

(The Full Gospel) 8. Faith, Brokenness and Victory

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, brokenness, and victory in spiritual warfare, and how to approach battles with confidence in God.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 20:12, Psalm 23:5, Psalm 139:16, Jeremiah 17:5, Romans 9:33, Romans 16:20, Ephesians 6:12, Ephesians 6:18, James 1:5

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Prayer Power"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the spiritual warfare believers face against evil forces, emphasizing the need to be wholehearted and on fire for the Lord to effectively fight against the enemy. He highlights the importance of prayer, especially for those faithfully preaching God's Word, as they are prime targets of the enemy's attacks. Using the example of King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20, Zac Poonen teaches on the power of seeking God in prayer, acknowledging our weakness, and trusting God to fight our battles. He categorizes believers into three groups based on their confidence in themselves and in God, stressing the necessity of having total confidence in God to do eternal work for Him.

Transcript

"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Every believer who is spiritually alive will find himself in the midst of a struggle with evil spirit forces. Those who are spiritually dead however will not sense this struggle, for they are like dead soldiers lying on the battlefield, whom the enemy ignores. Those who struggle with flesh and blood are also ignored by Satan, for he leaves them alone to quarrel and fight with human beings. It is only those who are wholehearted and on fire for the Lord, who are a threat to Satan, and who can fight the battles of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:18, 19 urges us to be on the alert always and to pray with perseverance for all believers, especially for those who faithfully preach God's Word, since they are the prime targets of the enemy's wrath.

An Old Testament Example

In 2 Chronicles 20, we see a picture of how we can wage this warfare against Satan. There we read of a great multitude that came against King Jehoshaphat. But Jehoshaphat did the right thing, when confronted by so many enemies. He got the whole nation of Judah to seek God in fasting and prayer. Then he prayed to God acknowledging their weakness, their foolishness and their faith.

He said, "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on Thee" (verse 12).

This is the secret of all effective prayer - to recognise our weakness and our foolishness, and to trust God utterly to fight the battle for us.

The Weakness of God's Elect

Jesus pictured "the elect" (the church) as a poor, helpless, old widow who has to fight against a strong enemy, with no human help or resources (Luke 18:

1-7). It is only when we recognise our weakness like that, that we can depend on the Lord. Only then can we exercise faith.

God curses those who lean on human resources with barrenness. He has said, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, for he will be like a barren bush in the desert" (Jeremiah 17:5).

Many are constantly defeated by sin, and overcome by Satan, only because they are strong in themselves. They have strong opinions about everyone and everything, they speak stinging words, and they are quick to judge others. God leaves such believers alone, and they never ever become overcomers.

Those who argue and dispute are certainly not weak and powerless. They are strong, and are therefore easy targets for Satan - for he always wins the battle with those who argue. That is how he won the battle with Eve in Eden. Don't ever get into an argument therefore with your husband or your wife or with anyone else - for you will never win. It is always the Devil who will win.

Those who take revenge on others also prove thereby that they are strong people capable of handling their problems themselves. The weak widow needs to plead with the judge (Luke 18:2), but strong people don't!!

Others are strong because their bank-accounts are large, or because their employers can be trusted to pay them faithfully on the first of every month. Their trust is not in God, but in man. And so they are barren.

It is only when we come to the end of our own resources that God works mightily to help us. Jesus waited until Lazarus had died - that is, when he had lost all his strength - before He came to help him. He waits on high even today, for us to come to the same zero-point.

Jehoshaphat confessed that he did not know what to do - and that is a good confession to make, for God has promised to give wisdom to all those who acknowledge their lack of it. But we have to ask for wisdom in faith (James 1:5, 6). And that was what Jehoshaphat did. He did not merely acknowledge his impotence and his lack of wisdom, He concluded his prayer with an expression of absolute trust in God. He said, "But our eyes are on Thee". In other words, he was telling God, "We are expecting you to work on our behalf".

AND GOD DID!!

Three Categories of Believers

There are three categories of 'believers' in the world:

Those who have confidence in themselves. Such believers can be identified by the fact that they pray very little or not at all. And they usually never ever fast and pray. Although they don't say so in as many words, by their prayerlessness they testify that they can handle every situation. Such believers can never do an eternal work for God.

Those who have no confidence in themselves and who have no confidence in God. They confess that they have no strength or wisdom. But they do not believe that God will work on their behalf. Such believers are usually prayerless too. Even if they do pray, their prayers are invariably without faith. Such can never do an eternal work for God either.

Those who have no confidence in themselves, BUT who have total confidence in God. They are aware of their lack of strength and wisdom, but they also believe that God will help them mightily, and do a work in them and through them. Such believers alone are truly spiritual, and only such can do an eternal work for God.

It is good for us to recognise that those in Category 2 above are just as useless to God as those in Category 1. Those in Category 2 may look more broken, but they are not - for unbelief can never be found alongside genuine Christ-like humility. Without faith it is impossible to please God, no matter how broken we may appear to be. Merely acknowledging our inability will not solve our problems. We must trust God too.

To confess that we are rotten, good for nothing, useless and foolish, is not humility, but unbelief!! If we keep on confessing that, we will remain useless forever. False humility like that is often mistaken for the genuine thing by undiscerning believers!

But Jesus told us to learn humility from Him (Matthew 11:29). And where do we find Jesus ever confessing that He was useless and good for nothing? Never.

True humility is taking the place of entire nothingness before God, so that God might be all in all. This is the place that Jesus took as a man. This is what we must do too. In that lowly place, we can trust God to do a mighty work in us and through us, and to crush Satan under our feet.

The Battle is the Lord's

As soon as Jehoshaphat finished praying, God immediately sent him a reply saying, "Do not fear, for THE BATTLE IS NOT YOURS BUT GOD'S. You need not fight in this battle. Stand and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf" (verses 15, 17).

To whom does God speak similar words today?

Only to those in Category 3, that we considered above. Pray in faith and speak words of faith, and you will find God working deliverances for you all the time. Those who trust in the Lord will find that they are never ever disappointed or put to shame (Romans 9:33). But those who confess only their helplessness will find that they are always put to shame by the enemy.

It is not enough to plough the hard ground (to repent and to be broken). We must also sow seed (the word of faith) in it, if we are to get a crop at harvest time. Those who only keep digging the hard ground without sowing any seed will get nothing. Satan would like either to stop us from digging up the hard ground at all, or to keep us digging forever till the end of our lives!!! Either way, he accomplishes his purposes.

Let us confess that God will crush Satan under our feet (Romans 16:20). Satan has no place on our tongues to make us lose our temper or to make us backbite against others. He has no place in our eyes to make us lust after women. No. His place is under our feet - ALWAYS!!

Jehoshaphat worshipped the Lord as soon as he heard those words of the Lord. The next morning he placed "singers and those who praised the Lord in holy attire" in the forefront of the army to lead Judah's soldiers to battle. And as soon as they began to sing and praise the Lord, the Lord defeated their enemies (verses 21, 22).

Praising the Lord in Holy Attire

It is the spirit of praise expressing our faith in the Lord that puts the enemy to flight. We see further in that Old Testament passage, that they praised the Lord in holy attire. This is the balance that we need in the church - the spirit of praise and holiness. In Christendom unfortunately, we find believers at two extremes in this matter.

On the one hand we find those who are not living holy lives, who praise God with loud voices and with a lot of emotion. They praise the Lord in other tongues in the meetings and then go home and shout at their wives in their mother tongues!! This is one extreme of deception. To the soulish person who has no discernment, such noise and emotions can look heavenly. But those with discernment will recognise that "all who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8), no matter how emotionally they sing in 'tongues', or how loudly they praise the Lord.

At the other extreme, we see many who sincerely judge themselves and seek to live godly lives, but who never seem to have a spirit of praise in their lives. They seem to believe only in exhorting one another all the time - and they look so serious and gloomy while they are at it!

It is written about Jesus in Hebrews 2:12 that He does two things in the midst of the church:

Proclaim the Father's Name.

Sing the Father's praise.

Jesus is not only the Messenger of the Father Who brings His Word to us, but also the Praise-leader and the Song-leader in the church.

These then are the two areas in which we must all follow Jesus as our Forerunner and Elder Brother, in the meetings of the church.

When we stand up to share the Word in the church it is the Name of our Father that we must proclaim, and not our own. We are not to stand up to show others how well we can preach, or how faithful we have been during the past week. Neither are we to hit people on their heads with some word that we have found in the Scriptures for their need!! All such preaching is earthly, soulish and demonic, and is a shameful disgrace to the Lord's Name. The testimony of Jesus alone is the spirit of all anointed prophecy

(Revelation 19:10).

We must also follow Jesus in raising our voices to praise the Father in the church. It is not enough to pray. We must praise God too. Ten lepers prayed to Jesus for healing. Only one praised Him. The proportion unfortunately is about the same in the church today.

A Thorough Victory

The result of Jehoshaphat's approach to the battle was that "not one (of the enemies) escaped" (verse 24). What that means for us is that if we approach the battle against Satan in the same way - with faith and praise - not a single one of our problems will remain unsolved. 2 Chronicles 20 begins with "a multitude of enemies (problems)", but ends with "not one enemy (problem) left". God is mightily able to resolve every single problem in our lives.

The people of Judah became rich from the spoils of battle (verse 25). And this is the way of acquiring spiritual wealth for us too.

We read further that "the dread of God was on all the kingdoms of the lands when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. So the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God gave him rest on all sides" (2 Chronicles 20:29, 30). There remains a similar rest for the people of God today too, over all the power of the enemy.

Enduring Until the End in Praise

The sad thing is that Jehoshaphat forgot what he learnt that day, and backslid and compromised towards the end of his life.

We read in 2 Chronicles 20:35 that Jehoshaphat "acted wickedly" and allied himself with idolatrous Israel once again - this time with Ahab's wicked son Ahaziah. Note that the Holy Spirit says Jehoshaphat acted wickedly and not foolishly. The first time Jehoshaphat compromised, he was foolish. The second time he was wicked. "Like a dog that returns to its vomit, is a fool who repeats his folly" (Proverbs 26:11).

Many who once learnt to "praise the Lord in holy attire", don't seem to be able to endure until the end in the same steadfastness. Somewhere along the line they compromise once again. But it need not be like that for us. God is mightily able to help us to endure until the very end.

Praising the Lord in Faith

We praise the Lord at all times and for everything, not because "it could have been worse" (as the psychologists tell their patients to say), but because "it could not have been better" - for God makes everything work for our very best (Romans 8:28). That is the praise of faith.

We can all look back at our past lives and see how God made many things that we thought would be bad for us, turn out for our very best. The Lord will do the same in the future too. If we believe that, we will praise the Lord at all times.

In Psalm 106:12, we read, "THEN they believed His words; they sang His praise". We read there that the Israelites who left Egypt could praise God only AFTER they saw all their enemies buried under the Red Sea (verse 11). That is to live by sight - to praise God after He has solved all our problems. But that was all that was possible under the old covenant, because they could not live by faith.

But now under the new covenant, our heads are anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit, and we praise God "in the presence of our enemies...because the Lord is our Shepherd and leads us beside waters of rest" (Psalm 23:5, 1, 2). We can now praise God, even when the Red Sea has not opened up for us, and when the Egyptians are hot on our heels, and when mountains hedge us up on every side. That is praise that springs from a living faith in an Almighty God.

Even in the valley of the shadow of death, we fear no evil, for we believe that not a hair on our heads can be touched by our enemies without their getting permission from our Heavenly Father. Like Jesus, we can say to our enemies, "You can have no authority over us, unless it is given you from above by our Heavenly Father" (John 19:11) Therefore we never have any reason to feel sorry for ourselves, or to complain or grumble about our circumstances or about anyone.

God can make even the blunders that we have committed to work for our very best.

God Uses those Who have Failed

Peter could become a compassionate apostle only after he had blundered and fallen into the sin of denying the Lord three times. It was certainly not God's perfect will for Peter to sin like that. But yet we see that God allowed it in order to do a work in Peter. It made him tender and sympathetic towards those who had failed in life.

Jesus never sinned even once, and yet He was infinitely compassionate and merciful towards sinners. But with the rest of Adam's race, that has not been the case. Those who have never fallen into gross sin usually end up being hard and unmerciful and haughty towards sinners.

When we look at the circumstances through which Peter fell into this gross sin, we see that God could have easily prevented him from even facing the temptation to deny the Lord. Yet God chose not to protect him from those moments of temptation.

In John 18:15-18 we see that John and Peter followed Jesus to the court of the high-priest. Since John knew the high-priest, the doorkeeper let him in. But Peter could not go in. So John came and spoke to the doorkeeper and gained admission for Peter too. That looked like a good thing at that moment. But notice the fact that Peter would not have sinned that night, if John had not got Peter into that courtyard - for it was only inside there that Peter was questioned, and that he denied the Lord three times (See John 18:17, 25, 27).

So we could ask the question, "Why did God allow that to happen? Why didn't He prevent Peter from gaining entry into the courtyard?" Was that a mistake on God's part? No. God in His sovereignty permitted John to get Peter inside, so that Peter could get an education through his failure. He could not have become the leader of the apostles and the leading evangelist of the early church without having completed this course in his education.

Satan had his agents ready to tempt Peter, but he had to get God's permission to do that. But Jesus was praying for Peter that his faith would not fail in that moment of utter failure (Luke 22:31, 32). And Jesus' prayer was answered. Peter came out of that experience a broken, compassionate man. Never again in his life would he be able to denounce sinners with harshness. Every time he was tempted to do that, he would remember his own failure and tone down his denunciations.

God can make the very worst things that ever happened in your life to work for your very best, if you have faith. During the seven weeks before Pentecost, Peter may have wished many times that John had not gotten permission for him to enter the courtyard that fateful night, so that he would not have denied the Lord. But then he would not have been broken either, and he would have been unfit to preach the gospel to sinners on the day of Pentecost.

We know that Peter still preached against sin, for he writes in his letter about following in Jesus' steps "who did no sin", and of "ceasing from sin" (1 Peter 2:2, 22; 4:1, 2). But now he preached with compassion. This was why he was given the privilege to open the door of the gospel to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and also to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. God could have used James or John in either of those instances. But he didn't. He used Peter - the one who had failed miserably - for he could speak with greater compassion to wayward sinners than those others.

David was another one like Peter. Once when he avoided going to the battlefield through laziness, he slipped up badly and fell into sin - a sin that became like a black mark against him for the rest of his life and for centuries thereafter (2 Samuel 11:1-5). The Holy Spirit records, "David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite." (1 Kings 15:5).

Yet God used David's failure to break him and to make him write Psalm 51 - a portion of inspired Scripture that has blessed millions for many centuries, more than any other writing of David's. David could never have written that psalm if he had fallen into a lesser sin. His failure had to be great and deep and known publicly, so that he might be thoroughly humbled and broken. He was a broken man for the rest of his life.

And Jesus calls Himself the Son of David!!

Brokenness Through Failure

I am not saying that we should therefore go and sin, if we are to become apostles and prophets!! No, certainly not. But if you have already failed miserably, you need not feel that there is no hope for you. You can even yet become a faithful servant of God.

God longs to give us grace, so that we might live in triumph at all times. But He can give grace only to the humble. And often He finds that He can humble us only through allowing us to fall into gross sin. That is not the best way. Jesus was humble, without ever falling into sin. But Peter and David and many other men of God have not been able to manage it, as well as Jesus did. But the wonderful thing is that God uses even Peters and Davids who have failed miserably. But only when they weep bitterly in repentance over their failures - not otherwise.

The first-century writer of "The Epistle of Barnabas" says, "When the Lord chose His apostles who were to proclaim His gospel, He chose those who were the greatest sinners of all, so that He might show that He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

What God did for Peter and David, He will do for you too.

Stop complaining then that it was because Eve gave you the fruit to eat, or that it was because John asked the doorkeeper to let you into the courtyard that you sinned. Take the blame yourself. It was certainly not the will of God that you should sin and fail. But now that you have failed, God can make even that work for His glory and for your good - to make you a broken man, so that you will never again be hard

on others for the rest of your life. So praise the Lord. Overcome Satan then by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of your testimony. Speak the word of faith, and be a broken man, like Peter and David, for the rest of your days.

God planned our lives even before we were born. David says, "You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book. How precious it is, Lord, to realize that you are thinking about me constantly! I can't even count how many times a day your thoughts turn towards me. And when I waken in the morning, you are still thinking of me!" (Psalm 139:16-18 - TLB).

That means that God has a diary in heaven for you with your name on the cover. That diary records what His plan for your life is - for every single day. Centuries before you were born, He had already written down who your parents were going to be, and which country you would be born into, and the circumstances that He would arrange to bring you to Christ. It is also written in that diary what trials He would take you through in order to give you a spiritual education. And also how He would make your blunders to work for His glory. All you have to do now is to ask God to show you each day what is recorded in that diary for you. Tell Him that you want to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven, since you can never make a better plan for your life than the one that God has already made for you.

Praise the Lord for such a wonderful Father that we have in heaven and for such a wonderful gospel by which Satan is crushed under our feet, and his accusations against us nullified completely.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-full-gospel-8-faith-brokenness-and-victory/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net