

THE KING
HAS ONE MORE MOVE

PATRICIA L. HULSEY

The King Has One More Move
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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED

TO MY MOTHER

DELLA LEAH WYCKOFF

WHO LEARNED IN THE TWILIGHT DAYS

OF HER LIFE

THE KING HAS ONE MORE MOVE!

-PATRICIA HULSEY

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CHECKMATE

The painting hung in an obscure corner of the old museum. Most people passed it by with just a glance and then moved on to better-known works or to something more esthetic, like landscapes or portraits.

The unusual painting depicts two people with a chess board set up between them. Playing pieces were lined up: The king, queen, pawn, bishops, knights, and rook. Legend has it that one person represents the devil and the other a young man, who is obviously not doing well in the game. With a smirk on his face, the devil believes he has the man cornered. The painting is entitled “Checkmate” because the young man seemingly has no moves left. The game is over, and the devil is waiting for an admission of defeat.

One day, an international chess champion visited the art museum, stood in front of the painting, and studied it thoughtfully for a long time. Finally, he called the museum curator over and said to him, “Sir, you need to contact the artist of this painting immediately!”

“Why? Whatever for?” questioned the curator.

“Because the title of the painting is incorrect. It isn’t checkmate, because the king has one more move!”

Are you facing what seems to be a checkmate in life? If so, then this book did not find its way into your hands by accident. God wants you to know that things are not as dark as they seem. It isn’t over. You are not defeated, because the King has one more move!

CHECKMATE SITUATIONS

Life is filled with what appears to be checkmate situations. At least, that is what Satan wants you to think!

-You may have been told that you have an incurable illness. Doctors have said that there is no hope and no medical recourse. Your days are numbered.

-You may be holding legal papers in your hands that spell out the terms of your divorce. As you read through the tears, you are feeling that life as you knew it is over.

-Your heart may be broken by a wayward son or daughter or an unsaved spouse or parent. Their eyes are blinded to the truth of the Gospel and they are drifting farther and farther away from you.

-You may be suffering financial ruin. Through calamity, your security and standard of living have been suddenly swept away.

-You may be reading this book in prison. Perhaps you are serving life without parole or you are on death row. You are wondering if there is any purpose remaining for your life, any hope of a meaningful future.

-Perhaps you can't seem to get free from the abuse you have suffered. You have wrestled for years with rejection, bitterness, or unforgiveness. Perhaps you are struggling with guilt and shame over things you did in the past.

-If you have recently lost a loved one through death, you are facing the ultimate checkmate. Right now, you may feel like life isn't worth living.

These are all examples of checkmate situations, difficult circumstances which erect a seemingly impenetrable barrier. These are the stop signs of life.

If you are like most people, you will not experience a checkmate just once in your lifetime. You will repeatedly come up against situations where it seems like all is lost and the enemy has won.

That is when you must remember that it isn't over yet. You must visualize the classic painting called "Checkmate" and realize that the King has one more move. In fact, the entire Word of God is a record of moves by our King. God always has the last move.

CHAPTER ONE

A Message In The Sand

The Adulterous Woman: The Checkmate Of Sin

The woman was caught in the act of adultery, and the religious leaders were livid with anger. An unruly mob pushed her roughly through the crowd to Jesus:

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. (John 8:3-6)

This poor woman symbolizes all of those in the world who are bound by sin and condemned by society. "She deserves to die," the scribes and Pharisees declared. The adulterous woman trembled under the harsh accusations of these legalistic religious leaders. Her reputation was shattered. Her hope was gone. Checkmate!

Perhaps you feel like this adulterous woman. Because of your sins and failures, others have written you off. Society has rejected you. Angry and judgmental, they have declared you guilty as charged.

Jesus did not deny this woman's guilt or suggest a rehabilitation program. He did not argue with the scribes and Pharisees or start gathering up stones to join them. Jesus

didn't say a word, but He stooped down and began to write on the ground:

But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. (John 8:8-9)

We don't know what Jesus wrote in the sand, but we do know this: Something these religious leaders witnessed caused them to quietly steal away.

When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:10-11)

When it seemed all hope was gone and final judgment for this woman was eminent, Jesus blotted out her sins, freed her from condemnation, and released her from a life of bondage to go and sin no more.

Jesus told the woman, "You are no longer condemned." Do you long to hear these same words? Does your heart cry out for release from the shackles of sin and shame? Has religion or society declared that you deserve to die for your wrongdoing? Are people around you picking up stones to hurl at you because of your failures?

Don't give up. Don't turn away in despair. The King, Jesus Christ, has one more move. God's message to you is just as powerful as the unknown words Jesus wrote in the sand that day many years ago. His message to you was written in His blood on the cross of Calvary. It declares:

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.
(John 3:16-17)*

If you do not know Christ as your Savior, you are condemned to death just like the adulterous woman: "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 6:23).

Sin has labeled your life with a big checkmate, but God is greater than your sin. Let Jesus write His message of love and forgiveness upon your heart today. Repent of your sin and let the King make His move in your life. Let Him speak a second opinion over your life. The Bible declares:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

You must make the Lord Jesus Christ the King of your life, which means you must give Him your total allegiance and worship.

Maybe you feel like your sin was so great that God can't forgive you. For years, our ministry has worked with prison inmates, some of whom have committed multiple murders, several of whom have killed their own children. We have

seen God forgive every kind of crime. We have seen thousands of broken lives and hearts mended. We have even heard the final witness of death row inmates who went to the death chamber rejoicing because their sins were forgiven and they would soon be ushered into the presence of the King.

Your sins are not too great. The checkmate of sin in your life is not the end. The King has one more move. Let Him make it today!

CHAPTER TWO

A Tarnished Relationship

David: The Checkmate Of Broken Fellowship

The Old Testament account of King David's sin with Bathsheba illustrates the checkmate of broken fellowship with God.

One afternoon, King David arose from a nap to walk on the roof of the palace where the cool breezes offered relief from the heat of the day. David actually should not have been relaxing in the luxury and ease of the palace, for Israel was at war and it was the duty of kings to lead the battle.

From the palace roof, David saw a beautiful young woman bathing. This pause in the way of temptation, like that of Eve on the path winding by the tree of knowledge, plunged David into a devastating cycle of sin which resulted in broken fellowship with God.

Despite the fact that Bathsheba was another man's wife, David brought her to the palace and had intimate relations with her. A short time later, Bathsheba sent word to David that she had conceived a child from their adulterous union.

The news that Bathsheba was pregnant panicked David. Her husband, Uriah, was one of David's mighty men and a national hero (2 Samuel 23:39). David also knew that, according to the law, he and Bathsheba deserved death by stoning.

Trying to conceal his sins, David sent for Uriah to come back to Jerusalem and bring news of the battle. David wine and

dined Uriah and encouraged him to spend the night with Bathsheba, but Uriah refused this pleasure:

And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives I will not do this thing." (2 Samuel 11:11)

Manipulation having failed, David conceived an even more diabolical plan. He sent orders to the commander of the army to set Uriah in the front of the hottest battle and then abandon him to the enemy. One sin led to another in David's life. First there was transgression, then manipulation, and then murder. If you don't deal with sin at its inception, it continues to spread like a cancerous lesion. Sin begets sin.

After Uriah was killed in battle and Bathsheba properly mourned his death, David sent for her to come to the palace and she became his wife. It appeared for a while that David got away with adultery and murder, but the Bible records that *"the thing David had done displeased the Lord"* (2 Samuel 11:27).

You may think you get away with sin, but you really don't and, for sure, if you continue in known sin, your relationship with God will be affected. Psalm 32 describes David's condition in his unrepentant state when His relationship with God was tarnished:

When I kept silent, my bones grew old, Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. (Psalm 32:3-4)

David was depressed, guilty, and even suffered physical effects from his sin. God's convicting power was at work in David, for he acknowledges that the Lord's hand was *"heavy upon me."* God loves His children so much that He won't let them continue living in an unrepentant state.

Several months after David's sin, the Prophet Nathan came knocking at the palace door. Nathan used a parable to expose David's unconfessed sin. It was a moving story of a poor man who raised a lamb as a beloved pet and a rich man with many flocks and herds. When a traveler came to visit the rich man, he refused to kill his own animals to prepare dinner, but instead slaughtered the lamb that was dearly loved by the poor man.

This parable aroused David's anger and he said to Nathan, *"As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!"* (2 Samuel 12:5). A poignant hush fell over the throne room as Nathan said to David:

"You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives...the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife!'"
(2 Samuel 12:7-9)

Nathan declared to David:

- You have despised the commandment of the Lord.
- You have done evil.
- You have killed.

-You have taken another man's wife.

Here is David, who as a lad defeated a giant on the battlefield, but as a king failed in the confrontation with the giant of lust. The warrior who slew thousands of enemy forces is now taken captive by sin. Here is the "man after God's own heart," (1 Samuel 13:14) the sweet psalmist of Israel, with shameful accusations reverberating down the halls of his palace. Checkmate!

To break the checkmate of a tarnished relationship and restore your fellowship with God, you must do what David did. He repented of his sins and asked God to forgive him. If your relationship with God has been broken by sin, pray David's prayer right now:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and

uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. (Psalm 51:1-13)

David suffered the tragic consequences of his sin. The child that was born to him and Bathsheba died. But not long afterwards, Bathsheba conceived again and another son was born to them. They named him Solomon, which means “peaceful.” His birth was a token of God being at peace with David once again. This young man succeeded his father to the throne and was the wisest ruler that ever reigned in Israel.

Restoring Fellowship With God

There was a young woman named Kathryn who, like David, lost fellowship with God because of her sin. Called of God to evangelistic ministry, Kathryn was used powerfully in the word of knowledge and healing ministries. In the course of her ministry travels, Kathryn met a young man, also a minister, and a mutual attraction developed into plans for marriage. There was only one problem: The man was already married.

This young minister left his wife and children, married Kathryn, and, like King David, there were no immediate reprisals for their sin. At first they were happy and continued on in ministry, but soon Kathryn noticed a change. No longer did she experience the tremendous anointing for healing and deliverance, and she continually wrestled with feelings of guilt and shame.

Eventually, Kathryn realized she could not minister with God's anointing while remaining in this sinful union. She repented of her sin, asked God's forgiveness, and she and her husband agreed to go their separate ways. The ensuing scandal bred gossip and shame, but the young woman

persevered and when her relationship with God was restored once again, multitudes of people were impacted.

This woman was none other than Kathryn Kuhlman whose ministry resulted in a multitude of healings documented by medical professionals and thousands of conversions to Jesus Christ. A tremendous anointing flowed through her life, as she was gifted with an unprecedented pure word of knowledge and powerfully used by God to impact her generation.

From the time of her divorce until the day of her death, Kathryn went by "Miss Kuhlman". "Don't you think that is deceitful?", she was once asked. "After all, you were married and divorced."

"Absolutely not," said Kathryn. "When God forgives, He forgets, and it is as though it never happened. In God's sight I *am* Miss Kathryn Kuhlman."

Like David, you may suffer the consequences of your sin. The "child"--your vision, your relationship with someone, your position in ministry--may be lost because of your transgressions. People may not be willing to forget or forgive your failures. Your fellowship with God will surely be affected until you repent.

But God isn't finished blessing your life. Failure is not an eternal checkmate because the King has one more move. He is just waiting to restore you to fellowship with Him and to birth your "Solomon."

CHAPTER THREE

The Scarlet Thread

Rahab: The Checkmate Of Unsaved Loved Ones

In Joshua chapters 2 and 6, there is a story about a woman named Rahab. From these passages we learn that the Israelites' journey from Egypt to Canaan, detailed in Exodus through Deuteronomy, concluded as the people reached their destination. They were camping on the eastern side of the Jordan River, on the plains of Moab, just north of the Dead Sea.

Joshua assumed leadership of God's people to direct the occupation of their promised land of Canaan and dispatched two spies to survey the fortified city of Jericho, the first target of their invasion. Unlike the venture of the twelve spies recorded in Numbers 13, the object of this mission was not to determine whether they should enter Canaan, but *when* and *how* it should be done.

Jericho, the ancient "city of palms" to which the spies were sent, was a prosperous and populous city surrounded by two great walls. These walls represented the city's greatest strength and it would be necessary to breach or destroy them to take the city. According to archaeological findings, there was a space of twelve to fifteen feet between these walls. Timbers were laid from one wall to the other and houses of sun-dried bricks were constructed to bridge the space between them.

Built over this gap between the two walls of Jericho was the house of a woman named Rahab who was a harlot. There was a constant stream of visitors in and out of her house and this

probably influenced the spies to seek refuge there. They presumed that two strangers would not be noticed and the character of the woman was of no particular concern to them.

The presence of these men did not go undetected, however:

And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country." So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country." (Joshua 2:2-3)

Rahab took the men to the roof of her house and hid them with stalks of flax that were laid out for drying and processing. When the king's messengers arrived she told them:

"Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them." (Joshua 2:4-5)

After the departure of the king's messengers Rahab went up to the roof and addressed the spies:

"I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as

we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." (Joshua 2:9-13)

The two spies agreed to this request and Rahab helped them escape over the city wall from a window in her home. The spies told Rahab to hang a scarlet cord from the window through which they escaped so they could easily identify her house and spare her and her family from destruction when Israel invaded Jericho.

Having eluded the enemy, the spies returned from Jericho and declared to Joshua:

"Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us." (Joshua 2:24)

A few days later, God parted the Jordan River and the Israelites walked across on dry ground. The people of Jericho peered across their walls to see a crowd of Israelites walking around the city in a silent procession. For six days, the strange ritual was repeated. On the seventh day, the people walked silently around the city again, but this time at the conclusion of their hike seven priests with trumpets blew their horns. The people shouted, the earth trembled, foundations cracked, and walls which had safeguarded the city for years collapsed.

Remember now, Rahab's house was built on the walls. What tremendous faith she demonstrated to remain in her house while the walls of the city were shaking and crumbling in the dust. But there she stayed, Rahab and her entire family--and from the window of their home fluttered the scarlet cord. Then Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the country:

"Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. (Joshua 6:22-23)

This example is a great spiritual parallel of household salvation. Rahab interceded for her family, and they were saved. Biblical records reveal that this woman later became the wife of Salmon, a prince of Judah. She gave birth to Boaz who married Ruth, who bore a son named Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David, through whose line came Jesus Christ. Rahab is listed among the ancestors of the Lord in Matthew 1:5. James commends her for the faith demonstrated by her works (James 2:25). Paul enrolls her in the hall of fame of the faithful, declaring:

By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. (Hebrews 11:31)

The scarlet cord from Rahab's window was a symbol of redemption through the blood and the promise of God, *"When I see the blood I will pass over you"* (Exodus 12:13). Rahab claimed this promise for herself and her entire household. Even when it seemed all hope was gone and the very walls

upon which her home was built were crumbling, Rahab's faith remained intact.

Have you prayed for years for your loved ones, without visible results? Are you interceding for a lost son or daughter, parent, or spouse? Do you feel like you are up against a big checkmate in this area?

Don't you dare give up on them! When you pray for their salvation, you are spiritually placing the scarlet thread of the blood of Jesus Christ over your household. When Paul and Silas ministered to the Philippian jailer, they told him:

*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.
(Acts 16:31-34)*

Begin to claim this promise every day. Come against the checkmate that Satan has erected in the lives of your lost loved ones by declaring, “I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am saved, and my household will be saved!”

The King's Move In My Household

I was saved when I was ten years old and from that date on, I began to pray for my mother's salvation. When my grandmother died, she left a note on her bedside table asking me to be sure that my sister, Cathy, and my mother made it to Heaven.

My sister wasn't serving the Lord for a time in her early years, but came back to her faith later on. She recommitted her life to the Lord, returned to school, and obtained her college diploma and a master's degree. The day she died of a brain aneurysm at age forty-eight, she had been scheduled to speak at her church. Cathy made it safely home to heaven.

All through the years, however, the more I prayed for my mom, the worse it seemed in the natural. She became more hardened and hostile. On one occasion, she told me: "Don't ever speak to me again about God. When I die, if you look in my casket and there is sweat on my brow, you will know where I went!"

Over the years, my mom went through three divorces, and both my sister and I left home as soon as we were old enough because of the negative environment. I came very close several times to just walking away from my mom totally because of her abusive behavior. I even had Christian friends tell me I was an "enabler", like those who stay with alcoholic spouses and put up with their behavior. But I just couldn't give up on her because I felt somehow I was my mom's link to God. I kept praying for her. I kept claiming God's promise of household salvation.

Mom was a chain smoker, and it literally destroyed her health. At age eighty-two, she had many smoking-related diseases: Crippling arthritis, osteoporosis, a congestive heart condition, and chronic pulmonary disease. For many years, my mom had a mental condition and she was also affected by demonic spirits. She once told me she had actually seen the devil. It was sometimes hard to distinguish her mental problems from the spirits, although we actually heard the demonic spirits speak out at times.

In the latter days of her life, my mom was taken to the hospital with pneumonia and bronchitis and she was spitting up blood. When she entered the hospital, she was delusional, combative, and eventually assaulted two nurses. They had to put her in restraints with a full-time sitter in the room.

Earlier that year, my pastor at the time, Rev. Roger Leach, had shared the story of checkmate and the fact that the King has one more move. As I drove from our home in Madera in Central California to the hospital in Southern California, I knew I was going into a checkmate situation. My mom was delusional. Could she even be reached with the Gospel? All the way of my four-hour journey, every time I tried to pray the phrase kept echoing in my spirit, “The King has one more move!”

When I arrived at the hospital, I went first to the hospital chapel to pray before going upstairs to my mom’s room. Again, I kept hearing that reassuring phrase in my spirit, “The King has one more move.”

When I got to my mom’s room, the health care worker took a break and left the room. Mom knew who I was, but then she started telling me this bizarre story of something she thought had happened which she perceived as being real. She told me about these people who had tried to take her captive and imprison her. “All of a sudden, I started screaming for you,” she said. “When I did, I heard a voice behind me say, ‘I’ve come for my bride.’”

When she said this, I felt the presence of the Lord literally flood that room. What my mom had experienced was actually a battle in the spirit world over her soul. When she started screaming for me, the intercessor, it brought in the presence of God. Jesus was the One who she had heard declare, “I’ve come for my bride.”

Suddenly, she looked at me, totally in her right mind, and said, “Now I don’t know what to do.”

“I know exactly what to do,” I answered.

“What?” she asked.

“It is time for you to receive my forgiveness,” I said. (Actually I had given it years ago, but she would not discuss past issues and receive or extend forgiveness.) “It is also time for you to forgive me and to get forgiveness of your sins and get prepared to go to Heaven,” I continued.

“Do you believe in God?” I asked her.

“Yes,” she said.

“Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His Son, and that He died for your sins?”

“Yes,” she answered.

“Will you pray with me right now for God to forgive your sins and make you ready for Heaven?” I asked.

“Absolutely!” she declared.

I took her hand and prayed the sinner’s prayer with her, asking God to forgive her sins and for Jesus to become her personal Savior. When we were finished, for the first time in my adult life (and perhaps ever, for I do not remember it as a child), my mother looked directly at me and said, “I love you!”

After our prayer, I barely made it out the door of her room before dissolving into tears. I got into my car and drove to

the cemetery where my grandmother, grandfather, sister, and niece are buried. I sat down by my grandmother's grave and told her, "It's done!" Satan thought he had a checkmate, but the King had one more move to make in my mom's life and He had just made it!

In subsequent conversations with my mom, we discussed Heaven and the fact that she would be with her parents, my sister, and her granddaughter again. From the time of our prayer until her death, she slept peacefully without a health care worker in the room.

A few weeks later Mom fell and broke her hip, and it became apparent that she must go to a skilled nursing facility. She was given three months to live due to lung cancer, but just a week later Jesus came for His bride and she went quietly to be with the Lord.

For all of you who are holding on for the salvation of parents, children, spouses, or others, don't ever give up on them! I had prayed for my mother for forty-eight years before the King made His final move. Keep on believing despite impossible situations.

As Winston Churchill said at the time of England's darkest war-time hour, "Never, give up. Never, never, never give up!" The admonition to you is the same. Don't stop praying. Do not ever give up. Don't let Satan write checkmate over their lives. It isn't over yet, because the King has one more move!

CHAPTER FOUR

Raising The Roof For Jesus

The Lame Man: The Checkmate Of Hindering Circumstances

There are many barriers in life that would create a checkmate to prevent you from experiencing God's fullness. If you are to experience all God has for you, then you must learn to press beyond these limitations.

In the book of Mark, there is the story of a lame man who had to break through several barriers to overcome the checkmate Satan had placed in his life:

And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he (Jesus) was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee;

or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.” And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, “We never saw it on this fashion.” (Mark 2:1-12)

In a parallel account of this story in Luke chapter 5, it states that the power of the Lord was present to heal because Jesus was sharing God’s Word with the crowd (verse 17). Many Pharisees, doctors, and scribes were present too, but healing came through the Word of God, not these professionals and religious leaders. Only God’s Word can eliminate the checkmates of life.

When Jesus is in the house, it creates expectation that things can change. People are attracted to hear the Word because of the demonstration of God’s power. That’s why the house was so crowded. The Bible says you are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). This means Jesus is in your spiritual house. Is the power of God operating in your “house” to attract others to the King?

The sick man in this account had many obstacles to overcome to get to King Jesus. The checkmates that he faced are similar to the barriers you must overcome in order to prepare for the King to move in your life.

A human barrier. Crowds blocked the way to Jesus. Think for a minute: What is the human barrier standing between you and your miracle? Is it words of unbelief spoken by others? Is it doubt and fear? Is it a person, an unholy relationship?

A physical barrier. This man did not have the physical ability to get to the Master. He was bedfast, and the house was so packed with people that there was no room left, not even outside the door. Checkmate! Sometimes you, too, will be totally hemmed in by your circumstances. This man and his friends would not be stopped, however. The friends took him up to the roof, raised up a portion of it, and let him down through the opening to Jesus.

Whatever it took, this man was going to get into the presence of the King. Do you have that kind of determination, or are you allowing yourself to be stopped by the checkmate of your negative circumstances? God may also want to use you to spiritually “raise the roof” for someone else, to break through the checkmate in their lives, and escort them into the presence of the King. Will you be a partner for their deliverance?

A barrier of tradition. Ripping off the roof and lowering the man to Jesus definitely broke up the order of the service being conducted in the little house. We should never be so bound to our programs and plans that we fail to meet human need. When you get desperate enough about the checkmate of your circumstances, you won't worry about tradition. All you will be concerned about is getting into the presence of the King so He can move in your life.

A material barrier. It became necessary for the roof to be sacrificed. Sometimes you can only break through the checkmate of circumstances by putting aside your rational, logical, materialistic reasoning. Sometimes it is costly. Ripping up the roof cost someone money! Are you willing to do whatever it costs to get into the presence of the King?

A barrier of preconceptions. These men had brought their friend to receive healing, but Jesus said, "*Thy sins be forgiven thee.*" These friends had to lay aside preconceptions of what

they thought should happen in order for deliverance to come. Jesus saw the faith of these friends, but the sick man's sin was an obstacle to his deliverance. This man was physically sick, but there was also spiritual sickness caused by sin. Jesus dealt with his sin first. He always deals with root causes, not just surface symptoms. In this case there was need for an inward change, the forgiveness of sins. Curing his sin was curing the disease of his soul. Then Jesus dealt with his physical condition. Your task is not to tell the King how to move. It is simply to eliminate all the barriers and get into His presence so He can move in your behalf.

A spiritual barrier. Sin had erected a spiritual barrier between this man and God. We know this by the fact that Jesus forgave his sins as well as healed his body. Are there spiritual issues of sin, unforgiveness, bitterness, etc., that have erected a barrier between you and the King? If so, eliminate these by asking God to forgive you.

A religious barrier. Religious enemies turned this incident into a theological dispute. You may need to break through the barriers of religion, even the treasured rituals you may have been raised with, in order to have the King move in your life.

There was a dispute as to whether Jesus had authority to forgive sins or not. While this clamor was occurring, Jesus said to the man, *"I say unto thee."* You must be able to hear the voice of Jesus above the noise of the crowd of disputing religious spirits around you in order to break through your checkmate circumstances.

A mental barrier. This man was resigned to being bedfast for the rest of his life. Maybe you have been in checkmate circumstances so long that you have lost hope that things can change. Hebrews 11:1 says, *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Hope gives

substance to your faith. You probably are not suffering a faith crisis, but rather a hope crisis. Ask God to eliminate mental barriers and renew your hope so that your faith will have substance.

A barrier of impossibilities. This man overcame the barrier of impossibilities when he responded in obedience, took up his bed, and walked. Friends can help you to Jesus, but there is a time when you must rise up and overcome the checkmate of your circumstances in the power of the Lord. When Jesus told the man to arise, take up his bed, and go to his house, the man did so immediately and departed giving glory to God.

Breaking The Barriers

Which of these barriers are standing between you and your miracle, your healing, the restoration of your relationships, your hopes and dreams, your ministry?

- A human barrier?
- A physical barrier?
- A barrier of tradition?
- A material barrier?
- A barrier of preconceptions?
- A spiritual barrier?
- A religious barrier?
- A mental barrier?
- A barrier of impossibilities?

What are the negative circumstances that have you trapped in your checkmate situation?

Determine right now that you will break through every barrier of hindering circumstances. Begin to raise the roof spiritually, so to speak, to get to the King. Ask God to help you identify and deal with every barrier Satan has erected. Break through

every checkmate circumstance to get to the King, and then watch Him make His move to change your life.

Jesus is King over every negative circumstance. He is King over your crisis. There is a miracle in the making for you, because the King is coming by where you are right now and is ready to make another move in your life.

CHAPTER FIVE

When You Don't Know What To Do

Jehoshaphat: The Checkmate Of Satanic Attacks

A hazy sun was obscured by the smoke of numerous fires, casting an eerie morning light over the streets of Nairobi, Kenya.

The scene from my third floor hotel room was one of complete devastation. Car windows were smashed, buildings were riddled with bullets, stores were ransacked, and dead bodies lay in the streets. After nineteen years of peace, the city of Nairobi was caught in the crossfire of a bloody coup between rival military powers attempting to overthrow the government.

That day we were scheduled to start a training institute for African Christian leaders from all over the continent. The administrator of the facility we were renting for the institute was frightened by the coup and did not want us to open the sessions. Due to anti-American sentiment, the Kenyan government was advising Americans to flee the country if they could find a way out. A Swiss airline crew staying in the hotel where I was residing offered me a ride to another city from where I could catch a flight to America, and I was seriously considering it. Our national coordinator and the African delegates, however, wanted to open the training institute as scheduled. The final decision was mine, but what should I do?

To be honest, I gave serious consideration to hopping a plane back to the safe haven of my California home, but would this be wisdom or a cowardly retreat? Should I remain in Nairobi

and open the institute as scheduled, despite the danger? If I did, it could cost someone's life--maybe mine!

What should I do?

We are taught that to find God's will we should pray, study the Scriptures, listen to the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, seek Christian counsel, and analyze the circumstances. But what happens when there is no angelic visitation, no audible voice from God, no supernatural manifestation, no time to seek counsel, and you are under attack by the enemy?

In 2 Chronicles 20 the Bible records the story of a man who faced such a dilemma. A formidable enemy was rapidly advancing to invade King Jehoshaphat's nation. As the massive army marched towards him, Jehoshaphat fearfully acknowledged that he had no strategy to face the enemy. He didn't have time to search the Scriptures, make an appointment with a Christian counselor, or wait for circumstances to work out.

Jehoshaphat's story begins with confusion but ends in conquest, because he learned how to deal with the checkmate attacks of the enemy. Once you understand the strategies Jehoshaphat used, you can apply them to every checkmate situation you encounter, when you don't know what to do.

That terrifying day in Nairobi I decided to open the training institute as scheduled, despite the continuing coup and governmental warnings. Hundreds of African delegates got on their faces before God and interceded for Kenya until, some fifty-two hours later, the government triumphed and President Daniel Moi publicly gave glory to God for restoring peace to his nation. That day, I learned that my life, the spiritual destiny of others, and perhaps even that of an entire

nation may be profoundly affected by how I respond to the checkmates of the enemy.

Here is a description of the checkmate that King Jehoshaphat faced:

It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat. Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the seas, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is En Gedi). (2 Chronicles 20:1-2)

There are always “some” with a bad report. The biblical record is filled with their gloomy proclamations:

-Moses received a bad report concerning the dangerous depths of the Red Sea which blocked Israel’s exodus from Egypt (Exodus 14:10-16).

-The woman with the issue of blood had sought help for many years, to no avail. The physicians had given her no hope. There was nothing else that they could do for her (Mark 5:25-324).

-A righteous man named Job seemed to have a propensity for bad news. He received word that his children had been killed and his servants and herds captured by the enemy. In addition, he had a wife who seemed to delight in emphasizing these negative reports (as if Job needed someone to tell him how bad things were). Her advice was to “curse God and die” (Job 1-2).

-As Jarius hurried towards home bringing Jesus to his ailing daughter's side, his servant met him with the tragic news that the child was already dead (Mark 5:35).

Have you received a bad report? Are you being sued for divorce or battling for custody of your children? Are you facing financial ruin? Is your health failing and the prognosis dismal? Is the enemy of your soul on the attack? Your bad report may be similar to that received by Jehoshaphat--you are surrounded by enemies. Your bad report may be a written document similar to the threatening letter received by King Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:14). Perhaps your evil report is in human form, someone who is doggedly pursuing you as Queen Jezebel did the Prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19).

Whatever the form of your bad report, whoever the source, and regardless of its message, you must recognize that behind every attack of the enemy there is a spiritual cause.

In Jehoshaphat's case, he was a godly man who was trying to lead the people in the ways of the Lord (1 Kings 22:41-44). Details of Jehoshaphat's administration of the kingdom of Judah are recorded in 2 Chronicles chapters 17-19. Jehoshaphat immediately strengthened Judah's military forces, sent priests and Levites throughout the kingdom to teach God's law, and established a righteous judgment system.

When a man chooses God's way, it won't be long until his commitment is challenged. This is exactly what happened in the account recorded in 2 Chronicles 20 which opens with the phrase, "*It happened after this...*" After what?

-After Jehoshaphat committed to walk God's way.

-After he reestablished righteous judgment and instruction in God's law.

-In the midst of delighting himself in the Lord.

That is when he received the bad report of the enemy's plan. When you are doing your best to live for God, ordering your life and ministry by His Word, and establishing yourself in holiness, that is when Satan and his demonic forces launch their fiercest attacks.

The multitude that was coming against Jehoshaphat was a formidable alliance consisting of the Moabites, Ammonites, and others with them. It was truly a checkmate situation!

When Jehoshaphat heard that the enemy surrounded him, he cried out to God saying, *"We have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us, nor do we know what to do"* (2 Chronicles 20:12). This is not the way most of us talk today. We boast of our great power in the face of adversity. We declare, "Greater is He that is within me than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4), but at the first hint of disaster, we retreat in fear and dismay. We really don't know what to do, but we act like we know it all. Jehoshaphat, however, humbly admitted his dependence on God.

Think for a moment. What is the composition of the "great multitude" you are facing? You may think your "multitude" is a person who is making your life miserable. If you are a pastor controlled by a carnal church board, you may consider them to be your "great multitude". Children out of control, an abusive spouse, or hostile co-workers. Who do you think composes the "great multitude" generating your bad report?

If you identified any of these--your spouse, children, co-workers, or controlling and abusive people around you--then you are wrong. Your enemy is not those rising up against you. Your real foes are only disguised in "flesh and blood" and as long as you perceive your battle to be on a natural level you will continue to be terrorized by the enemy.

Behind every "great multitude" and every "bad report" there are spiritual causes. The Apostle Paul explains that:

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

Your enemy is not your spouse, your co-worker, or your abuser. Your enemy is the controlling power behind them, the forces of Satan and his demonic hosts. Their strategy is similar to the enemy alliance Jehoshaphat faced, because "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10).

You face a spiritual enemy with spiritual strategies. This is why the Apostle Paul declares: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Here are the strategies Jehoshaphat used in his checkmate situation, strategies that you, too, can employ as you face your own enemy.

Replace fear with faith. The Bible says: "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah" (2 Chronicles 20:3).

Jehoshaphat's first response to the checkmate of the enemy was fear. Centuries later our immediate response to difficult circumstances has not changed. When we receive a bad report or face a multitude of problems, when we don't know what to do, we usually respond with fear. Impossible situations are never resolved by fear, however, so the first thing you must do when you don't know what to do is replace fear with faith.

Every area of your life is either governed by faith or fear. In the face of impossible situations for which you have no answer you will either be mobilized by faith or conquered by fear. Fear binds and renders you ineffective to deal with the difficulties of life. Fear paralyzes, but faith energizes.

Faith comes by hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17); keeping your mind on God instead of the problem (Isaiah 26:3); and acting in faith instead of fear (James 2:26).

Rise up to seize your destiny. The Bible says: "*Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court*" (2 Chronicles 20:5).

Jehoshaphat arose, right in the midst of a fearful people; right in the path of an advancing enemy army; despite the fact that he really didn't know what to do--Jehoshaphat stood up.

Standing up. It seems so simple, doesn't it? Simple, yet pregnant with tremendous significance because it wasn't a mere physical act but rather a spiritual declaration. Consider these examples:

-God told Abraham to arise, walk the length and width of the land promised to him, and claim it (Genesis 13:17).

-Moses was commanded to “*rise up early in the morning,*” stand before Pharaoh, and plead for Israel’s deliverance (Exodus 8:20).

-Deborah challenged a hesitant Barak to “*arise and lead thy captivity captive*” (Judges 5:12).

-A young man named Samuel arose from his bed to deliver God’s message to Eli (1 Samuel 3:8).

-King David rose up from the ashes of defeat at Ziklag to retrieve from the enemy all that was stolen from him (1 Samuel 30).

-Elisha arose to follow Elijah and minister to him. He never regretted his decision, for eventually the mantle of the anointing passed from his master’s shoulders to his own and he fulfilled God’s destiny for his life (1 Kings 19:21).

-Nehemiah rose up at midnight to survey the ruins of the walls of Jerusalem, then he challenged the workers to “*rise up and build*” (Nehemiah 2:18-20).

-Esther arose from her couch of luxury to stand before the king and save an entire nation (Esther 8:4).

-When Jonah obeyed God’s command to “*arise and go to Ninevah,*” the greatest revival in history occurred. The entire city repented (Jonah 3:2-10).

-An angel told the imprisoned Apostle Peter, “Arise quickly!” Peter could have said, “Why should I do that? Here I am bound between guards in the maximum security section of the prison. I’m not going anywhere. Stop disturbing my nap!” He could

have remained sleeping right where he was, in prison, but Peter chose to stand up. As he did, the chains of bondage fell from his hands (Acts 12:7).

-At the border of their promised land, the nation of Israel was challenged, *“Arise, go up against them. For we have seen the land, and indeed it is very good. Would you do nothing? Do not hesitate to go, and enter to possess the land”* (Judges 18:9).

These mighty men and women of faith didn't just passively wait on God, nor did they rush forward in aggressive confrontation or devise schemes to manipulate themselves out of their crisis. Instead, they each rose up in faith to act against the checkmate in their lives and seize their God-given destiny. In so doing, they experienced miracles, conquered enemy armies, and saved entire nations.

Refocus your attention. Jehoshaphat prayed: *“O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?”* (2 Chronicles 20:6).

Since he didn't know what to do about his problem, Jehoshaphat did the only thing he knew to do. He began to focus on God instead of the checkmate of the enemy.

Jehoshaphat's enemy was advancing rapidly, yet this man stood up, held his ground, and began to call on God. Your enemy is advancing also and his forces and threats are fearsome. The question is: Will you focus on the problem or the promises? Do not deny the problem, just change your focus from your problems and circumstances to God's unlimited resources.

Reject carnal reasoning, receive divine revelation. His name was Jahaziel. He appears on the pages of Scripture but once, and that briefly, yet his message impacts the destiny of an entire nation. His words were pregnant with the potential of a turning point in Israel's circumstances, but in order to accept his message God's people must reject carnal reasoning and embrace divine revelation.

*Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly; And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the Lord to you: Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem! Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you." And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the Lord, worshipping the Lord.
(2 Chronicles 20:14-18)*

In every attack of the enemy for which you have no answer there comes a turning point, a moment in time when suddenly, in answer to your perplexities and prayers, the King makes His move and reveals His plan.

The turning point in every dilemma of life comes when human reasoning is rejected and divine revelation is embraced:

-Noah rejected reason, built an ark on dry ground, and his family was saved (Genesis 6).

-Moses rejected reason and led the Israelites across the Red Sea (Exodus 14).

-Joshua rejected reason and conquered Jericho with shouts and blasts of rams' horns (Joshua 6).

-A poor widow rejected selfish reasoning, baked a cake for the prophet from the last of her meal and oil, and her supply of staples was replenished continually for the duration of the famine (1 Kings 17:12-16).

-At the prophet's word, a desperate debt-ridden widow borrowed vessels from her neighbors and began to pour from a single container of oil. Defying reason, the oil continued to flow until every vessel was filled, then she sold the oil and paid her debts (2 Kings 4:1-7).

-The Prophet Elijah prepared a sacrifice, drenched it in water, and then called for the fire of God to fall. Against all human reasoning, the flames consumed both sacrifice and water (1 Kings 18).

-A little boy rejected reason, offered his lunch to Jesus, and a multitude was fed (John 6:5-13).

-The Apostle Peter rejected reason when he heard Jesus say, "Come." In the strength of that one word he got out of the boat and walked on water (Matthew 14:25-29).

Do not listen to education, tradition, religion, or experience. Listen to God. One word from God is more powerful in your checkmate than an entire discourse emanating from human reasoning.

Respond in obedience. The details of God's revelation vary according to each situation, because no two sets of circumstances are identical. But once that revelation comes, you must act in obedience upon it as Jehoshaphat did.

Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with voices loud and high. And they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the Lord, For His mercy endures forever". (2 Chronicles 20:19-21)

Jehoshaphat's instructions to his people contain the next key to resolving your own crises in life: *"Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established. Believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."* When you are established in God, enemy attacks no longer immobilize you. You may not know what to

do, but you know God has the answer. Confusion is replaced by confidence. Fear is conquered by faith.

Do not limit God's power to work in your circumstances by your own unbelief. Reject doubt and assert your confidence in God. You must believe it is God's will to establish you because, *"If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established" (Isaiah 7:9).*

Belief is not optional. It is a command:

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. (1 John 3:23)

Belief is fostered by immersing yourself in God's Word:

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:31)

To be established you must believe God exists and that He will respond to those who seek Him, for *"He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him "* (Hebrews 11:6). Belief generates faith and soon you will receive an internal witness that your confidence is not misplaced.

If you want to be established in God, you must take God's Word literally for what it says and let it reign over your circumstances. Then its supernatural power is released to work in your life:

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of

*men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.
(1 Thessalonians 2:13)*

You will be established in God when you choose to live righteously. The Apostle Paul declares:

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? (Romans 6:16)

Obedience results in righteousness and the Word declares, "*In righteousness you shall be established*" (Isaiah 54:14).

Consider the direction of your life and evaluate the consequences of each decision. Proverbs 4:26 encourages you to "*Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established.*"

Stability results from being "established in the faith," which means you are grounded in the basic doctrines of God's Word. Paul encourages us in Colossians 2:7 to be "*rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.*" The Bible also declares, "*Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established*" (Proverbs 16:3).

Instead of struggling to work out your situation, commit your work to the Lord. It is God's work, His plan, His ministry. Release the stress and tension of your troubling circumstances to Him and you will find that your thoughts are established, you begin to think clearly, and the fog of confusion lifts.

Reverse the curse of the enemy by praise and worship. So Satan has erected a checkmate in your life, has he? Then do what Jehoshaphat did to reverse the curse back on him:

*Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another. So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped.
(2 Chronicles 20:22-24)*

The turning point in Jehoshaphat's dilemma came when God's people acted upon the divine revelation they were given. Faith is a fact that always involves an act:

-You receive the word of faith for salvation, you act upon it by responding, and you are saved.

-Noah acted upon the word he received from God concerning a forthcoming flood and by faith built an ark to preserve life on the earth.

-Moses received a commission to deliver Israel and acted upon it in faith by returning to Egypt to petition Pharaoh on their behalf.

-Blind men saw, the lame walked, and the deaf heard as they acted by faith in response to the words of Jesus.

Faith is not just passive believing or wishful hoping. Faith is acting on the fact of God's Word. Jehoshaphat was instructed by God:

*"Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem! Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you."
(2 Chronicles 20:15-17)*

Jehoshaphat had a word from God and acted upon it in faith. The next day he positioned himself for victory by obeying God's Word and he watched the King move on his behalf.

When Israel began to sing and praise God, ambushes were set by the Lord against the advancing enemy. The King moved when they began to sing and praise, not when they had finished. The enemy was ambushed by God and when Israel arrived on the battlefield, instead of finding living men to contend with, they found only the carcasses of the enemy. There they were, in full battle array, armed with shields and spears, but there was no life in them. Their deadly potential was eliminated when God's people began to praise and worship.

Dead bodies littered the plains as the sun rose over the wilderness that morning. The curse of the enemy was reversed! The military forces of the enemy actually turned against one another and self-destructed. What a victory for Jehoshaphat, a man who at one time confessed he didn't know

what to do. And what a tremendous victory you will experience when you apply the same strategies to confront the checkmates of your enemy.

Would you like to disarm the enemy forces arrayed against you? Do you want to reverse every diabolical curse and stronghold that threatens and controls your life? Then begin to praise God!

Don't wait until you see the hand of the King moving in your behalf and your victory is assured. Praise Him, even while you hear the sound of advancing troops echoing across the desert plains of your life. Begin to sing in the face of adversity when, like Jehoshaphat, you don't know what to do about the impending checkmate of the enemy.

And don't be surprised, when you reach the battlefield, if all you find is the decaying corpse of your enemy because the King has already made His move!

CHAPTER SIX

Receiving Your Miracle

Blind Bartimaeus: The Checkmate Of Bondage

Everyone experiences bondage at one time or another in life. For some, it is the bondage of bad habits, drugs, or alcohol. It may be the bondage of physical illness, mental problems, or emotional instability. For others, it is deep poverty or the actual bondage of a prison cell. Whatever bondage may be affecting your life, it is erecting a powerful checkmate that must be dealt with if you are to be and do all God intended.

The Biblical account of blind Bartimaeus reveals seven powerful strategies that, if you employ them, will allow the King to move in your life and eliminate every bondage.

And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" The blind man said unto him, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." And Jesus said unto him, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." And

immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way. (Mark 10:46-52)

The King eliminated the checkmate of a physical condition that Bartimaeus was bound with all his life. The principles that Bartimaeus applied can also be appropriated as you believe for your own miracle of deliverance in every area of your life.

Assume responsibility for the bondage in your life. By assuming responsibility, it does not necessarily mean that the bondage in which you are entangled is your fault. The word “responsibility” simply means the “ability to respond.”

Bartimaeus was not responsible for his physical condition, but he took responsibility that things could change. He realized, “I am blind, I am a beggar, and I want things to change!” If you want to position yourself for the King to move in your life, then you must acknowledge that your relationships, your physical condition, your mental or emotional problems, or your financial situation needs to change.

Believe that things can change. Bartimaeus had been sitting there for years as a blind beggar. You may have been in bondage for years. Your health problem may be chronic. You may have been in therapy for mental or emotional conditions for a decade. You may have lived in poverty all of your life. If the King is going to move on your behalf, then you must prepare the way for Him to do so by believing that things *can* change. If you don’t have faith, then pray as the man in Mark 9:24, “*Lord I believe. Help my unbelief!*”

Cry out to God. Change will not come unless you do something about it. Bartimaeus began to cry out because he believed things could change. If you don’t cry out for change, then things will remain as they are. Where has your silence

gotten you? What is the result of your refusal to address the bondages in your life?

The good news is, if you cry out to the King, He will change your circumstances. You may think, like Bartimaeus, that you are lost in the crowd, but He knows right where you are. Keep on crying out to Him until things change.

Remember that crying alone isn't enough. You must cry to someone who can do something about your need. That Someone is Jesus!

Are you going to keep sitting there begging, checkmated by your bondage, or are you going to do something about it?

Clarify what you need. In the past, Bartimaeus asked for money, but this time he didn't ask for alms. Have you been asking for the wrong thing? Perhaps you have been seeking rehabilitation, but what you need is change, not rehabilitation of the old, not a better way of life, not more counseling. You need a brand new life:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Bartimaeus further clarified what he needed when Jesus asked him, "What do you want?"

Bartimaeus replied, "I'm blind. I want to see!" Clarify to God exactly what you need. What is the bondage in your life that needs to be broken?

Do not let those around you discourage you. Stop worrying about what others say. Many in the crowd told Bartimaeus to be quiet, but he didn't care what the "many" said, because

the majority are not always right. It doesn't matter what the majority says about your bondage. Let the King speak His opinion into your life.

If you let them, people--sometimes even your dearest friends --will stand in the way of your miracle. They may say, "Things can't change. It can't be done. It's never been done." But even if like Bartimaeus, you were "born that way" or if you have lived in bondage for years, things can change for you when the King makes His move.

Bartimaeus got to the place that he said, "I don't care what anyone thinks. I'm tired of going through life begging!" That is the point you must come to. Don't worry about how many times you have failed and don't worry about what people say about you.

Never give up, despite the circumstances. It was crowded, noisy, hard to be heard, and people were telling him to shut up, but Bartimaeus didn't care. The circumstances weren't ideal for his deliverance. If you are waiting for ideal circumstances to be freed from the bondage in your life, they may never come. It is in the midst of difficult circumstances that miracles are most often manifested.

Leave the old behind to embrace the new. Bartimaeus wore a garment that identified him as a blind beggar, almost like carrying a white cane or walking with a guide dog identifies a blind person in society today. When King Jesus called to him, Bartimaeus did something bold. He cast this garment aside. He cut his ties to the past. He threw off the symbol of his physical bondage. He made no provisions for failure.

If you are to overcome the checkmate of bondage in your life, you will have to do something bold. You will have to take a step of faith and make no provisions for failure.

In one of our prison services, we felt led to pray for those bound by drugs or cigarettes. “Don’t come up here with drugs or cigarettes in your pocket and ask us to pray for you,” we told them. “If you are sincere, you must get rid of these things and make no provision for failure!” At the end of the service, the chapel platform was littered with cigarettes and drugs discarded by the inmates. Many who had sought deliverance for years received their miracle that night because they made no plans for a relapse, no provision for failure.

Jesus told Bartimaeus that his faith had made him whole. That faith was demonstrated as Bartimaeus stepped out and left behind the garments that chained him to his bondage. The change in his life was immediate. The Scriptures say that immediately, he received his sight.

How? I can’t explain it physically, but I do know this: When you appropriate biblical strategies such as these reflected in the story of Bartimaeus, the King will make His move and change your life.

For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2)

If you have been bound by sinful habits, you no longer must be the servant of sin.

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed

*from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.
(Romans 6:14-18)*

This is the time for your deliverance from the checkmate of bondage. Your physical, mental, or emotional condition is not too big for God. Your poverty is not too deep. Your habit is not too great.

The King has one more move and when He makes it, you--like Bartimaeus--will be made whole. You will be able to rise up to a new life and leave the cloak of your bondage in the dust of your past.

CHAPTER SEVEN

But God

Joseph: The Checkmate Of A Painful Past

There are two major areas of the past that affect all of our lives. One is environmental, the parents you had, the home you came from, and the place in which you grew up. The other is experience, the things you personally have gone through.

Some people were blessed to grow up in a loving, sharing, caring family. But others grew up in dysfunctional homes marked by disharmony, divorce, and physical, sexual, or verbal abuse. Many wrestle with terrible memories of horrible situations through which they have passed along life's journey.

As long as you are living in the past, you will never have a future. You must deal with the checkmate of the pain of your past in order for the King to move in your future.

In the book of Genesis, the Bible tells the story of a young man who had a painful past through both environment and experience. Joseph's childhood environment included his father, Jacob, who had an extensive history of deception. His mother, Rachel, was continually in conflict with Jacob's other wife, Leah. Rachel was continually trying to manipulate Jacob and gain his exclusive affection.

There was partiality in the home, which created rivalry and jealousy. Jacob preferred Rachel to Leah and Joseph to the rest of his sons (Genesis 37:3-4). The special coat given to Joseph by his father was more than just a beautiful garment. It

was not a garment that shepherds wore. It set Joseph apart as the favored child, one who would not work as did the other brothers.

Where there are wrong attitudes, it is always difficult to communicate. Joseph's brothers hated him for his words (Genesis 37:8) and could not speak peaceably to him (Genesis 37:4). Joseph's brothers were also involved in a terrible sin of immorality at Shechem (Genesis 34).

Joseph lived in a family dominated by deceit, immorality, manipulation, envy, and hatred. For seventeen years, he was raised in this dysfunctional family. He could have blamed this bad environment for ruining his life and, in so doing, thrown away his future.

Joseph had some pretty horrible personal experiences also. In Genesis 37, we learn how his brothers stripped him of his coat of many colors and threw him into a pit. Then they sat down, cold and uncaring, their ears deaf to his cries. Maybe you have been crying for help, with no answer from those you love the most. Little did Joseph think that he would someday look back on this great tragedy as the most significant event in God's plan for his life. The same may be true for you.

When an Egyptian caravan passed by, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. In Genesis 39, you can read how Joseph suffered another checkmate when he was falsely accused of immorality and thrown into prison.

In every checkmate of life, however, the Lord was with Joseph (Genesis 39:3). God has been with you also, in that dysfunctional family and in the tragic experiences of your past. He has not abandoned you.

Confinement is hard at any age, but Joseph was young and used to roaming the hillsides of Judea. Yet, he refused to give in to despair. In Genesis 39-40 we learn that he was placed in a position of responsibility in the prison and ministered to a butler and baker who were confined with him, both of whom promptly forgot him.

Humanly speaking, Joseph had every right to develop a bitter spirit. He was failed by family and friends, falsely accused, and forgotten. But instead of bemoaning his fate, he used each opportunity to the best of his ability. Little did he know that every circumstance was bringing him nearer his God-given destiny.

And this is what God wants to do in your life also. Every checkmate situation of your painful past can be used by God to help you achieve your destiny if you will allow the King to move in your life.

Forgotten and alone in prison--but the King had one more move. Joseph was summoned by Pharaoh, released from prison, became a ruler in Egypt, and saved the then-known world from death by famine.

Experiences or environment cannot checkmate God's purpose for your life unless you allow them to do so. If you hold on to the pain of the past with bitterness and unforgiveness, the King cannot move for you or through you.

When Joseph married, the names he gave his two children were symbolic of the experiences through which he had passed (Genesis 41:51-52). The first child was named Manasseh, meaning "*God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house.*" Joseph didn't forget his father's house, but he forgot the pain associated with the events that occurred there. You may never forget the difficulties of the

past, but God wants to heal you of the pain of these experiences.

Joseph's second son was named Ephraim, meaning "*God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.*" Joseph was fruitful in affliction because he let God heal him of the pain of his past.

The only way you will be fruitful and achieve your God-given destiny is to let the King move in your life to eliminate the checkmates of unforgiveness and bitterness. You must deal with the pain of the past before you can experience a fruitful future.

Joseph went through many difficulties, but God used them all in his life. Joseph was being prepared to save a nation. What great thing does God have planned for your life? How will He use the experiences of your past as you submit them to Him and allow the King to move in your life?

When Joseph's brothers stood before him in Egypt, they didn't even recognize him. Joseph declared:

"Come near to me, I pray you." And they came near. And he said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a

ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."
(Genesis 45:4-8)

Joseph realized that the painful events of his past were not just "tough luck" or "unfortunate circumstances." He declared, *"It was not you that sent me here, but God!"* His brothers meant it as evil, but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20).

If you have checkmates in your life that were erected by your past environment and experiences, these two words can change your world: But God! The pain of your past can be greatly used by God if you release the hurt and bitterness.

As a child, Joseph had dreams and visions of being in a place of responsibility and authority. All through the long, difficult years, Joseph never lost that dream. When at last he stood in the place of his God-appointed destiny, he remembered the dream: *"And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed"* (Genesis 42:9).

God has a plan for your life. He has a destiny for your future. Refuse to let the pain of your past checkmate your future. It isn't over yet. Do not lose your spiritual vision. The King has one more move!

In Genesis 50, we read the story of Joseph's final days. Prior to his death, Joseph commanded that his body be placed in a coffin so that someday when Israel traveled to their promised land, his bones could be taken with them. Even in death, Joseph looked towards the future. He knew the King would make another move.

For hundreds of years, through all the dark days of Israel's slavery, that coffin provided hope. It was a silent promise that someday God would move in behalf of His people.

Today, we do not have a coffin, but we can look back to an empty tomb on a Jerusalem hillside, a silent witness that the King has one more move.

CHAPTER EIGHT THE BACKSIDE OF THE DESERT

Moses: The Checkmate Of An Aborted Ministry

He just couldn't take it anymore. When Moses witnessed an Egyptian beating an Israelite, it was literally the last straw. He knew slavery was wrong. He felt he was called to deliver his people from bondage and when he witnessed this violent scene, he responded in anger and killed the Egyptian taskmaster. Then, knowing his own life was in danger because of this act, Moses fled to the backside of the desert.

For forty long years, Moses lived with the memory of an aborted purpose. He had tried, and failed. Would God ever use him again? Have you been there? Are you there right now? You tried to step out and do what God called you to do, only to fail repeatedly. Have you, like Moses, retreated to the desert to nurse your wounds?

One day, while watching a flock of sheep in the desert, Moses saw a burning bush which, miraculously, was not consumed. He drew near, and God spoke to him.

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." And when the Lord

saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, "Moses, Moses." And he said, "Here am I." And he said, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Moreover he said, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt." (Exodus 3:1-10)

You are not abandoned in the desert and left to die. God knows right where you are, just as He knew where Moses was. The words you are reading right now are His "burning bush" message to you.

There are several things revealed in this story of Moses that will help you move past the checkmate of an aborted ministry:

Reject excuses for remaining where you are. Moses had a multitude of excuses why he couldn't get past the checkmates that hindered his ministry. Do these sound familiar to you?

Who am I? Many people struggle with the failures of their past, who they are, and their lack of skills or abilities. That is how Moses felt:

And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? (Exodus 3:11)

God's answer to Moses was, "It is not who you are, but who I am!" It is not who you are that will bring forth your ministry, but who God is!

What authority do I have? Who sent me? Next, Moses was concerned about his authority:

And Moses said unto God, "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say unto them?" (Exodus 3:13)

God's answer to Moses was, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'I AM hath sent me unto you'" (Exodus 3:14). God has already given you authority and power over the enemy, all you have to do is use it:

*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.
(Luke 10:19)*

What if they don't believe me? Moses was concerned about whether or not he would be accepted by the people:

And Moses answered and said, "But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." (Exodus 4:1)

God's answer to this objection was, "*What is in your hand?*" (Exodus 4:2). In Moses' hand was the rod of God which represented His power. Later on, this rod was thrown down before Pharaoh and miracles happened; it was stretched over the Red Sea and the waters parted; and it brought forth water from the rock.

To deal with the checkmate of an aborted ministry, you must begin where you are with what you have. The prophet asked a poor widow lady, "*What do you have in the house.*" She answered, "*Nothing but a jar of oil!*" He told her to gather vessels and start pouring. She obeyed, and God multiplied what she had (2 Kings 4:1-7). What do you have in your house--your talents, skills, and abilities--that God can bless and multiply?

What shall I say? Moses objected that he was not an eloquent speaker. In essence, he was saying, "What shall I say?" God's answer to this objection was, "*I will be your mouth and teach you what you should say*" (Exodus 4:12). It is not your words, but God's Word that will birth your ministry and make you effective for God.

In order to move past the checkmate of his aborted ministry, Moses had to let God eliminate all of these excuses. If you are to fulfill your destiny, you must deal with every objection in the power of the Lord.

Realize that circumstances often get worse when it is time for a move. When Moses returned to Egypt, things got worse for God's people before they got better. Pharaoh was angry and told them they would have to gather their own straw, yet it was expected that production would not diminish (Exodus 5:10-22). Right before your victory, right before the King makes His move in your life and ministry, things may get worse!

Respond on the basis of the covenant promises of God. Moses came to Israel with a powerful message of deliverance:

"And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.'" So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage. (Exodus 6:5-9)

Moses delivered a message that assured Israel's release from slavery, but they could not hear it because of anguish of spirit (feelings) and cruel bondage (circumstances). If you rely on feelings and circumstances, you will never move beyond the checkmate of an aborted ministry. Don't look at how powerful Pharaoh (the enemy) is, because he is not

orchestrating the course of your life. The King is directing your every move.

You can block spiritual checkmates on the basis of the covenant promises of God. God said, *"I have remembered my covenant."* He hadn't forgotten Israel, and He hasn't forgotten you.

Rise up and take action. You must act upon the Word of God or, otherwise, you will remain right where you are. After Saul's death, God told Samuel to stop grieving, get up, and go anoint a new king. God told Moses at the bitter waters of Marah, "Don't look to me. Look to the branch God has provided and cast it into the waters." God told Noah, "Rise up and build an ark." He told Nehemiah, "Arise and build!" He said "Arise" to a lame man by the side of the road.

If you are grieving over an aborted ministry, it is time to stop. Rise up and begin to act in faith. You must make a change, or a year from now you will be right where you are today. God's Word to you is:

Arise from the depression and prostration in which circumstances have kept you, rise to a new life! Shine, be radiant with the glory of the Lord; for your light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you!
(Isaiah 60:1, TAB)

Rely on God's power. God told Moses, *"So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go"* (Exodus 3:20).

Abraham's son, Ishmael, was birthed by human effort and we are still haunted by that mistake today. Isaac was birthed by God. Do you want a ministry or an answer to your

circumstances that is birthed through self-effort or one birthed by God? Rely on God's power to launch you into ministry rather than your own human effort.

Relate to God at a new level. In the past you may have known Him as your Savior, comforter, and guide. If you are to enter into the ministry He has planned for you, you must come to relate to Him at a new level. God told Moses:

"I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Jehovah, I was not known to them. I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord'" (Exodus 6:2-8).

God's names offer special insight into His personality and what He wants to do for His people.

Jehovah is one of the most important names for God in the Old Testament. Yahweh, or Jehovah, comes from the verb "to be," meaning simply but profoundly, "I am who I am," and "I

will be who I will be." All the other Old Testament names of God stem from this name.

You have known God at one level in the past, but you must come to know Him at a new level if you are to embrace the ministry He has planned for you. Jehovah was the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. This bush was a vivid symbol of the inexhaustible power of God which burns like a fire, yet remains the same and never diminishes.

Your ministry may have been aborted in the past because of difficult circumstances. Perhaps you were rejected by those to whom you ministered. Maybe you were maligned, hurt, and disillusioned. Why you are on the backside of the desert is not as important as what you are going to do right now. The burning bush of new revelation is consuming the checkmate of your aborted ministry. God isn't through with you yet. The King has one more move!

The checkmates of Moses' life were not over when he returned to Egypt at God's command. Pharaoh set up several checkmate situations, but each time the King had one more move and after His final move, Pharaoh let God's people go. Standing on the banks of the Red Sea pursued by Pharaoh's army, Moses faced another checkmate. God's people couldn't go forward and they couldn't turn back. But then the King made yet another move. The waters miraculously opened before them, they walked across on dry ground, and the enemy perished.

You will find that ministry involves a whole series of checkmates where Satan sets up one barrier after another to hinder you from fulfilling God's plan. In the heat of the battle, never forget what you learned on the backside of the desert: The King always has one more move!

CHAPTER NINE

Surviving The Tempest

Paul: The Checkmate Of Spiritual Storms

The Bible defines a natural storm as a tempest. The dictionary calls it a disturbance of normal atmospheric conditions. In military terms, a storm is defined as a violent assault. Natural storms provide great parallels of spiritual truths. A spiritual storm is any disturbance or assault on your life--whether it be mental, emotional, financial, physical, or spiritual.

Believers and unbelievers both experience storms in life. What makes the difference in the outcome of a storm depends upon whom and what you have built the foundation of your life. Jesus told the following parable to illustrate this truth:

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. (Matthew 7:24-27, NIV)

Both men in this story were industrious, in that they took time to build their houses, which is symbolic of carefully building their lives. The difference was that one man built his life on a firm foundation--representing Jesus Christ and His Word--

while one did not. Both houses experienced storms. The house built on the foundation of Christ stood firm. The other house collapsed in the storm.

The question raised by this story is this: Upon what are you building your life? Are you building your life your own way and disregarding the master plan in the Bible? Are you building your life on what your peer-group thinks or says? Will your foundation stand firm in the midst of the storms of life? If you build your life on Jesus Christ and the Word of God, you will be able to withstand the fiercest spiritual gales.

Types Of Storms

All spiritual storms of life fall into one of two categories.

Storms that are your fault. These are caused by your own sin, difficulties you experience because of your sinful decisions.

Storms that are not your fault. These come through the circumstances of life, because of the actions of others, as a result of your ministry, and by Satanic attack.

The Bible provides two excellent examples of these categories. One is the account of a prophet named Jonah who experienced a storm because of his own rebellious decisions. The other is the story of a storm experienced by the Apostle Paul, one he had to endure through no fault of his own.

The story of Jonah's storm is recorded in Jonah chapter 1. The story of Paul's storm is recorded in Acts 27. Take time to read these two passages before you continue with this chapter.

Jonah's Storm

First, let's look at the prophet Jonah. Jonah chapter 1 records how the Word of the Lord came to Jonah and instructed him to go to the city of Ninevah to preach repentance. Nineveh was the capitol of the Assyrian empire, the world power at that time, and a very evil city.

Instead of obeying the Lord, Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Note the key word “but” in Jonah 1:3. Jonah knew what he was supposed to do, but he didn't do it. That is the simple definition of sin. Jonah hated the Ninevites because they were among the most brutal nations in the ancient world. He refused to go minister to them because he didn't want them saved. He wanted them destroyed.

So instead of obeying God's Word, Jonah went to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went down into the ship, fleeing from the presence of the Lord. Or so he thought. He actually was heading into a storm that resulted because of his disobedience. Jonah chapters 1 and 2 record details of the fierce storm and how Jonah was eventually cast into the sea and swallowed by a huge fish. Following his sincere prayer of repentance (chapter 2), the Lord spoke to the fish and it deposited Jonah safely on shore.

From the story of Jonah we learn that spiritual storms can result from your own sinful decisions. Like Jonah, you will pay a price when you rebel against God. But God loves you so much, that He will send a spiritual storm in order to get you back on course.

There is no remedy for a storm resulting from disobedience other than repenting of the sin that caused it. When you come to the end of yourself and there is no way out, when you

repent and determine to go God's direction, that is when you will be supernaturally delivered from your spiritual storm.

Paul's Storm

Most believers understand the concept of spiritual storms caused by their own disobedience. Where we have difficulty is understanding storms that we experience through no fault of our own. The storm experienced by the Apostle Paul is a classic example. Paul had been arrested because of his ministry in behalf of the Gospel and was sailing to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27).

Why does the writer of Acts spend so much time recording details of this storm? Because there are many great spiritual analogies to be drawn from Paul's experience. These strategies will help you face spiritual storms for which you are not at fault and position you to experience the next move of the King in your life.

Recognize that storms do not necessarily mean you are going the wrong way. Jonah experienced a storm because of rebelling against God, but Paul was on the way to his next mission in Rome when his storm occurred. When Jesus told the disciples to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, they too experienced a storm that hindered their mission. They were on the way to where Jesus had directed them to go and where they would be part of a great ministry, yet they experienced turbulence on the way (Mark 4:35-41).

Maintain confidence in God. Paul knew where he was going. He had been told by the Lord that he would make it to Rome. The disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee also knew their destination. Jesus told them to go to the other side. No matter how the elements raged, the disciples would not die in the storm. God told Paul that he would not perish in the

storm. Neither will you. Maintain confidence that God will get you to where you need to be despite the storms of life.

Realize you are not alone in your storm. Paul had with him a young man named Mark, who wrote the account of this storm in the book of Acts. Paul also had Julius, the centurion who befriended him. Most importantly, Paul had God. You may not have a "Mark" or a "Julius", but you certainly have God with you in the midst of your storm.

Do not blame God for the storm. Paul told the crew, "You should have listened to me." He realized that this storm was not his fault, but he was experiencing it because of bad decisions made by others. God allows storms in life, but He is not the source of them. Spiritual storms are caused by either your own sin, because of circumstances of life, through others around you, for the sake of the Gospel, because of your ministry, or through Satanic attacks. You live in a sinful world with the effects of sin all around you. You are not immune from the storms of life just because you are a believer.

Maintain communion with God. Paul communicated with God in the midst of the storm. He did not get mad at God or become discouraged because of the tumult, nor did he stop praying.

Replace fear with faith. Paul not only maintained his faith in God, he encouraged those around him to have faith. Paul told those on board not to fear and to be of good cheer. He said:

"But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not

be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me." (Acts 27:22-25, NIV)

Your faith will see you through the storms of life and enable you to encourage others along the way.

Reject unbelief. Paul said, "...I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25). This is the kind of simple faith you need: If God said it, believe it! Paul was clear about who he was in God, who he served, and who had promised deliverance. Paul was prepared by God, possessed by God, protected by God, and served the purposes of God. You are being prepared by God to be possessed by Him. You will be protected through every storm of life and emerge victoriously to serve His purposes.

Do not be concerned if there is silence. Jesus slept during the storm the disciples experienced at sea. The important thing was that He was on board. The Lord was with Paul in the midst of the tempest. God is still on board with you in the midst of your storm, even if you do not sense His presence or hear His voice.

Do not be concerned if you have no direction. The sun and moon were not visible in the midst of the storm Paul experienced. This was a problem because this was how navigation was done in those days. There was no GPS system. God is still in control of your "ship", even if the way ahead seems dark and without direction.

Do not try to escape the storm. In the natural world, many people have been killed trying to outrun a storm. Stay on board with Christ during your storm. Despite the tempest,

you are heading the direction God wants you to go. Do not abandon the "ship" of your faith and calling. Realize that--as Paul--you are being propelled towards your spiritual destiny by the storm. You will get to where God wants you to be!

Undergird yourself spiritually. The crew undergirded the ship with ropes to hold the timbers to the hull. In the midst of your storm, undergird yourself with the Word of God, prayer, and worship. The King James Version indicates that they undergirded the ship so they would not get mired in the quicksand (Acts 27:17). Your spiritual undergirding will prevent you from being pulled down into the "quick sands" of this world.

Get rid of the baggage. The crew tossed all of the excess lading overboard. Storms of life are a good time to examine the "baggage" you are carrying and see what you need to eliminate--things like anger, bitterness, unforgiveness--any weights that will hinder you from reaching your destination. Do all you can to lighten your load, then trust God for deliverance from the storm.

Cut off the ropes. Paul told the soldiers to cut off the ropes to the lifeboats so that the crew and passengers could not escape. This represents rejecting any man-made ways of escaping your storm.

Take up the anchors. Do not hold on to things that anchor you down in the storm. Refuse to be anchored to the past and the things that characterized your old life--negative relationships, addictions, habitual sins, etc. Anchor yourself to Jesus Christ, the secure anchor for your soul (Hebrews 6:19). In the account in Acts 27:40, the King James version says that by taking up the anchors the crew "committed themselves to the sea". Let go of everything that anchors you

to the old life and commit yourself to the God who controls the waves and billows of your life (Psalm 42:7).

Take down the sails. Relinquish control. Stop struggling. God is in control of the stormy wind that is battering your life.

Exercise spiritual authority over the storm. Jesus calmed the storm for the disciples, but Paul had to go through it--yet both emerged victoriously. When you exercise spiritual authority, sometimes the storm will cease. At other times, God will give you the supernatural strength to endure the turbulence. In either case, God will be glorified.

Abide in the ship. Paul told those on board to stay in the ship if they wanted to be saved. This ship, like Noah's ark, is symbolic of Jesus Christ. Remain in Christ in the midst of your storm.

Act decisively in the proper timing. When it was time, the crew, passengers, and prisoners all jumped in the water and headed for shore. Sometimes, in the midst of your storm, God will give specific directions as to what you are to do to escape the storm. When He speaks, act immediately and decisively.

Avail yourself of your refuge from the storm. The ship ran aground near an island named "Melita", which means "refuge". God is your refuge in your storm. The psalmist said: *"Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by"* (Psalm 57:1). Immerse yourself in God, prayer, worship, and the Word until your storm has passed and fair skies return in your life.

Know that the storm is taking you where you need to be. Paul thought his destination was Rome, and ultimately it was. But God had need of him in Melita, an island where there was a great spiritual need, and that is exactly where the storm took him.

The King Moves In The Storms

Here are some powerful conclusions to be drawn from the study of these storms and prepare you for the next move of the King in your life.

Storms come to all believers. For sure, spiritual storms will come when you sin. But even if you walk in perfect obedience to God, like Paul, you will sometimes experience storms. Know that you are not alone. Many others are going through similar physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and financial gales.

Storms are not pleasant. No one wants to experience a spiritual storm because they are not pleasant. The psalmist expressed this in Psalm 107:

For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end. (Psalm 107:25-27, NIV)

This passage speaks of being at your wit's end in a storm. Read through Psalm 107 and you will discover that it describes a storm as a place of instability, a place where your soul melts, you are lonely, hungry, and thirsty. It is a time of trouble, darkness, bondage, staggering, fainting, and falling. You seem to be without direction. Indeed, a storm is not a

pleasant place to be, but it can have positive results in your life if you persevere and remain faithful to God.

God uses the storms of life to position you spiritually.

Jonah's storm got him back on track to minister in a great revival in Ninevah. Paul's storm landed him on the Island of Melita where he ministered to spiritually receptive people. God loved Ninevah and Melita so much that He used storms to bring His servants to them. God loves the people you are called to serve so much that He will use everything--including the storms of your life--to position you where you can serve them. Despite the difficulties you may experience, there is always divine purpose in the storms of life. The psalmist declared regarding the storm:

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven.
(Psalm 107:28-30)

God sometimes uses storms--difficult circumstances of life--to get you to your desired destination. That is the testimony of the Old Testament patriarch, Joseph who was enslaved and falsely imprisoned. He declared: *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives"* (Genesis 50:20, NIV).

God uses storms of life to give you new responsibilities.

Jonah was a prophet, but after the storm he became a tremendous evangelist in Ninevah. Paul began his voyage as a convict, but ended it directing the ship. It doesn't matter who man says you are, it is who God says you are that counts.

The storms will not last forever. Jonah's storm ended when he repented. Paul finally landed on shore through supernatural intervention by God. Likewise, your storm will not last forever.

God knows exactly where you are. Whether you are in the midst of a storm because of your own sin or you are faultless as to its cause, you can be assured that God knows exactly where you are. He knew where Jonah and Paul were, and He knows where you are right now. God understands the rough waters you are sailing. He knows about your difficulties. Like the people of Israel who experienced many spiritual storms, you can" *...trust and listen believingly that God was concerned with what was going on with them and knew all about their affliction" (Exodus 4:31, MSG).*

The storms of life will not prevent you from reaching your destiny. Whether the storms of life are your fault or occur through no fault of your own, you will reach your destiny. The disobedient prophet, Jonah, made it to Ninevah. Paul made it to Melita and later on to Rome. The disciples made it through the storm to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. You, too, will make it through the storm to your destiny.

The storm you are experiencing will not last forever. You will emerge victoriously with new vision and purpose in your life. You will get to where you need to be because the King has one more move to make in you and through you. You have a destiny, and He will get you there despite the storm. The rough waters will become calm and the tempest will cease. The King will eventually declare "peace, be still" to your storm.

CHAPTER TEN

Why Me?

Job: The Checkmate Of Unexplained Suffering

Natural disasters. Automobile wrecks. Airplane and train crashes. Mass shootings. Genocide. All such circumstances raise the age-old question of unexplained suffering, as both the righteous and unrighteous perish together.

When an unexplained tragedy happens, you often feel like you have reached a checkmate of life. Game over. A lot of questions, but no answers. The future looks grim. You can't really muster the faith that the King will move again in your life.

Job is a classic example of a man who faced tremendous challenges of unexplained suffering. The Bible begins his story by declaring that Job was a righteous man:

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. (Job 1:1, NIV)

Job had many possessions and a great family. Most importantly, he feared and served God:

He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East. His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and

drink with them. When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom. (Job 1:2-5, NIV)

But there came a day when everything changed:

One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. (Job 1:6-12, NIV)

Satan's contention was that Job served God only because of the great blessings he received. He maintained that if Job lost these benefits, he would no longer serve God. With God's permission, Satan was allowed to attack Job through the circumstances of his life.

In a series of devastating blows, Job lost all of his earthly possessions:

A messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" (Job 1:14-17, NIV)

Next, Job lost his children:

While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" (Job 1:18-19, NIV)

Then Satan appeared before God again:

On another day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. And the Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going

back and forth in it." Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason." "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life." (Job 2:1-6, NIV)

The next trial was that Job lost his health as "...Satan.. afflicted Job with sore boils from the sole of his feet to the top of his head" (Job 2:7,NIV). Finally, Job lost the comfort and support of his wife who said, "... "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9, NIV). Job also had to contend with the negative attitudes of his friends who accused him of sin and were extremely judgmental and uncompassionate. Their extensive dialogues are recorded in Job chapters 2-37.

Job's losses were staggering and occurred in such quick succession that before he could recover from one blow, another was delivered. (Maybe you are feeling that way right now?) Job lost everything--everything that is--except his faith in God.

Amazingly, Job's first response to these tragedies was to worship God and declare His righteous judgments:

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken

away; may the name of the Lord be praised." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. (Job 1:20-22, NIV)

At one point in his intense suffering, Job could no longer even sense God's presence. He said:

But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. (Job 23:8-9, NIV)

Yet, in the midst of this, Job declared:

*But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.
(Job 23:10-12, NIV)*

Stripped of his possessions, suffering agonizing pain, forsaken by his family and friends, Job eventually became weary and lost hope. He even cursed the day he was born:

May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, 'A boy is born!' That day--may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine upon it. May darkness and deep shadow claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm its light. That night--may thick darkness seize it; may it not be included among the days of the year nor be entered in any of the months. May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it. May those who curse days curse that

day... May its morning stars become dark; may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn, for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me to hide trouble from my eyes. Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed? (Job 3:3-12, NIV)

Job lost everything—and when he turned his eyes on his losses, he became despondent and lost hope. Job didn't have the book of Job like we do. He couldn't see behind the scenes as we are privileged to do through the pages of God's Word. He didn't realize that there were spiritual reasons behind the circumstances he was experiencing in the natural world. We are privileged to have Job chapters 1 and 2 which reveal the reasons for the spiritual battle that was raging over Job and help us understand our own challenges in life.

As you face your losses, you must understand that there is a spiritual battle raging over you also. Satan wants your worship, your allegiance, and your very life. Worship is what Satan craved from the time he tried to assume God's place. The Prophet Isaiah says of him:

You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:13-14, NIV)

Always remember: Behind every negative circumstance in your life is a spiritual battle for your mind, your body, and your soul. You may say, "I would never worship Satan!" But that is what you are doing when you reject Jesus Christ and

continue in your sins. Jesus said that whoever is not with Him is against Him (Luke 11:23).

At the conclusion of this extended period of suffering, the King finally makes His move and speaks to Job in a powerful monologue (Job 38-41). Job immediately repents of his doubting, questioning, and complaining. Then he prays for his unsympathetic friends, and all that he lost during his intense time of suffering is restored. In fact...

After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought upon him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring. The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters. The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so he died, old and full of years. (Job 42:10-17, NIV)

Facing Suffering

Although Job experienced times of despondency during his trial and at times seemed to lose hope, there are eight powerful spiritual keys revealed in his story which led to the

next move of the King in his life. These strategies will help you to face your own suffering.

Step One: Seek forgiveness. If your losses are due to your own sin or bad decisions, repent and seek God's forgiveness. After God answered Job's many complaints in a lengthy monologue (recorded in Job chapters 38-41), Job declared, "*Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*" (Job 42:6). When you are in a difficult situation it is easy to fall into fear, doubt, and unbelief and say things you shouldn't. When you do, ask God to forgive you.

In the book of James, the patience of Job is commended (James 5:11). God did not comment on his despondency and the complaints he raised during his ordeal, because those things were forgiven. All that is remembered is that Job endured his difficulties and emerged still loving and serving God.

Step Two: Don't blame God for your losses. Settle it in your heart: It is Satan who comes to kill, steal, and destroy—not God. Jesus wants you to have an abundant life:

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.
(John 10:10)

You often hear people exclaiming after personal tragedies, "Why would God do this?" If the event that you experienced killed, stole, or destroyed something, then it wasn't from God! The Bible is clear. All that kills, steals, and destroys comes from Satan who works against you through circumstances and others around you. Satan also tries to work within you and through your own bad decisions to try to destroy you.

God's ultimate purpose for you is good:

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.
(James 1:17)*

James said to count it joy when you encounter difficulties:

Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations. Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience. But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4, AMP)

You can rejoice in God, not because of your losses, but in spite of them. How are you able to do this? Because you know the promised outcome: Your faith will be proven, circumstances will be turned for your good, and you will learn endurance, steadfastness, and patience. In the end--you will lack nothing!

Step Three: Worship your way through it. We find Job worshiping God despite his losses (chapter one) and worshiping again when everything was restored to him (chapter 42). Even when he could not feel God's presence, Job declared:

But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands

of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread. (Job 23:10-12, NIV)

You may wonder, “How can I praise God when I have lost everything?” You can praise Him because He is still in control. A major revelation in Job’s story is that God limits what affects your life. God is still in control of your circumstances, even when you lose everything. There is no loss in your life of which God is not aware (Job 1:8-12).

You can be assured that God will never allow you to experience circumstances that you are unable to bear:

For no temptation (no trial regarded as enticing to sin), [no matter how it comes or where it leads] has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man [that is, no temptation or trial has come to you that is beyond human resistance and that is not adjusted and adapted and belonging to human experience, and such as man can bear]. But God is faithful [to His Word and to His compassionate nature], and He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength of resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out (the means of escape to a landing place), that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently. (1 Corinthians 10:13, AMP)

You can worship your way through your difficulties because you know God will use every negative circumstance that enters your life and work it together for good:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28, NIV)

We tend to focus on the bad things and wonder how they will work for our good. God says that all things, taken together--both positive and negative--work together for good.

Step Four: Focus on God. Turn your eyes from your circumstances and fix them upon God and His Word. Set your mind on God's faithfulness and allow His peace to guard your heart and mind:

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal. (Isaiah 26:3-4, NIV)

Despite Job's suffering, he continued to focus on God. When Job lost everything, he "...arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped" (Job 1:20). Job declared concerning God's Word: "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:10-12). Get into the Word of God. Consider it more important than your necessary food!

There are two aspects of peace: Peace with God is the relationship you enter into through the finished work of Jesus Christ when you receive forgiveness for your sin (Colossians 1:20). The peace of God is beyond all understanding, which means it is beyond the power of natural thinking. In the natural, you cannot be at peace in the midst of suffering, but in the supernatural realm, you can continually experience peace:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts

*and your minds in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:6-7, NIV)*

Anxiety is being troubled by fearful, distressing thoughts and worrying about real or imagined problems. The peace of God is unruffled serenity. It is not the absence of conflict, but rather the presence of composure, faith, and trust in the face of it. Its source is supernatural because it comes from the God of peace and Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace. Stop striving, be still, and know that God is in charge of your circumstances (Psalm 46:10).

As you focus on God and seek His direction, He will show you the way to total restoration:

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." (Isaiah 30:21, NIV)

Step Five: Resist the enemy. The Bible instructs us to "...submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7). Repeatedly throughout the story of Job we find him submitting himself to God in statements such as: "...though God slay me, yet I will trust Him" and "the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." (Job 13:15 and 1:21, NIV). Job repeatedly stood his ground and refused to retreat or curse God. In the midst of your trouble, refuse to retreat or give up. Refuse to turn your back on God. Use the spiritual armor described in Ephesians 6:10-18 to war against the attacks of the enemy.

Step Six: Release your faith. Release your faith for total restoration of all the enemy has stolen from you. Act upon what you are believing as if it is already done. Be like faithful Abraham who...

Against all hope...believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:18-21, NIV)

Believe God for total restoration in your life:

So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust... (Joel 2:25)

God uses the analogy of locust to describe the devastating effects of loss. Despite the utter destruction and whether or not it was caused by your transgressions, He promises restoration.

Job demonstrated this kind of faith when he proclaimed:

But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. (Job 23:10, NIV)

Step Seven: Forgive others. You may need to forgive others who have contributed to your suffering. God directed Job to intercede for his friends--Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar--who were very accusatory, extremely judgmental, and totally uncompassionate:

After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your

two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:7-10, NIV)

The end of Job's suffering was linked to forgiveness and yours may be also. Is unforgiveness blocking the next move of the King in your life? What good things might God be waiting to restore to you that are being hindered by your spirit of unforgiveness? By an act of your will, forgive those who have wronged you. If you are not willing to do this, pray for God to make you willing. Your own forgiveness from God is vitally linked to your willingness to forgive others:

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15, NIV)

Unforgiveness does not hurt the person you refuse to forgive, but it hurts you. It is like poison working its way through your body, soul, and spirit and it hinders the move of the King in your life.

Step Eight: Wait on the Lord. Job waited a long time, but finally God intervened in his circumstances. Do not become weary of waiting. Instead, "...Consider him who endured

such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:3, NIV).

Wait on God in prayer, worship, and Bible study, knowing that...

*He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.
(Isaiah 40:29-31, NIV)*

Regardless of how long you must wait for God to move in your difficult circumstances--regardless of the extent of your losses and the pain and heartache you have suffered--continue to wait for God to come on the scene. You will not wait in vain, because the King always has another move to make and it will happen in His perfect timing.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Stump Remains

Nebuchadnezzar: The Checkmate Of Divine Judgment

Our King is merciful, and full of compassion. But He is also a God of judgment. The question is, will the King move in your life again if you have experienced the dire consequences of His judgment for your sin and rebellion? To answer this, let's look at the story of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in Daniel chapters 3-4.

Nebuchadnezzar was an evil king who lived during Old Testament times. Daniel chapter 3 opens with him building a golden idol which he required everyone to worship or else be put to death. How often, like Nebuchadnezzar, we set up images in our hearts--things that we hold more precious than the Lord. Perhaps it is a person, a material possession, an activity we cherish, or a habit.

Three Hebrew men stood faithful to God and refused to worship the image, so Nebuchadnezzar had them thrown into a fiery furnace. Although he witnessed their supernatural deliverance and issued a decree about the power of their God, Nebuchadnezzar never acknowledged God personally. Knowing about God and even talking or acting like a believer is not the same as knowing Him personally and acknowledging Christ as your Savior.

Daniel chapter four records an open letter from King Nebuchadnezzar to all people, nations, and languages of the then-known world. His purpose in writing was to testify of the signs and wonders that God had done in his life. He is telling what "God has wrought toward me." It is no longer

just an official decree as recorded in Daniel 3:29. It is his own personal testimony.

Nebuchadnezzar begins with praise to God saying, "How great are His signs! How mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. His dominion is from generation to generation." After the fiery furnace miracle when the three Hebrew men were supernaturally delivered, Nebuchadnezzar knew there was a God, but did not acknowledge Him personally. Now he is praising and worshipping God. So, what happened in the intervening time that changed him so dramatically? Nebuchadnezzar's letter gives us the answer.

Nebuchadnezzar tells how he was at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace when he had a significant dream. He sought an interpretation for it by calling the wise men of Babylon to come and reveal the meaning. In response to the king's summons, here came the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers, but despite their best efforts, they could not give the interpretation. The world cannot understand the things of God because...

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
(1 Corinthians 2:14, NIV)

At last, Daniel--a young prophet of God whose Babylonian name was Belteshazzar--was called to come before the king. "Tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen and give me the interpretation," Nebuchadnezzar requested. And that is exactly what Daniel did (Daniel 4:19-27).

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, there was a great tree in the midst of the earth. Its height reached to heaven and it could be seen from the ends of the earth. The leaves were vibrant and the tree had much fruit--enough for every living creature. The beasts of the field took refuge under it and the fowls of heaven perched on its boughs.

Then Nebuchadnezzar saw what he called a watcher and a holy one come down from heaven with the command to:

*Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit. Let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from off his branches. Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man, and let a beast's heart be given unto him. Let seven times (seven years) pass over him.
(Daniel 4:14-16, NIV)*

Daniel was so shocked by Nebuchadnezzar's dream that he sat quietly for an hour with troubling thoughts. He was not only troubled by the interpretation, but most likely concerned about how to present it to the king in an appropriate way.

Finally the king told Daniel, "Don't let the dream or its interpretation trouble you." Daniel answered, "My lord, let this dream be to them that hate you and the interpretation to your enemies rather than to you!"

Having witnessed previous demonstrations of the wrath of the king, Daniel was quite courageous to tell him the interpretation. But Daniel delivered the difficult message, and did so with respect.

The tree which grew tall and strong and provided for every creature symbolized Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told him, "The tree is you, oh king. You have grown and become strong. Your greatness reaches even unto heaven and your dominion to the end of the earth." (Trees are often used in scripture to represent men or nations. See Ezekiel 31:3; Psalm 1:3; Jeremiah 17:8; and Isaiah 56:3.)

The watcher and the holy one were heavenly messengers who declared that the tree should be cut down and destroyed, although its stump and roots were to remain. The tree stump would be bound by iron and brass, left in the field with the beasts, and grow wet with the dew of heaven. Daniel declared, "This is the interpretation, Oh king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king." Then Daniel declared:

- You shall be driven from men.
- Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.
- You shall eat grass as oxen do.
- You shall be wet with the dew of heaven.

The stump of the tree and its roots would be left, meaning that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would eventually be restored. Only a stump would remain where previously animals and birds took shelter. No longer would there be any fruit. The stump, however, would be surrounded by brass and iron so that it could not be destroyed. Perhaps this referred to a fence that confined the mentally distraught king in safety or perhaps it is merely spiritually symbolic. Whatever it meant, it implied supernatural protection of the stump that remained.

All that Nebuchadnezzar had and all that he had been in the past was lost because of his own sin and rebellion. But God said, "Leave a stump, because someday this man will be restored to all I intended him to be." That is the same word

God is speaking over your life today. Despite the corrective judgment you may have experienced, the King will move once again in your life, even if all that is left is "a stump" of your former self.

Seven years would pass until the king acknowledged the Most High God. This was the purpose of the judgment: To cause Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge the one true God. Events in your life have been orchestrated by God to bring you to that same place: That you might come to acknowledge the one true God and allow the King to rule in your life.

After giving the interpretation, Daniel made a passionate plea for Nebuchadnezzar to forsake his sins, repent of his iniquities, and do what was right. Daniel suggested that if he repented, perhaps judgment could be avoided:

Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.
(Daniel 4:27, NIV)

It is interesting to note that God allowed an entire year to pass before executing judgment on Nebuchadnezzar. God's judgment sometimes seems slow in coming, but it inevitably comes. Delay is only because of His great mercy and grace. Nebuchadnezzar had twelve long months in which to contemplate the prophetic word he had been given and seek forgiveness for his sins, but he refused to do so. What about you? What is it going to take to get you to acknowledge your sin, repent, ask God for forgiveness, and be restored?

After a year passed, King Nebuchadnezzar was walking through his palace admiring its beauty. He said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom

by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Nebuchadnezzar did not acknowledge that God was the one who had blessed and prospered him. His statement is reminiscent of that made by the captain of the ill-fated ship, the Titanic, who said, "Not even God can sink this ship." It went down on its maiden voyage when it hit an iceberg and hundreds of lives were lost.

While the words were yet in the king's mouth, a voice from heaven confirmed all Daniel had prophesied:

- The kingdom will depart from you.
- They shall drive you from men.
- Your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.
- They shall make you eat grass as oxen.
- Seven years shall pass until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He will.

Immediately, Nebuchadnezzar became mentally deranged and was driven from men. He ate grass and his body was wet with the dew of heaven. His hair grew out like eagles' feathers and his nails grew like birds' claws. The king's mental problems are actually recognized by modern psychology as being related to a rare condition called "boanthropy", a severe form of schizophrenia in which a person believes and acts as if he is an animal.

Nebuchadnezzar continues his testimony by saying:

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded

as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.
(Daniel 4:34-37, NIV)

Prior to the events recorded in Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God, but only as an addition to the other pagan deities in which he believed (Daniel 2:47 and 3:28-29). When Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledged the one and only Most High God, his reason returned to him. Many of the mental conditions with which we struggle would be alleviated if only we would acknowledge God, ask and receive forgiveness, and deal with issues like pride, anger, and rage.

When Nebuchadnezzar finished his declaration regarding the one true God, his reason returned to him along with the glory, honor, and brightness of his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar's counselors and lords sought him out once more, which was miraculous as in those days they normally would have executed a king who had become powerless. God completely restored Nebuchadnezzar and reestablished him in his kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar lost all he that had through divine judgment for his sin, But God left a stump--and the stump grew again! In a final declaration of praise, Nebuchadnezzar said: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of

heaven. His works are truth and His ways just. Those who walk in pride He is able to abase."

It is one thing to acknowledge the existence of God, but quite another to come to know Him as your God. Nebuchadnezzar had witnessed the miracle of the preservation of the Jews in the fiery furnace. Daniel had been mightily used of God in his life by giving interpretations to his dreams and visions. But none of this drew Nebuchadnezzar to repentance. It took seven long years of severe judgment, but finally King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the one true God as his Lord and King.

How long will it take for you to acknowledge God as the Lord of your life? It is one thing to accept Him as your Savior, but is He exalted as King over every situation, every habit, every circumstance, and bondage? If not, ask Him to take control of every area of your life right now.

Due to divine judgment resulting from your sin, your losses may be great. But a "stump" remains--and that is all the King needs to restore you and to move once again in your life.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Hope In The Valley Of Achor

Joshua: The Checkmate Of Spiritual Defeat

Are you facing the checkmate of spiritual defeat? Do you feel like all hope is gone because of poor decisions you have made? Perhaps you have fallen into sin and your reputation has been ruined. Maybe you have been publicly defeated in spiritual battle. No matter what your failure, this checkmate of the enemy can be overcome by the King.

The Old Testament contains many stories about Israel, the nation God selected to represent Him to the world and through whose genealogical line Jesus Christ would come to earth. Their history is dotted with poor decisions, sins, and failures. These stories were recorded so that we could learn spiritual truths from them--both what to do and what not to do:

*Now all these things happened to them as examples,
and they were written for our admonition, upon whom
the ends of the ages have come.
(1 Corinthians 10:11)*

One of Israel's classic failures occurred just after they entered their promised land. God had promised the nation a beautiful land, including what is now called the state of Israel. The people traveled many miles and endured many failures and difficulties along the way to this land. The book of Joshua records how, finally, Israel entered into their promised land to claim their possession. God told Israel to eliminate the evil people occupying their land because He had repeatedly dealt with these nations, yet they had not turned to Him. Now it

was time for judgment upon them because of their gross immorality, child sacrifice, idolatry, and other terrible evils.

The first great battle faced by Israel after crossing the Jordan River occurred at the city of Jericho and is recorded in Joshua chapter 6. God gave Israel a unique strategy for taking this city. They were to march around the walls of the city in silence for six days. On the seventh day they were to march around seven times, the priests were to blow their trumpets, and the people were to shout because *"the Lord has given you the city"* (Joshua 6:16).

As Israel fulfilled God's detailed instructions, they experienced a tremendous victory over the city of Jericho. But we are not going to dwell on the battle at Jericho in this chapter because we do not have a problem with our victories in life. It is exciting to walk in the successes of our "Jericho" battles. Where we have our problems is when we face defeats. So we are going to move on to Joshua chapters 7 and 8 which record a major defeat experienced by God's people. Take time to read these passages before proceeding with this chapter, for they contain important strategies which provide the reason for, the results of, and the remedy to correct spiritual defeat.

The Reasons For Spiritual Defeat

The word "Achor" means "trouble," and that is exactly what Israel faced when they staged their attack against the small city of Ai. The story of Ai and the Valley of Achor begins in Joshua 7:1 with the key word "but." In Joshua 6 Israel was walking in victory, "but" chapter 7 finds them in trouble. When you are defeated in spiritual battle there are always reasons. In the story of Achor, there were four reasons for defeat, all of which are common in the failures you may

experience. These are in the areas of principles, pride, perception and prayerlessness.

Principles. Violating the principles of God--sin--results in defeat. God told Israel not to take any of the spoils of Jericho. They were to be dedicated to the Lord as they were the "first fruits" of battle. God warned:

"And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord."

(Joshua 6:18-19)

Joshua 7:1 records how a man named Achan took some of the accursed spoils of battle. His temptation followed the same pattern as that of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Like Eve, Achan "saw, desired, took, and hid." He said:

"When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

(Joshua 7:21)

Sin always begins in the mind. Thoughts of sin always precede the act. Achan thought, "Who will see? Who will know?" He saw only the immediate pleasure these things would bring and not the terrible long-term effects of his actions. If Achan had looked with eyes of faith instead of eyes of lust, he would have seen these items as accursed. Instead, he viewed them with his natural senses only.

Normally, Israel was allowed to keep the spoils of their battles, but in this first battle at Jericho the enemy's treasures were to be dedicated to the Lord. Sometimes, what was considered acceptable in the past is deemed wrong. There is no need to seek counseling or prayer for guidance about something that God explicitly forbids. When God says something is wrong, then it is wrong--whether He speaks this through His Word or specifically into your spirit.

Your spiritual battles are with the world, your flesh, and the devil. These work together to tempt you by the lust of the flesh, the lust of your eyes, and the pride of life. If you look on temptation with eyes of faith instead of eyes of lust, you will see it as that which is forbidden and as an "accursed thing." When you violate God's principles, it always affects others as well as yourself. Achan's sin affected all of Israel. God said:

"Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff." (Joshua 7:11)

Pride. Achan is not the only one at fault in this story. When Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai to view the city prior to the invasion, the men returned and told Joshua:

..."Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few." (Joshua 7:3)

Ai was a small city in comparison to Jericho which Israel had just conquered. These men proudly thought, "Ai should be no problem. We have faced bigger things and been victorious.

This is nothing to worry about." Israel was self-confident instead of being confident in God. There is no mention of "if it is the Lord's will," an attitude we are advised to have according to James 4:13-17.

In our own battles of life we often believe we can handle the lesser problems ourselves. But there is no encounter with the enemy so small that you do not need all of the resources God has provided in order to face it successfully. When you begin to move in self-confidence and pride and think that there is nothing to worry about, then you are moving into dangerous territory. There is no spiritual battle for which you do not need all of the available resources provided by God.

Perception. The men sent to survey Ai viewed things with their natural senses. They did not have enough spiritual perception to see beyond surface appearances and recognize the power of the enemy.

Following natural perception instead of spiritual insight led to inaccurate reporting. These men claimed that the warriors of Ai were just "a few" (Joshua 7:3), when in reality, there were 12,000 of them. When you live a carnal life based on your natural senses, you will make decisions based on fleshly perceptions. This leads to carnal plans which, when acted upon, always lead to defeat.

Prayerlessness. Joshua also bears some blame for the defeat at Ai. He listened to the reports of the men who returned from viewing the city, but there is no record that he prayed about the information he received. He immediately organized only 3,000 warriors to go up to Ai to battle.

Had Joshua taken time to pray, undoubtedly God would have revealed that there was sin in Israel and warned him not to go to battle. Had Joshua taken time to pray, he would have also

discovered that the pattern for attacking Ai was not to be the same as for Jericho. The "Ais" of life--representing the battles with the flesh--are not won the same way as the "Jerichos" of life which are representative of the world.

You cannot live in past victories or by what worked well yesterday. God has new strategies for each battle you face. In the book of Judges, a man named Gideon is told to reduce his army. In Joshua's case, he is told to take all the warriors to battle. You cannot limit God to a certain pattern. He is the One who continually declares, "I will do a new thing."

But Joshua apparently did not take time to pray. He sent a few of the troops to Ai. Some men were killed and the others fled before the enemy.

The Results Of Spiritual Defeat

Israel's defeat at Ai was due to violations in the areas of principles, pride, perception, and prayerlessness. These same issues will lead to your spiritual defeat if you allow them to operate in your life. Just as there are reasons for defeat, there are always dire results. God said:

...the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. (Joshua 7:12)

Because of sin, Israel was soundly defeated at Ai:

So about three thousand men went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as

far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted and became like water. Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads. And Joshua said, "Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies? The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?" (Joshua 7:4-9, NIV)

Note the results of Israel's defeat:

Joshua 7:4-5: Fleeing before the enemy.

Joshua 7:5: Death.

Joshua 7:5-6: Fear and despondency.

Joshua 7:7: Looking back to the past.

Joshua 7:8-9: Questioning.

What a sad picture! No longer is Israel a motivated and mobilized force for God. They are a discouraged people with a disheartened leader and they are questioning, fearful, and fleeing before the enemy.

Moses had warned Israel that if there was sin in their midst they could not defeat the enemy. If they were following the Lord, however, one soldier would chase 1,000 and two would put 10,000 to flight. Three Israeli soldiers could have defeated the entire army of Ai, had not sin separated them from God (Leviticus 26:8).

Violation of God's principles, your pride, carnal perception, and prayerlessness always render you immobile in the face of the enemy. But never view the final outcome on the basis of temporary defeat. Just as there are reasons and results for failure, there is always a remedy to correct these issues.

The Remedy For Spiritual Defeat

There is a remedy for every spiritual defeat, whether it be in the past, the present, or the future. If you have started your new life in Jesus and failed--if you have been defeated and taken captive by your enemy--you can recover!

...that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:26)

When you are walking in defeat, you are fulfilling the will of the enemy. God will help you recover, but you must also take steps to escape by following the Biblical principles of recovery. Joshua 7:10-13 reveals four steps to recover from defeat. These are revelation, repentance, restoration, and return.

Revelation. The first step of recovery is to receive a revelation concerning the problem. When Joshua finally went to prayer after their failure, God revealed to him that Israel had sinned: *"And the Lord said...Israel has sinned..." (Portions of Joshua 7:10-11).*

Ask God to reveal the "accursed thing" that is causing your spiritual defeat and standing between you and total victory over the enemy. It may be a habit, a recurring sin, unforgiveness, anger, etc.

It is important to note that individual sin affected the entire corporate body. God told Joshua that "they" (all of Israel) had sinned, not just Achan (Joshua 7:11). Never underestimate the damage one person's sin can do. David's disobedience resulted in the deaths of 70,000 people! Why would God blame a whole nation for the disobedience of one man? Because Israel was considered one people in the eyes of the Lord.

As the Body of Christ, all true believers are one in the Lord and sin in our midst affects us all. Your sin affects the cause of Christ. People around you know that you claim to be a Christian and when you act inappropriately, then they may think that all believers act that way. Individual sin does corporate damage, as demonstrated by one man's sin coming upon all men (Romans 5:12,15,17).

Repentance. The revelation of a problem is not enough to recover yourself from the snare of the enemy. You must deal with the issue on the basis of God's Word. There is a time to stop praying and begin to act upon what God has revealed to you.

God not only revealed the problem to Joshua, He told him exactly how to deal with it: *"So the Lord said to Joshua: 'Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?'"* (Joshua 7:10). God instructed Joshua to call the people together and deal with the sin in their midst. If you are to recover yourself from the snare of the enemy, you too must confront your sin. Joshua was quick to obey. It says he "rose up early in the morning" to follow God's instructions (Joshua 7:16).

The tribes appeared before Joshua man-by-man. Finally it was revealed that Achan was guilty. Joshua told him to confess and give glory to God. When you confess your sin, you are agreeing with God and this glorifies Him. As soon as

Achan confessed, Joshua sent men running to his tent to retrieve the sinful items. We cannot be too quick to deal with sin. Delay is disobedience, but...*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

Restoration. The next step after repentance is restoration. In this case, the accursed items are removed and Achan's entire family is punished. They are stoned to death in the Valley of Achor. The separation from God caused by Israel's violation of principles, carnal perception, pride, and prayerlessness is corrected. Israel is restored to fellowship with God when sin is eradicated.

You may question why the entire family was punished along with Achan. The family most likely knew and agreed with Achan's sin, as the items were hidden in their tent. Deuteronomy 24:16 declares that children cannot be held accountable for the sin of their parents, so the family would not have been punished had they not been participants in Achan's sin. Also, these were the days of Old Testament law, not the era of the grace and forgiveness that are now freely available through Jesus Christ. This sad event serves as a classic example of how desperately men needed a Savior to die for sin once and for all so that we could be saved from the penalties of sin--spiritual death and eternal judgment.

Return. When fellowship with God is broken by sin, recovery comes by returning to the point of failure and conquering the enemy. You must return to the spiritual battlefield and deal with your defeat. So, after the revelation of their sin, their repentance, and restoration, God's instructions to Israel were "Go up to Ai."

There can be no truce and no neutrality with the enemy. When you have failed, the enemy will speak words of defeat to you:

- "You might as well give up."
- "Everyone has lost confidence in you."
- "You are weak and good for nothing."
- "You will just fail if you try again."

But you must return to the battlefield. You can never move on and be successful in other battles until you win at "Ai," your place of failure. When Israel returned to Ai, this time they were victorious in battle.

The Door Of Hope

How many times you fail is not as important as what you learn from your failure: *"...for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again" (Proverbs 24:16)*. The Biblical remedy for recovery from failure as revealed in Joshua chapters 7-8 is revelation, repentance, restoration, and return.

When you follow God's remedy for recovery, He takes your valley of Achor (trouble) and turns it into a door of hope, declaring: *"I will give...the valley of Achor for a door of hope..." (Hosea 2:15)*. Joshua chapter 7 opens with dark picture of the Lord's anger kindled against His people, but in chapter 8 we find Israel marching forward again in victory. The King can turn your Valley of Achor into a place of hope instead of defeat.

Sitting there where you are in the darkness of defeat, you may have lost hope. But in your darkest hour, right there in your personal "valley of Achor", the King wants to restore your lost hope because *"...faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1)*. The Amplified Version renders this verse as follows:

Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]. (Hebrews 11:1, AMP)

If you are discouraged, depressed, and feeling spiritually dead you may think you are having a faith crisis. But quite often, such an experience is a hope crisis because the two are related. Hope is confident expectation and joyous anticipation regarding the future. You need your hope restored because your faith is closely related to hope. Faith gives substance to things hoped for. If you have no hope, you have nothing to which faith can give substance.

Faith provides the proof and conviction of things you do not see. Faith reveals things you cannot see with your natural senses. If you lose hope, your faith is affected and you no longer feed substance to your faith. Your spiritual vision is also affected, because hope feeds the faith that gives you the assurance of the things you do not see. If you lose hope, your heart is affected because...*"Hope deferred makes the heart sick"* (Proverbs 13:12).

Hope is related to your salvation because you are "... saved by hope..." (Romans 8:24). Hope provides a spiritual anchor for your soul: *"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul..."* (Hebrews 6:19). As long as you maintain your hope in God, you won't drift spiritually, experience repeated failures, or be tossed around by the waves of circumstances.

To renew your hope, look only to God and His Word. Be like Abraham, who believed God's promise of a son even though he was old and his wife was barren, and...

...who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. (Romans 4:18-21)

Joseph did not lose hope when he was sold into slavery, wrongly imprisoned, and forgotten. Moses never lost hope during forty long years in the wilderness. Job lost everything, was suffering physically, and was abandoned by his wife--yet he never lost hope that he would emerge victoriously from this dark chapter of his life.

The Apostle Peter failed by denying the Lord Jesus Christ at the time of the crucifixion, but he was restored again by Jesus after His resurrection. The Lord not only restored Peter to relationship with Him, He also gave him a divine commission to "feed my sheep" (John 21:16). The one who had failed was restored and commissioned to bring hope to others. God will do the same for you!

You never truly fail until you quit trying. Repent of your failure, renew your hope right there in the valley of your defeat, and get ready: The King is going to move once again in your life.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Give Me That Mountain

Caleb: The Checkmate Of Advanced Age

He was 85 years old. Everyone of his generation had died except for his friend, Joshua. His name was Caleb and he was part of a new generation that was nearing the border of their promised land to claim their God-given inheritance. Let's backtrack a bit for his story.

The books of Exodus and Numbers in the Bible record an exciting saga of the deliverance of God's people, Israel, from slavery in Egypt and their journey through the wilderness to the land which God had promised them. Approximately sixteen months after God delivered Israel out of Egyptian bondage, He brought them to the border of their Promised Land. From where they were camped, the Israelites could see the beautiful hills, fields, and pastures of the land which God had promised them as an inheritance. Can you imagine the excitement that filled the hearts and minds of the people of Israel as they gazed toward the land of Canaan? Behind them were the years of slavery in Egypt—the pain and sorrow, the cruel taskmasters, the bondage, anguish, discouragement, and defeat. Their difficult desert journey was over. Before them was the land of promise with all of the blessings of the covenant of God—prosperity, provision, protection, and peace.

The land belonged to them legally because of the promise from God, but receiving the promise was not the same as possessing it. The land was theirs unconditionally, but the possession of it was conditional and based upon their obedience. God told them: “...*if you will obey My voice in truth and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own*

peculiar possession and treasure from among and above all peoples; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (consecrated, set apart to the God)” (Exodus 19:5-6, AMP). They were to be a nation that was set apart to God in a land promised them through His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 13:17).

God sent the Angel of the Covenant before them and told them to:

*...obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.
(Exodus 23:21-22).*

There, poised at Kadeshbarnea on the border of their promised land, Moses told the Israelites:

*...Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.
(Deuteronomy 1:20-21)*

God instructed Israel to advance and take possession of the land. Their destiny was in their own hands. They had a choice: To obey God and possess the land, or to disobey God, forfeit their inheritance, and reap the punishment for their disobedience.

In preparation for the coming invasion, Moses sent twelve men, one from each of the tribes of Israel, to spy out the Promised Land. Their purposes was not to determine if Israel

should advance, but how they should advance. After exploring for forty days, the men returned. The entire congregation was anxiously waiting to hear what these twelve leaders had to say.

The spies told Moses, *“We came to the land to which you sent us; surely it flows with milk and honey; this is its fruit”* (Numbers 13:27, AMP). Can you imagine the excitement among the congregation as these twelve men showed them the fruit they had brought from the land? Just as God promised, the soil was rich and fertile. The spies brought back pomegranates, figs, and a single cluster of grapes that was so large it took two men to carry it on a pole between them. At last, their waiting was over. Soon they would be enjoying the fruit of the land and the blessings God had promised them.

Turning Back At The Border

But then ten of the spies reported that *“...the people who dwell there are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover there we saw the sons of Anak (of great stature and courage)”* (Numbers 13:28, AMP). The men continued their report saying *“...there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight”* (Numbers 13:33).

Upon receiving this negative report, concern spread among the Israelites and they began to express their doubts and fears. They embraced a "grasshopper mentality" instead of believing the promises of God. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, tried to encourage the people saying, *“Let us go up at once and possess it; we are well able to conquer it”* (Numbers 13:30). But the other men said, *“We are not able to go up against the people (of Canaan); for they are stronger than we are”* (Numbers 13:31). The voice of unbelief said,

"We are not able." The voice of faith said, "We are well able."

God had told the Israelites to advance and take possession of the land. He had assured them that He would drive out their enemies before them. No further discussion was necessary. No questioning. No hesitating. All that was required was for them to obey the voice of God. The voice of God had been confirmed by the voice of faith when Caleb said, "*We are well able to conquer it.*" He and Joshua pleaded with the people not to rebel against God (Numbers 14:7-9). God's people had a choice: To listen to the voice of faith or listen to the voice of unbelief, retreat from the giants, and rebel against God.

Instead of going forward to take possession of the land as God had commanded, the Israelites listened to negative reports which created doubt and resulted in disobedience. They chose their will above God's will. They rejected Him as the supreme authority, the King of their lives. They actually wanted to return to slavery in Egypt rather than to obey God and advance at His command. Moses and Aaron recognized the serious ramifications of their rebellion and fell on their faces in intercession before God. Joshua and Caleb, in great anguish, tore their clothes and pleaded with the people not to rebel. But the children of Israel refused to listen. Once they made the choice to go their own way, nothing anyone could say or do altered their decision.

The people were actually ready to stone Caleb and Joshua! They wanted to ease their consciences by silencing those who represented God's will and spoke His Word. As they were getting ready to do this, the glory of God appeared before the people and He was ready to destroy the entire congregation! Moses interceded for them and God graciously forgave their rebellion, but He did not let them go unpunished. Because of

their rebellion, God said that all of that generation--with the exception of Joshua and Caleb--would die in the wilderness: *"For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun"* (Numbers 26:65). Checkmate! But the story isn't over yet...

Give Me My Mountain

Imagine: Forty long years of wilderness wandering. Desert conditions. Hardships. Every friend and family member of that generation dying. Funerals every day and gravesites dotting the pathway that they traveled. Yet, for forty long years, Caleb held on to the dream. He reflected on the beauties of the promised land. He remembered the mountain that Moses had declared would belong to him. Despite the death, despite the difficult wilderness lifestyle, despite his advancing age, Caleb held on to the dream. He believed that God would do what He had promised. He believed that his King had one more move!

Forty years later, Israel stood once again at the border of their promised land. This time, they would enter in. They would take Jericho, Ai, and other cities. Under the leadership of Joshua, they would take possession of the land.

When the major battles had subsided, Caleb came to Joshua to remind him of the promise Moses had made. Caleb said...

..."Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt:

but I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's forever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God'." (Joshua 14:6-9)

Caleb had carried this promise in his heart for forty long years! Now, he was ready to claim his territory:

"And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said." And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. (Joshua 14:10-14)

Quitting Too Soon

What if Caleb had given up his dream? After all, everyone except his friend Joshua had died. There seemed to be no end to the wilderness trek. He could have become hopeless. He could have abandoned his vision. Perhaps, after all, he was

too old. He could have given up his dream too soon, right on the brink of his miracle.

In many cultures, older people are made to feel dispensable. Employers have mandatory retirement ages. Retirement communities and rest homes abound. The retirement mentality is perpetuated by society. Kick back. Take it easy.

But there is no such thing as retirement in the Kingdom of God. Do you see any of the prophets, evangelists, or great leaders in the Bible giving up their spiritual visions and retiring?

Here are some true-life examples of people who did not give up on their dream, despite their age:

- At age 71, Katsusuke Yanagisawa of Japan climbed Mt. Everest.

- At age 77, Grandma Moses, who would become a renowned artist, started painting.

- At age 88, Claude Pepper was the oldest man ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

- At age 89, Albert Schweitzer ran a hospital in Africa.

- At age 91, Allan Stewart of New South Wales completed a Bachelor of Law degree at the University of New England. He said he finished what would have normally been a six-year degree in four and a half years "because of my age."

- At age 96, Harry Bernstein published his first book, "The Invisible Wall," which recounted his childhood in an English mill town. He started writing it at 93 as

a way to deal with the loss of his wife of almost 70 years.

-At age 102, Alice Porlock of Great Britain published her first book, "Portrait of My Victorian Youth."

So...what will you do, despite your age?

Age Means Nothing

Perhaps, like the aged Caleb, you have held on to the promises of God for years. Now you are old, and you are wondering if those promises will ever be manifested. You must come to the realization that age is no barrier to the plans and promises of God. The psalmist declared, *"Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee" (Psalm 39:5).*

Abraham and Sarah had a child when they were too old to bear children. Same for Zacharias and Elizabeth. Simeon and Anna, serving faithfully in the temple for years, finally saw the promise of God fulfilled through Jesus Christ. Simeon declared: *"Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).*

The Bible declares:

*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.
(Psalm 92:12-14)*

Are you flourishing? Are you still bringing forth spiritual fruit? If not, perhaps you have given up too soon.

Make your prayer as that of King David who declared: *"Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.... Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth"* (Psalms 71:9 and 18).

You have a legacy to leave the next generation. It is not time to retire, It is not time to draw back. It is not time to lose hope and give up. The King has one more move to make, despite your age!

You may have waited forever to see God's promises fulfilled in your life. You may feel like you are in a spiritual desert, wandering around in circles in the wilderness. Do not look at the harsh environment. Do not look around at those who are retiring or giving up on their dreams. Keep your focus on the vision of your mountain, the promises that God made to you. His promises have no expiration date.

Despite your age, the King has one more move to make in your life. So, what are you waiting for? Take the first step right now, today! Mountains are conquered one step at a time, be it Mt. Everest, Pike's Peak, or Mt. Shasta. Spiritual mountains are conquered the same way. So why don't you take the first step right now. Regardless of the circumstances. Regardless of your age. Make your move, and the King will make His.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Ultimate Checkmate

Lazarus: The Checkmate Of Death

If you have recently lost a loved one, or you are facing such a loss, you may be wondering how you will ever survive the experience. Death seems to be the ultimate checkmate of life.

In John 11, there is the story of a man named Lazarus who died, and his sisters felt much the same way.

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." When Jesus heard that, he said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was...Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already...Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Jesus saith unto her, "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha saith unto him, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in

me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" She saith unto him, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him...Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, "Where have ye laid him?" They said unto him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, "Behold how he loved him!" And some of them said, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone." Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." Jesus saith unto her, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound

about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, "Loose him, and let him go." Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. (John 11:1-45)

In the natural, it seemed that Jesus arrived too late because Lazarus had already died, but in the spiritual realm, He was right on time. Sometimes delays set you up for an even greater miracle from God. If you have lost someone through illness or tragedy, God didn't fail you. Believe that He will accomplish something even greater through that loved one's death. If you are facing the eminent death of a loved one, don't give up. Keep on praying and believing for a miracle.

My precious niece Michelle died an untimely death when she was shot and killed by her fiancé at age eighteen. It was a devastating experience, but from that tragedy came a book entitled "*Bitter Waters*" that has literally spanned the globe and changed thousands of lives. God accomplished something great through her death. Her blood was not shed in vain.

Jesus declared to Martha, "*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*" (John 11:25). There is no past day of miracles. He is the healer and the deliverer. Jesus declared that Lazarus's sickness was not unto death. This statement indicates, however, that there is a sickness unto death.

There are two possible end-results of a sickness: It will either be a sickness unto death or a sickness unto the glory of God. The Bible reveals that every person has an appointed time to die (Hebrews 9:27; Ecclesiastes 3:2). The goal of healing is not immortality. Divine healing does not achieve this any more than medicine does. Even those raised from the dead by Jesus eventually died, including Lazarus.

Elisha, the great prophet of God who ministered many miracles of healing, became sick with "*the sickness whereof he would die*" (2 Kings 13:14). Do not be disturbed when Christians, who believe in and have ministered divine healing, die from sickness. This is what happened to Elisha, yet years later his bones had enough power to raise a dead man!

If someone you loved has recently died despite your fervent prayers for their healing, God did not fail you. Death is part of life until Jesus returns and the last enemy--death--is destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26). You and your loved ones are no more immune to death than you are to sin.

We often make the mistake of living bound by the parameters of time, as we know it, instead of eternity. As believers, we are already living eternal life whether we live it on this or the other side of death. If a person isn't healed in this life, then he receives the ultimate healing as he is ushered into the presence of the King.

Death is swallowed up in victory. For some, that victory will be experienced this side of death. God will raise you up and you will glorify Him by your testimony, life, and ministry. This happened to my dear friend Valerie who was given six months to live and told to "set her house in order" and prepare to die. God miraculously moved in her life and we enjoyed over 40 years of friendship and ministry together before she went to be with the Lord. A sickness like this is for the glory of God because when the person is healed, the King is glorified.

The story of the man blind since birth recorded in John 9 illustrates this. Jesus said of this blind man:

“Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in Him.” (John 9:3)

When the blind man was healed, God received glory through his testimony. Lazarus’ sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God (John 11:4).

Other people receive the ultimate healing as they pass through death and victoriously enter the presence of the Lord with body, soul, and spirit perfectly whole. That happened to my friend Marie, who bravely fought a battle with cancer for several years. We prayed for her healing until when she finally told us, “It’s time for me to go.” Right before she died, she received a beautiful revelation of heaven. The King had one more move, and Marie entered the presence of her Lord perfectly whole.

Death is not a final checkmate for the true believer. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Death is an enemy, the last enemy that will be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26). The resurrection of Jesus was the "first fruits" to confirm that death is conquered, although not yet destroyed. It is the terror of this enemy that is disarmed for the believer:

*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
(1 Corinthians 15:55-57)*

God gives dying grace as well as living grace. For a believer, death is the ultimate healing, not the ultimate checkmate. Because He lives, we too shall live in perfect bodies, free from pain and sickness:

*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.
(1 Corinthians 15:42-44)*

The Ultimate Checkmate

On a beautiful, green hillside in Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, California, there are five graves. Five times, I have stood beside an open grave as one-by-one, my family members were buried: The grandfather I loved as a child; the grandmother who taught me of God; the sister with whom I shared my early years; my mother, who turned to the Lord in the closing days of her life; and my precious niece who was like my own daughter.

I have visited those graves many times over the years. It is a sacred place where I have wrestled with difficult issues and gained new perspective on my life. Every time I visit, I quote God's Word over the graves of my loved ones:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up

*together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.
(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)*

Over 2000 years ago, Satan thought he had executed the ultimate checkmate when Jesus died on the cross. But three days later, in splendor and majesty, the King arose from the grave. The King had one more move! Death was not the ultimate checkmate in His life, nor is it in our lives. Because He lives, we too shall live.

I can't think of anywhere I would rather be than standing by those five graves on Resurrection Day. I really would like to be there to see the King make that miraculous move in their lives.

GET READY!

THE KING IS ABOUT TO MOVE

Get ready. The King is about to move in the checkmates of your life!

No matter how desperate your situation--even if it looks like you have lost everything--the King has one more move. How do I know this? How can I be so confident as to declare this to you?

I know because our King has a well-documented history of last moves in His Word. I know because:

-Seas don't split open to allow people to pass through on dry ground.

-Water doesn't just spring forth from a rock.

-Food doesn't just accumulate on the ground every night.

-An old man holding up his arms does not determine the outcome of a war.

-Thick city walls don't just fall down flat when people blow horns.

-Men thrown into furnaces and lion's dens do not survive.

-A jar of oil doesn't just keep refilling itself.

-Dead men don't walk out of their graves.

-Wading into a dirty river doesn't cure leprosy.

-The blind don't see, the deaf hear, or cripples walk just because someone touches them.

-Threatening storms don't just stop because someone talks to them.

-Shackles don't just fall off and prison doors open automatically.

All of these supernatural events, and many others recorded in God's Word, occurred because the King made one more move.

At this point, you are probably convinced that the Bible is a history of checkmate situations where the King had one more move. You may be thinking, however, that your difficult situation is different. But the Apostle Peter declared:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.
(1 Peter 5:8-10)

Your checkmate situation is not unique. Satan is continuously prowling the earth throwing up barriers. The same things you are going through, others are experiencing. The same God that sustains them in these challenges will also perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you through your affliction.

One of the darkest days in history was that dismal afternoon when they placed the body of Jesus into a cold tomb in a Jerusalem hillside. His life had been snuffed out and it appeared that His ministry was over. All hope was gone, His followers were discouraged, and it seemed that the enemy had triumphed. It appeared to be the greatest checkmate in history.

But three days later, early in the morning, when His friends and disciples came to the tomb to anoint a dead body they left with news of a living Savior! Jesus had been resurrected in power and majesty. The King had made one more move!

The book of Revelation describes a final checkmate that will be attempted in the end-time by the rebellious armies of this world under the leadership of Satan. Just when it appears all hope is gone, our King will split the clouds of heaven and make His move. The enemy of our soul will be conquered once and for all. The King will have the last and final move!

As we journey together towards the twilight of time on earth as we know it, we will continuously experience checkmates in life. In these dark times of seeming defeat, always remember that behind every circumstance there is a supernatural power at work, the King, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Do not struggle. Do not despair. Refuse to retreat from life in defeat. In every checkmate of your life, the King always has one more move!