you on one battle, you get up, you don't quit, you don't give up, you say, I'm going to serve God with all of my life, with all of my heart, with all of my strength. Because that's just like the devil to come and try to use personal failure to knock out something that God wants to do.

And I know lots of people who have gotten discouraged, not by what others have done, but by their own personal failure. But if we confess our sins, hallelujah, he is faithful and just to forgive us, hallelujah, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But the attack came just when he got out of the ark.

A brand new day was spoiled initially by personal failure. Later on in that same book, we read about another great man of faith, by the name of Joseph. And in Joseph's life, we read in Genesis 37, 5, Then

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

Joseph was the pet of his father Jacob, which was not good. You shouldn't favor any of your children. You should never favor your children or your grandchildren.

You love them all equally the same, because that breeds contempt within a family when you play favorites. Well, Jacob played a favorite, and he gave Joseph a coat nobody else had, and he was his daddy's pet, and the boys didn't like him. But listen, his brothers, but then Joseph went to bed one night, and you have to understand that Joseph wasn't looking for anything from God.

Joseph just went to bed as a young boy, a teenager. And Joseph had a dream from God. And he saw his sheath in the field, standing up, and he saw eleven other sheaths bowing down to his sheath.

And he went and told his brothers, I had a dream from God. It's a different kind of dream. I remember the dream.

God was doing something new in Joseph. God was preparing Joseph to be the savior of the people of Israel. A famine was coming, and God had great plans for Joseph.

And it all started with a dream that Joseph did not ask for. And when Joseph told the dream to the men closest to him, his own brothers, his own flesh and blood, they hated him. And this is what Satan uses so often when God begins to do something in your life, or you step out.

He uses opposition to come against you in a very strong way, sometimes opposition from your closest friends, yea, even from your family. And all of the freshness of what God is trying to do, seems to be smothered by this, not just opposition. They hated him.

A few nights later, or a few weeks later, we don't know, he had another dream. And he saw the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. He went foolishly, I guess, and told his brothers and his father that.

And his father figured out he and his wife must be the sun and the moon. And the brothers must be the stars. And even his father Jacob, as in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Jacob rebuked his own son and said, Why don't you get a grip on yourself? Do you think your mother and father will bow down to you? Something's wrong with you, son.

This was the encouragement that Joseph got when God began to do a new thing in his life. But it didn't stop there. His brothers caught him out in the field, and you know the story.

I don't need to tell it. Their hot breath fell against his face as they stripped him and beat him and threw him into a pit, a cistern. And Joseph, beginning this new thing that God gave him, ended up with a one-way ticket with some Midianite slave traders to go to Egypt to be sold on the meat market like a piece of pork chop.

Satan attacks the baby when it's still so young. A teenager getting a dream from God, and Satan uses his own brothers and his own mother and father to misunderstand him, and then his brothers to almost kill him and send him down the river. But I want you to know that the Bible says, even when he was being sold down the river to Egypt, the Bible says, but God was with Joseph.

And you know what? If you trust God, no matter who hates you and no matter who fights you, God will have the last word. How many say Amen? Let's put our hands together and thank God that He has the last word. And the amazing thing about God is, Satan tried to kill the dream of Joseph and the ministry of Joseph when he was just in his formative stages.

But by selling him down the river to Egypt, hallelujah, that's exactly where God wanted him to go, what Satan meant for evil, God turned around and worked for good. How many say Amen? So I want you to know, I want you to know when God begins to deal in your life with something new, if you are faced with sudden new opposition and it hurts, don't tell me it didn't hurt. Don't tell me when your brothers try to kill you that doesn't hurt.

You stay strong in the Lord. Let's keep trusting God no matter what people do, because God can turn it around. And the day came when Joseph, right hand to Pharaoh, number two man in all of Egypt, had those very brothers come asking for food.

And Joseph was in charge of all the food. And this was years later and they didn't recognize Joseph. And then Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and said, I'm Joseph who you tried to kill.

And at first they were so afraid because they realized we were so wicked to do that. And Joseph said, don't be afraid. What you meant for evil, hallelujah, God worked it out for good.

Listen, listen, no weapon formed against us shall prosper. This is the heritage of those who put their trust in the Lord. Amen.

Lastly, I'd like to bring before I tell you about a personal experience that Carol and I had. I want to tell you about Moses. Moses was out in the wilderness, out in the desert for 40 years as a shepherd.

And God appeared to him in the burning bush. And God told him, you go to Pharaoh and you tell Pharaoh, let my people go. Let them go out three days journey so that they might worship Jehovah God.

So now Moses begins a new mission. He is obedient to the calling, although he battles God about, I'm not able to speak like I should be able to speak, but God sends his brother with him. And now he appears in front of Pharaoh.

You talk about starting out new. Here is a man of God challenging the most powerful man on the face of the earth, Pharaoh of Egypt. And the Bible tells us in Exodus 5 that Moses goes to Pharaoh and he gives him God's message, let my people go.

This is what God says, let my people go three days out. Now, the people that he's asking to let go are slaves and they're making bricks. And this slave force has been multiplying and Pharaoh is keeping one eye on it because he sees it as a political threat.

So when Moses comes, fresh from God's presence, fresh from the burning bush, fresh from talking with God like a friend talks with a friend, he goes to Pharaoh and he says, Pharaoh, thus sayeth the Lord, let my people go. He's anointed, he has the word of God on his lips, he's faithful and obedient to the call of God. And what happens? Pharaoh says, you're not going anywhere.

And you've got a big mouth too. That's not in the Bible, but I put it in. And you know what? You're a troublemaker.

I've got all these slaves, they're supposed to be making bricks. Now you're going to talk about worship? You've got to go out and worship your God? That's what you've got time to think about? Is this what's going on here? He dismisses Moses and says, blow off. And he gets a hold of some of his supervisors, and he says, go tell those rotten Hebrews that they've got to make the same quota of bricks, but take away the straw.

And suddenly the word spreads among all the Hebrews, you've got to make the same number of bricks, but you've got to go out and get your own straw. The Egyptians are not going to give you straw. And suddenly they don't have any time to go find straw, and then still keep their quota.

So now, tribulation and trouble comes to the people of God, because the slave masters and the taskmasters are whipping them and yelling at them and saying, get moving, get the bricks, why haven't you met your quota? Don't tell me about straw. You want to talk about worship and going out and serving Jehovah? If you've got time for that, you better make bricks without straw. And one day the leaders of the Hebrews, the elders, meet Moses and Aaron and say, what in the world have you done? What are you, stupid? You have now made us a stench in the nostrils of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

In other words, Moses' ministry begins in its formative stages with an attack of the devil through Pharaoh, that not only is it not successful, it makes everything worse. It's like the minister that I met, who said he just went into the ministry, this is true, and in the first meeting he was in, he was asked to pray for someone who was sick, this was all new to him, the person came up, he laid hands on the person to be healed, he had never done that as a pastor, and the man dropped dead while he was praying for him. That's a good start.

Nobody brought people for a while for that, but my friend to be praying for him, they were like, you know what, let's just go slow with this. Moses began with an attack of total failure. This is what happens, seeming failure.

Seeming failure. You step out and do what God wants you to do, you're misunderstood, and Moses ends up with the elders of his own people saying, hey, you're the deliverer, give us a break. Why don't you go back where you came from? And it brought such discouragement on Moses, that Moses went back to God, and if you go home and read it, you find out that Moses ended up telling God in chapter 5, why did you ever send me? That's what the devil was after.

Such a collapse, such a seeming failure, such opposition, misunderstood by his own people, and Satan pushing him, because Satan must have known, God's hand is on that guy. So let me knock him out before he gets momentum and faith in his soul. And Moses ends up saying, why did you ever send me? By obeying you, I've made it worse.

And there's the devil laughing in the background saying, I got him. But chapter 6 begins with God telling Moses, is that what Pharaoh told you? Is that what the people said? Step back Moses, because now I'm going to show you what I can really do. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Let's put our hands together, Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! And then, come the ten plagues, and it ends up that Pharaoh is begging Moses, Pharaoh begs Moses, please stop it, you can go.

But he had a weather that first attack, when the baby was young, when all hell seemed to be breaking loose, and he wanted to quit. Everybody who ever has worked for God has had an attack. And many of the attacks have come when you're young and you're new, and the thing is new in you.

Attacks go on your whole life. One of the signs that you're in God's will is that you're being attacked. If you're not being attacked, you're probably in a coma, and Satan doesn't even want to bother with you, because why wake somebody if they're sleeping.

But how many have found in your own life, when you get serious for God, you face some attacks. For we wrestle not against. Most of you know the story that when my wife and I came to the Brooklyn Tabernacle, we were total novices.

My wife was way ahead of me, she was a pastor's kid. She had grown up with this unique gift that God has given her, and music, and playing, and perfect pitch, and harmonies, and all this. So she was way ahead of me.

Ahead of me probably spiritually, ahead of me certainly in fitting in, because this was all new to me, preaching, and so on and so forth. We came to the Brooklyn Tabernacle, and we decided that this is where God wanted us to be. So we left the job where we had a salary, in a church in Newark, and then we started on Atlantic Avenue with just a literal handful of people.

She got a job, I got a job, to make ends meet. That first year, I remember my friend did my taxes for me, and he looked at me funny when he said, your income was \$3800 for the year? And I said, yep, but God's supplying. But we didn't know anything else.

We didn't know anything about the ministry. We didn't know anything about guaranteed salaries, or benefits, or insurance. That was totally off to us.

We didn't know anything about that. We never talked about any future plans. My wife had had, I think, a vision from God when she was a teenager that one day she would lead a large choir.

But I was just groping, and we were just scrambling. I was just trying to get through one day at a time, one Sunday at a time, learning to preach. My sermons were so bad then that I fell asleep while I was preaching.

And that's not good. Well, we were in Brooklyn full-time about two months, three months. There were people living upstairs in the building.

There was an elderly woman who was around 90, who was a Norwegian woman who had lent the previous two pastors before me, before things really went bad in the church and ended up with so few people. She had lent the church \$15,000. This was right around 1970 that she lent it, or 1969.

\$15,000 was a lot of bread back then. That was a lot of bread. Well, my schedule would be on Tuesday, I would go in in the morning, and I had no secretary.

I had no phone person. I would go in and just, you know, look at the bills and figure out how could we pay the bills. We're having meetings on Sunday nights, Sunday morning, Sunday night.

And we came home one night, and about 11 o'clock at night, our home phone rang. I have no idea how they got our number. And a person, a minister, introduced himself and said, I pastor, and he mentioned a denomination.

He said, I pastor a church in South Dakota. I have a wife, two children. God's been talking to me about coming to New York to work for him.

What do you feel? Well, first of all, I had no idea how he found me. I was a novice, and he's asking me. He had been pastoring for five or six years in two different churches in a barren part of South Dakota.

And I said, well, I really don't know what to tell you. There's ministries, there's Teen Challenge. We're in a very struggling situation, and I don't know if I could really help you.

He said, well, we're praying. God's given us a burden, and, you know, when God gives you a burden, He's going to make a way. I said, yeah, that sounds fairly right.

But I didn't, I was noncommittal. I didn't know what to make of it because, you know, here we were scrambling the thought of somebody asking me about coming to New York. Certainly there was no position in our church.

The next Sunday night, at almost the exact same moment, he called again from South Dakota. And he said, our van and our cars are packed. We're coming.

And God is with us. I said, well, sir, you know, I was just so young then. This is totally all new to me.

I said, I can't make any commitment to you because we're just, we're in a very touch-and-go situation. Don't worry about it. Praise God.

When God is able, God can do it. He gave all the right verses, said all the right things. I said, well, when you get close to the city, call.

We'll have you come to our house. We were living in New Jersey then. My mother had put down \$8,000, and my wife and I purchased our first home, \$32,000.

Those were the good old days. Right? Now you can't buy a car for \$32,000. That was one of the things we were working, just to cover the note on the house, \$24,000.

So he calls from New Jersey and says, I'm here on a Friday, I think. And we said, well, here's the way to get to our house. I gave him directions, and I said to Carol, we've got to make, you know, a meal for them.

They're coming, two of them and two kids. So I went down to the supermarket and bought some. We wanted to be kind to them, so we bought steaks, chuck steaks, you know, the ones, you know, like two cents a pound or some of those.

But, you know, we felt good, like we're going to put something out nice. And it's all bone and fat. There's a little piece of meat there like that.

So their car pulls up, and my wife has, we just had Chrissy. Chrissy was an infant baby. So they come in our house, very quiet couple, very, seemed very nice.

Wife had red hair, very thin. Man was very, seemed very nice. They sat, they ate in our house.

And then I said, well, listen, you have no place to stay. There is an apartment on the second floor of the church on Atlantic Avenue, and I've made it so that you can stay there. Okay.

So I said, and, you know, I'll give you directions how to get there. Someone's waiting. They will let you in.

There's an elderly woman up there, and there's one other person staying there, a woman and her daughter. And you just stay there, and I guess I'll see you in church on Sunday. I really don't know what to say to you, brother, because you don't know me.

I don't know you. I don't really know where this is going. Don't worry, brother.

God is on the throne. That sounded right, too. Well, I guess you can't really picture how young and how vulnerable my wife and I were at this time, because you only know us, some of you, in this building, older.

Well, on Sunday, I go to church. He's sitting there in the Sunday morning service, amening everything I say. And then in the night service, I had him come up and introduce himself and just, you know, share a greeting.

He spoke well. Activities have been going on among some people on Saturday, and he had met a lot of the people, he told me. A lot of the people, you know.

You have 18 people, you meet 18 people. Doesn't take very long to know the whole church. So he was there on Sunday.

We said good night. We said, well, we'll just pray. We'll be in the prayer meeting on Tuesday.

Monday morning, I got a call from the lady who lived upstairs, not the elderly one, another one. And she said, Pastor Cimbala, you have a problem. I said, what's the problem? She said, you know this man that's here? I said, yeah, he's a nice man.

He's been talking about you, and he's been talking to the people in this church. You have a problem. I said, no, he's a nice man.

He's probably just being friendly. And then she said something which made me feel uncomfortable, which made me hold back. She said, no, he's been using the phone.

He's gotten the phone number of some of the people. Besides talking to them on Saturday, he's been calling them. And he's saying that your time is up here in this church.

And I said, sister, you misunderstand. He's probably just making a spiritual point that you don't understand. Talk about not understanding.

So I dismissed it. I, you know, love hopes all things, believes all things. And she just said, no, I listened in on one of his phone calls.

And I said, sister, you shouldn't have done that. But she said, no, I love you and your wife. There's something wrong.

I said, there's nothing wrong. This guy is just, there's nothing he can do. There's nothing to do.

There's no church. There's no money. There's the buildings run down.

And there's no people. So what could he want? Well, we had dinner Monday night, Carol and I, by ourselves. Carol went up to rest, put Christy to bed.

And I began to study my Bible and pray. And suddenly as I was praying, the Holy Ghost came upon me. And I began to pray.

I really don't really like to tell this story. I'll be honest with you. I don't like to talk about it publicly.

I can feel it now. I began to pray, but I couldn't stop praying. I physically, literally could not stop praying.

I began to groan and intercede in the Holy Spirit, but I didn't even know what I was praying for. But, you know, sometimes you don't know what you're praying for, but God is praying through you. I tried to shake it off.

I started to walk through the house. Carol was sleeping. It was now 9 o'clock, then 10 o'clock, then 11 o'clock, then midnight.

I walked, I wept, I prayed. My heart was pounding for no reason. I tried to open my Bible to read a scripture.

I couldn't read a scripture. This thing, this like birthing a baby was on me or something. I didn't know what this was about.

It had never happened like that before. When I looked at the clock and I realized that it was 1.30 in the morning, I said, What's the sense of going up to try to sleep? I'll just go into the church and find a little empty room there. And I left a note for Carol saying, Carol, I feel like I should just go to the church.

I didn't want to alarm her. I didn't tell her a lot of the details. I just said, I'm going.

I was riding Highway 22, then onto 109, approaching the Holland Tunnel, when I realized there is no bedroom in the church. It's all taken up by that woman or daughter, by this family, by the elderly woman. Now what am I to do? It's 2.15 in the morning.

So I stopped and got a little room right near the Holland Tunnel and said, I'll try to get some sleep. But when I got in this room to just sleep, because it was too far to go back, I lay awake probably till 4, just weeping and praying. But I didn't know what I was praying for.

It was like God was preparing me for something, but I had no concept. Before God, I had no concept. I got up after sleeping a few hours.

I pulled into the church at about 9 o'clock. And after going to my little office, I went into the kitchen area. And I sat down at the table, and I can see myself now.

I made a cup of tea. And they came out of their bedroom, the husband and the wife, and they sat at the table with me, and we exchanged pleasantries. And I was sitting there, not yet 30 years old, and said, Brother, I think there's something I need to talk to you about.

He said, fine, Brother, whatever. You know, I love your church. Love your church.

Love the way your wife plays. She's got a gift, you know. I said, yeah, okay, that's great, but now I want to talk to you about something.

I would handle this differently now, but back then I'm telling you the truth, the only thing I knew. I said, Brother, the sister that stays up here, she tells me I have a problem. She tells me that you've been talking

to the members and that you told them that my time is up and that my wife and I are living high on the hog, eating steak.

This was one of the things he had said. Right, Carol? I said, I bought that steak because you came and we have no money. I have no insurance.

I've had to drop out of Social Security and years went on, I couldn't get back in. Have you been calling people? I'm embarrassed to say that the lady listened in on one phone call and I corrected her for that, but she says that you're talking nasty. But, Brother, I don't want to believe that.

The Bible says don't answer a matter until you hear both sides. He just kept his head down. And then he looked at his wife and he said, Honey, should we tell them? And suddenly she looked up with a look from another world and started saying, Yes.

And both of them got up and started to circle me. They just walked and said, You're through. God has sent us here.

We have a word from God. You'll never speak again in this church. I made a mistake by not discerning quickly.

I discerned, but I was too naive and too young. I tried to reason with them. I should have hit them over the head with a two-by-four.

I didn't mean that. Or did I? Either way. And we started at about 9.30. They circled me.

It was bizarre. It was like from a movie. I couldn't believe it was even happening to me.

I tried to reason with them. I tried to say, You call. They spiritualized everything.

They said, We've talked to the people and they believe and they agree with us that God has sent us. You're through. We've talked to them.

And they started naming people in the church. They hadn't been there 72 hours. And as God is my witness, 10.30, 11.30, we went from room to room.

I'm trying to reason with them. I'm trying to be kind. And they're just stalking me.

And this woman... You know in those movies when they're demon-possessed and the head goes around like that? She did everything but that. This little wisp, red-haired little stick of a woman turned into some kind of animal in front of me. And I couldn't... I couldn't withstand her.

I couldn't. I fought in reason. I tried to be sincere.

I was so stupid. I was so naive. I tried to reason with something that was unreasonable.

You can't reason with the devil. You can't reason with the devil. Then he would come at me and he would bring up something else.

Hours went on. At about 1 o'clock, this is from 9.30, we're going from room to room. And we sit down and I'm trying to explain and they're trying to tell me, God has spoken.

You can't defeat God. And the people know it. There's been a confirmation in people.

A sister in the church got a word that you're through from God. And I thought, maybe I am through here. Because who wants the discouragements and the battles we were fighting and no money and struggling? It was so reasonable, I can't tell you.

And then at about 1 o'clock, they said, and you know, Mrs., the lady, I won't mention her name, the elderly woman who lives here, she wants her \$15,000 today because she wants to help us. When they said that, the playground started to come out of me. And I said, what? And I ran down the hallway and I knocked on the door and this little old lady let me in and I said, sister so-and-so, have they been taught? She said, they're good people, Pastor.

I said, what are you saying? She said, and I want my money. And she pulled out an IOU with a payable upon demand that some pastor had signed. Payable upon demand.

She said, I want the money. But you know what? That went over the line with me. He was standing like where the Altos are, Esmeraldas are over there.

And I turned to him and for the first time I spoke forcibly and I said, you devil, because I realized what he had done. And suddenly when I said that as God is my witness, he lifted his hand and he started running at me with a scream like from out of hell. And he's running at me these 20, 25 feet and here's a 92-year-old woman.

And it's like, this is insane. And he's running and I just had to make a decision. What am I going to do? And I just closed my eyes and I said, God, if he's going to hit me, he's going to hit me.

But just hold me and protect me because if I pick him up, I'll throw him right outside that window three stories down. I'll kill him. I will literally kill him if you don't hold me.

I'm telling you the truth. This is not a very spiritual story. And he ran and he ran to hit me and I just closed my eyes and I thought, you know, he's going to knock me out.

He's going to do something. And he stopped like within six inches, like God just held him and he didn't strike me. But now I had total chaos.

She started crying. He's going totally off. But by me saying, you devil, something happened in me and God began to show me what I was dealing with.

And I said, you're out of here. I will call the police. You're out.

I will call the police. You can get your money, ma'am. And she got a lawyer and got her money.

And for me to get \$15,000 in those days would be like getting today a half a million dollars for this church. \$15,000. The offerings were \$85.

Literally. I said, you're out of here. Suddenly they shifted without even talking to each other and they started to butter me up and be kind.

And they said, you are a man of God. We know it and we want to work with you. Just let us stay.

I said, no. Something was telling me I got to get them out. I have to get them out.

But now they were so complimentary and the woman was saying, they're kind. They're being nice to you. How can you throw them out? I thought you were a man of God.

I thought you were a Christian. What kind of Christian throws somebody out in the street? So now I was betwixt and between. What do I do? Then the woman went and got the children who had gotten up and they were crying and she would walk in front of me and hold her little children and say, are you going to throw us out in the street? We have nowhere to go.

And I didn't know what to do. Do I throw them out? Do I let them stay? But something, like God was saying to me, if you let them stay one night there will be no church left. I was totally bewildered.

I was a mess. But I held by the grace of God. I said, no, I'll help you pack your bags.

You're leaving. You're leaving. But it took, listen.

Listen. It took two hours to get your leaving in. This all took hours.

You just didn't say you're leaving and they said, okay. It was a battle. Every inch.

I mean, it took 20 minutes to get an inch. And finally they packed their stuff. Then I looked out the window and it started to snow.

And then the elderly woman said, you're sending them out in the snow. I said, oh God in heaven. And the children were crying.

And the lady turned from the animal into this sweet, I'm telling you, I have never in my life seen anything, experienced anything like that. At about 4, 4.30, they packed themselves up in their car and they drove away. I remember looking out the window and as the car drove away, suddenly I burst into tears.

The prayer meeting that night, I couldn't even talk. But it wasn't bad because only two people came who needed to talk. Just, how you doing? How you doing? Could have had coffee.

It would have been a better meeting. I came home that night. I didn't want to scare my wife.

I couldn't get up the next morning. My wife's a witness. Listen, I've been playing basketball all my life.

I grew up in the park. I was still playing ball then. I was in shape then.

I could, you know, I could navigate. I lay down. I lay down on the sofa all day Wednesday.

All day Thursday. I couldn't get up to do anything. It's like I had fought Mike Tyson 15 rounds.

They went over to a ministry here. They went over to Teen Challenge and said, we've just come from Pastor Simbala. He highly recommends us.

And he feels we could get a job here working. Thank God the leader of the center called me and said, we got a couple here named such and such. They said that you highly recommend them.

I mean, this was like this was out there. I couldn't move the whole week. My spirit, my body, my emotions, my mind.

Brothers and sisters, listen. Don't you realize the devil saw that this would all happen one day? Listen, wait, wait. He realized the gifting he would put on my wife.

He realized the kind of caliber of people he would save and bring in this church. He knew Pastor Ware would start a prayer band. He knew one day I could write a book.

And when the baby is young. But let me close by saying this. I never shared this with my wife.

I thought it would be immodest. But you know how the devil, in one way he's wise, in another sense he's a jerk. Because in the months that came after that, and I realized what had happened, I began to wonder, you play Jonathan, why would the devil attack me so? Unless God was going to cook up something good.

In other words, if it was a dead end and if my wife and I were just never going to do anything for the Lord, why would the devil even mess with us? And suddenly, the devil's own attack on me, God began to use it to build faith in me. And I began to think, Satan, God must have something in store. Because why else would you do such a demonic thing? Even his attacks God can use to bring glory to his name.

And the next time the devil attacks you, and you feel like, Oh God, I failed the Lord. Here I just started out. I've had a personal failure.

Why did the devil come so quickly to tempt me and win a battle like this? Just remember God's got something good in store for you. The next time you get opposition from even your loved ones and they fight you, like they did Joseph, say to the devil, Devil, you must know God's going to do something. Because why would you be messing with me this way? And if you start out doing something for God and it bottoms out and there's a feeling of failure and misunderstanding, don't give up.

Because if you'll just hold, God will say, Now you will see the glory of the Lord. Let's put our hands together and praise the Lord. Hallelujah.

We bless you Lord. Hallelujah. Let our voices sing.

Listen. Everyone hold steady. Here's how we're going to go out of the building tonight.

Listen, next time the devil tells you about your past, you remind him about his future. Listen. We're going to sing that song, but here's what we're going to do.

Bow our heads. Close our eyes. There's faith.

That's the truth. He's never failed me yet. Jesus Christ.

I want every pastor and their wives to come up to the altar that's here today in the building. From our church, some of our daughter churches, associated churches are here. Come quickly.

And every worker on this staff, everybody in leadership, anybody teaching in Christian Ed, every prayer band member, get up here quickly. If you're in service here to the Lord, you get up here to the altar. Come on.

Just come. Don't anyone else move.

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