

Victory or Survival - Part 1

by Winkie Pratney

Winkie Pratney emphasizes the need for Christians to transition from a survival mindset to one of victory through righteous anger and active faith.

Duration: 28:36

Scripture: 1 Samuel 13:2, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Faith And Courage", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Saul and the Israelites facing a dangerous enemy named Nohash. The Israelites were distressed and hid themselves in caves, rocks, and pits. However, Saul took a bold and costly action by cutting up something close to him and mailing it off, which galvanized the people and unified them in the fear of the Lord. The preacher emphasizes the need for Christians to have a sense of future and to not be too nice, as being too nice does not bring about change.

Transcript

I brought some bumper stickers along to show you. Warning, live so the preacher won't have to lie at your funeral. Many who plan to seek God at the 11th hour die at 10.30. The Bible's pleased the book of 1 Samuel chapter 11.

1 Samuel chapter 11. I want to talk this morning about victory. Most of you who have known me for a long time, and those of you who don't probably won't, know that I am writing a hateful hymn book.

It is hymns I hate most. I have a choice collection of these so far, but the number one hymn in my hateful hymn book, and if it appears in any hymnals that ever appear in this church, the number one hymn I hate most is, Hold the Fort, For I Am Coming. Now I don't know what picture this gives to you of the Christian church, but the picture it gives to me is a bunch of Colonel Sanders Christians with white or yellow flags, hiding out behind a piano, saying, Play louder, I think the devil is coming.

I don't get the picture from the Bible of a group of people who are defeated, who are broken, that the devil wins. I believe in Jesus, there is victory. And victory is a dangerous word.

And this morning I want you to turn to this passage in 1 Samuel 11, and I want to tell you some steps to real victory. It is time the Christian church moved out of a survival mode. We have been so battered by the enemy, so knocked sideways by various events, we've forgotten that God allows things like this to get the

church clean and ready for battle.

And victory is not survival. I introduce you this morning to a man called Nahash the Ammonite. You can imagine what he is like by his name.

My name, Nahash. He is your basic local hell's angel Ammonite. Came into town one time on his motorbike with a... camped against a little place called Jabesh Gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, this is your basic victory type people, make a covenant with us and we will serve you.

Now here comes the enemy rolling into town with his chains and his jacket, and there is the man of Jabesh Gilead, the wimps of Jabesh Gilead, J-wimp Gilead, and they say, listen to me, we don't want any trouble, you just let us know what we do and we will serve you. Well, you know, Nahash came looking for a fight. The enemy never comes just to get covenants out of people.

He wanted a fight, so you can tell he wanted one because he said, all right, I'll tell you what, I'll make a bargain with you if you pour out all of your right eyes and give them to me. Now what was he going to do with those right eyes? String them around his neck like gooey marbles? What did he want with all those right eyes? Nahash come along not only to beat up the church but to make it blind. Because you can't really have slaves that are totally blind or they're useless, you might as well punch out one of their eyes.

And I'll tell you what is embarrassing. The elders said, give us seven days to think about it. The word victory is not the word survival.

It never has been. Survival is not taking over a nation. Survival is not winning.

I believe that we in the Christian church have begun to adopt the word survival instead of the word victory. Survival is not Christian. Survival is not finally getting healed.

Victory is not finally getting healed. It is being used of God to heal others. Victory is not staying saved.

I have been here for all these years and I'm still a Christian. Praise God. Survival is not just hanging in there so you can stay saved.

Victory is not doing that. Victory is knowing God so well that you can help others get saved. Victory is not your marriage surviving the terrible pressures that are on marriages today.

And some people, you know, the kind of world we live in, this is regarded as a living miracle that you are married still. My wife and I, you know, we never thought of divorce. Murder often, divorce never.

But victory is not having your marriage hold together. Victory is having a happy, exciting marriage. Victory is not finally having enough money.

Thank God we paid the bills this week. Victory is being delivered from poverty so you've got more than enough to help pay other people's bills. So what are you in this morning? Victory is not church growth.

That's nice. It's normal. It's a wonderful thing.

Victory is when the church becomes such a power in society that the devil checks out of town and goes somewhere else. Victory is a dangerous thing. And I introduce you this morning to one of the two heroes we look at.

This man's name is Saul. They looked for a deliverer. They looked for somebody that could help them and came the messages of Gebeah to Saul.

They told the tidings in the ears of the people and all the people lifted up their voices and wept. Saul said, why are you crying? He said, well, it's just terrible. This guy's come in and he's done all those awful things to us and we just really don't know what to do.

Haven't found anybody angry enough to help yet. You know what? I think one of the problems, and I mentioned it last time I spoke, every time I speak here, I seem to speak about stirring people up for some reason. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to just come and share it? Sort of a laid-back, mellow message.

Rest, or something like that. But you know what I think? We need to be delivered of the sin of being too nice. I have learned, and I said this last time, that when you're too nice, you don't change anything.

And the great characteristic of our time is that we don't believe we have a future. I've been going through, for my devotions, a bunch of underground albums. Names like Brain Damage, Fear.

And it seems to me the one theme that is there more than any other theme is the theme of destruction, of no future. Three things happen to you when you don't have a sense of future. The first one is you make no long-term plans.

You live day by day, and you live for the moment, and you live for survival. And secondly, you make no long-term relationships. You're afraid to commit yourself to anybody for any length of time.

Now, we belong to a generation that grew up in the 1960s when the bomb first made its impact on society. And I remember that. Those of us who were saved during that time or began ministry in that time, we don't expect to be here now.

The beast was supposed to be stamping people's hands. I had a friend who was going to make rubber hands for Christians. When the beast stamped their hand, they could just pull it off and still be free.

I said, well, if you sell any of those, you won't need rubber heads because the people who buy them will already have them. Many of us who became Christians in the 1960s, we never planned to be here, so we made no long-term plans. We didn't plan anything in that area.

We didn't plan the future. We didn't plan what we were going to be doing in 30 years. We didn't plan to die.

We didn't plan any of those things. Jesus was coming, probably tomorrow. What you had to do is go preach the gospel and, you know, shoot, he'd probably come right in the middle.

We put off marriage. We put off children. We put off all of those things.

What is the use of having a baby if the beast is going to be around? And the third thing we never did, we didn't take risks. And I believe the Christian church has been gripped by a survivalist mentality. Don't plan for the future.

Live day by day. Just hang on to what you've got now. Don't commit yourself in any length and any depth to anybody because it may be gone tomorrow.

And it is high time the Christian church learned to move out of survival and into victory. The trouble is we've got too many people like these men of Jabesh Gilead. When Mayesh rolls into town, they all cry and look for a good reason why they shouldn't get their eyes punched at.

And this is the first step to breaking down that thing. It is called rage. Now I want you to notice something.

The Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard these tidings, verse 6 says, and his anger was kindled greatly. What is the consequence of the power of the Holy Spirit coming on this young leader, Saul? Answer, he got angry, greatly angry. He was enraged.

And that is a consequence of the power of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes what we think is a lovely temperament is actually cowardice. It is afraid to confront and afraid to go to war and afraid to disagree and afraid to differ.

And the cost is our right eye. And the loss of a town or a city. Saul was mad.

He was really mad. He was mad because the Holy Spirit touched him. Is it possible to be angry because God made you angry? Yes.

God is angry with the wicked every day, the Scripture says. He never got over being angry against sin. He hates sin with a perfect hatred.

And when you're touched by the Holy Spirit, you need to get mad. Now the reason why some of you, if you've ever held on to long-term sin and have been delivered from it, is because you never got mad enough yet. You've treated it and coddled it and darlined it and it is time for you to get angry.

Now I told a bunch of kids all this year, I said, if you're going to break free of your sin, you need to get mad first of all. You need to see and hate it and then forsake it. We've had some wonderful rallies.

We've begun a new kind of rally called a total destruction rally. This is for all the headbangers. It is neat.

And I said, look, if you're going to break off from an expensive sin, some of you spent so much money on your sin, you put thousands and thousands of dollars into your addiction, and the reason why it's so hard for you to break off is because it's cost you so much. So if you're going to break off with it, you may as well have fun when you do it. None of this little side-like stuff, and with you, I think I mean, bust it properly.

So what we did is we had these major rallies. We put trash cans up in front, talked to the kids three or four days, said, get all your best stuff, man, and bring it. We're going to rip it to bits.

We're going to smash it and jump up and down on it, and we're going to help other people. You know, five or six people are going to get a hold of one thing and rip it to bits. Oh, we had wonderful times.

Shocked all the parents, but, you know, who cares? We had a good time. Some wonderful stuff. I went after one of the rallies.

I mean, kids put all kinds of stuff. One guy cut it. There were credit cards busted in half.

There was \$100 bills ripped up. There was, I mean, you know, there were CDs snapped, popped. You know, there were records looking like Frisbees.

There was all kinds of stuff. There were clothes. There were posters, and then the books, the drugs, and, you know, the switchblades and all the other stuff that people hang around with today.

And one girl came up. She carried a pair of black high-heeled shoes. She put them in the garbage can, and the ass who looked at her and she looked at him, she said, you don't know what this means, but God knows what it means, and I know what it means, and walked away.

I bet you could do a movie man on those shoes. I remember the first ministry I ever had in any length of time in this country. When I first came here, I used to live in Southern California for a short time and went to a little town called Corona.

Those of you from California know where that is. And Corona at that time was the acid capital of Southern California. All the acid flowed through Corona, and that's where the kids dealt it, and began a little Bible study there in a home with some high school kids.

And it grew, and we challenged them to begin to really reach out and get angry with the devil and get angry with sin. We had some wild prayer meetings. That little home meeting grew until there were about 80 kids, and they were swinging on chandeliers and everything.

I remember a Catholic priest coming around at 12 midnight on a Saturday, and the place was jammed out with over 80 or 90 kids. And he said, What in the world are they doing? I said, They're praying. He said, But it's Saturday night! And those kids, I never told them this.

This is how they finally wound up praying. Have you ever heard kids pray when they get released in God and they don't have these Mickey Mouse, nerdy, Abius Gilead type models? I have a friend in New Zealand I just talked to a couple of weeks ago. He started an early morning prayer meeting for some kids.

And he works with the rottenest kids in New Zealand. He comes from a place called Otara. And it's a terrible place.

It's gang warfare and violence and drugs and all this kind of stuff. It's the worst area in New Zealand. Well, he works there.

God called him the minister to these kids. So he decided that God really laid in his heart to start an early morning prayer meeting just once a week with these kids. And they get up at 5 in the morning.

They are there at that prayer meeting. It's only short. It only lasts about an hour.

They call it the Dawn Treaders. And he said, You know, it is awesome. These kids come in.

There are 89 kids now in this prayer meeting. It's just growing. And he said, I bring adults in and they get saved just listening to these kids pray.

They are so radical when they pray. They just go, Oh God! You know, and people's hair stands on end. In Corona they had a prayer meeting.

You know how those kids prayed? They prayed like this, Oh God! Revive the churches in this town or burn them down. That's how they prayed. Tell you what was funny.

Two churches had a revival. One burned down. I didn't do it.

I didn't do it. John Wesley said, Give me some men, 100 men who fear no one but God and hate nothing but sin and I will move the world. It is time the church got angry again in the right way because God has touched you.

And if some of you would be angry enough to see your sin the way God sees it and to hate it the way God hates it, you could forsake it the way God wants you to forsake it. And this is what Saul did. He was out there plowing, you know.

John was talking about with him, the Caribbean carpenter. He was out there farming and he had his oxen and stuff. He took a yoke of his oxen and he cut them up in pieces and he mailed them off for a Christmas present.

That is called angry. Oh yeah! Chop, you know, cutting an ox up into bits. Imagine you're sitting there in the morning with your eggnog.

The knock on the door, special delivery. And here comes this big package sort of dripping. Dad brings it in, puts it on the breakfast table.

The kids all crowd around. What is it? What is it? You pull off the string and you open it up and there's a big cow's head in it. You know, dead head inside that, still dripping.

And tattooed on the horns is, this will happen to you if you don't come immediately, sign Saul. This had the necessary consequences. You see, your rage is not enough, not enough to get angry.

You've got to do something. That rage must translate into resolve. And Saul took something costly and close to him and he cut it up in bits and then he mailed it off.

And it galvanized the people. It put all the tribes together. And old Nahash was run out of town with a wobble in his wheel.

And I felt pretty good. You can see it there. The fear of the Lord, verse 7, fell on the people and they came out with one consent.

You see, one of the consequences of a rage that leads to resolve is it brings a unification in the fear of the Lord. We don't have people that are together. It's because the leaders have lost the fear of the Lord and the anger of God.

And God is going to do this with the church. He's going to stir us up. He's going to make us fight.

We're not going to remember fighting as part of the Christian church. I know why the Christian church fights. Have you read this book? You can't read hardly anything in the Old Testament.

They're always fighting somebody. Israel isn't fighting Canaanites and Philistines and Ammonites and Meoites and all these otherites. They're fighting each other.

They are fighting people, these people. You know why? Because God made the church to fight. He bore it to fight.

That scripture Tracy read out about Jesus being a warrior. When he sees what is going on, some parents, they go, I don't understand why kids are so violent today. I wish they were just nice children.

Do you know why kids are violent today? Because I think a great chunk of violence is a misguided, perverted hunger for justice. They wish something was done. That's why you've got all these death wishes, one, two, three, up into the year 2049 with Charles Bronson as the granddad murderer, you know.

Why do we have all these things? Because people realize there's something going wrong and there's wrong stuff going on and nobody's saying anything and nobody seems to care and it just slides and God cares. That's why he gets angry and he puts on that warfare uniform. As Forster and Marsden point out, the armor of God is, in Ephesians, is not called the armor of God because it's just the armor God gives to you.

It is called the armor of God because it's the armor he wears. He puts on that breastplate of righteousness and he goes forward with his strong right arm. Now, if we're going to be like God, that's what God is like.

We make up a God and conform our lives to him. We will have to put up with an imaginary conversion, too. This is the real God.

This is what he's really like. He hates sin. He loves people.

He loves righteousness and hates injustice. And what happened? Men of Jabesh, Gilead got their act together. Now, I want you to go forwards, please, to another chapter.

One or two chapters. Go to 13 first, just briefly. See, they felt pretty good now.

Saul is now king. He's the boss. He's running stuff.

They've got their nation pretty much together. But then, you see, in verse 2 of 1 Samuel 13, he'd reigned two years over Israel. Saul had chosen 3,000 men of Israel.

2,000 were with Saul. Now, this place is called Mishmash. Mishmash.

You know, I love these Bible names, man. Doesn't it give you an idea? Mishmash, what is going to happen there? They're going to mish, and they're going to mash each other. That's what's going to happen, all right.

Well, Jonathan, Jonathan, he's a young guy. His dad, Saul, he's the king. He's seen his dad get angry and stand up against these Nahash and overthrowing this local little tribe, the Ammonites and Nahash, and got rid of that guy.

Now, then Jonathan does something a little bit dangerous. He takes on a Philistine garrison. Now, I don't know if you understand what this is like.

It's something like going in to the Russian embassy with Gorbachev there and shooting the place up and wearing an American flag. You know, you don't, you do not do stuff like this. The Philistines, see, Nahash is just a local bikey, right? You know, he's no big thing.

He's an Ammonite, sure, but, you know, he's just in for himself. But the Philistines were a major world power, the ruling major world power, the ones who ruled the seas. They had the best navy around.

They had a secret weapon called iron. And that is like having a Star Wars defense system. Today, I mean, you fight with a brass sword against a dude with an iron sword, you go, and he goes, and yours goes.

They had chariots of iron. You with your little wooden wagon wheels? And Jonathan, flushed with victory, hey, he really got it in his spirit. See, he didn't go, well, we've beaten the ass, but let's hold the fort.

He goes, hey, why not the Philistines? You know, he gets into them too. The Philistines heard it, unfortunately. And all Israel heard say, Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines, that Israel had an abomination with the Philistines, and the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal, and the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel.

See, and they're peacefully coexisting. Devil's not going to bother you if you don't bother him. And a guy said, devil? I never met the devil.

Guy said, no wonder you're going in the same direction. Turn around, you'll run into him fast. And this is what they put together, 30,000 chariots.

We're talking Star Wars chariots here. 6,000 horsemen. That's your basic tank.

People as the sand, which is on the seashore in multitude. Who cares about counting them? They all came out. And they came up and pitched in mishmash eastward from Beth-haven.

What is the response of these fearless Israelites now? Hey, we beat Nahash. Ah! When the men of Israel, I'm reading from the King Jimmy version, saw that they were in a straight jacket. This has to be one of the Bible's most understated lines.

For the people were distressed. That is your very basic understatement. Then the people did hide themselves in caves, thickets, rocks, high places and pits.

Hold the fort, for they are coming. You go, real estate agents sold out on caves in three hours, and they're all gone. You go past, you have funny noises coming out of holes in the ground.

You climb up a tree, there are four hairy legs coming out of the tree. Get out, this is our tree. You go past the river, there's a couple of McDonald's straws there.

This is the fearless response of Israel. And some of the Hebrews, we have four responses. You can write these down real fast if you like.

What happens when the Christian church takes a big risk and the enemy comes up against them? Well, I'll show you the four responses these guys did. Number one, 1 Samuel 14, 21, some joined the Philistines. They went down to the local bar, they partied with Spuds McKenzie and his anointing.

They gave up and threw in the towel. They went down dressed in Philistine duds, picked up some Philly light, and sat around and smirked and practiced their Philistine accent. Must have been weird for these Philistines.

They said, who are you guys? We're Philistines. We just come from another part of the world. One response to pressure is people just drop out.

Not just survival, but drop right out. Go join the Philistines. Hey, can't beat them, join them.

Two, in 1 Samuel 13, 6, some of them got into caves. Now, I believe this happens. Whenever God comes close to do something, He gets some people and they get in.

They're not just going to backslide. They will not backslide. They will not check out.

I mean, they've got too much invested to backslide. In a Christian 10 years, I'm not going to lose it now. But they don't want to go fight or anything.

What they do is they get a cave someplace close so they can observe to see how things are going. See, if Israel gets beaten up, they go, well, I knew it. I knew it was a foolhardy thing.

He should have got a word from God on that and he didn't. But they're close enough so the only good happens to go, yes, I was there. I was there when it happened.

I knew it would happen. I had, you know, that stuff. Close enough to check, not close enough to get involved.

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