

How to Take Back Your Territory

The devil bombards you with one crisis after another so that you will give up. You must learn to fight back.

As I was walking to my car from the grocery store recently, I was swept along by several strong gusts of wind. They caused traffic lights to sway, flags to ripple and pop, and drivers to take extra caution. Leaves, paper and other loose items in the wind's path were helplessly tossed about.

Suddenly I realized how very much like faith that wind was. Driven by the potency of God's Word, the assurance of Christ's love and the power of the Holy Spirit, faith operates in much the same way. It sweeps past obstacles and hindrances, clearing debris such as fear, doubt and unbelief out of the way and taking authority over the circumstances and conditions that threaten to impede our promises.

Jesus observed that "'from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force'" (Matt. 11:12, NKJV).

The force He refers to is akin to the force expended when an army storms a city. Just as the goal of the invading army is to completely capture and take dominion over the fortified city it assails, the prevailing determination of our faith is to achieve—and receive—its desired effect.

To be sure, there are opposing forces to contend with. The residents of that besieged city have no desire to become the victims of a successful invasion. They will do everything in their power to prevent or subvert an attack.

In a similar way, the enemy of our soul fights tooth and nail the purposeful exercising of our faith and wages seemingly

incessant warfare against us in an effort to wear us down. He strives to turn our focus away from the one who has given us the promises we're standing on and toward the weariness and fatigue we may be experiencing.

Though these are natural byproducts of battle, in the hands of the enemy they become instruments of propaganda with the singular assignment of making us believe that God is uncaring, unsympathetic and distant at a time we feel we need Him most.

The devil doesn't stop there, as he is not content with utilizing only the age-old strategy of bringing into question the character of God. He takes the attack to a deeper level, using the thorniness of our circumstances to undermine the Word of God to which we cling and make us believe that our conditions will never change, that our destinies will never be fulfilled, and that we wait in vain for God to work in our lives.

His goal is to make us give up entirely—and he will stop at nothing to bring us to the point of surrender. Consider his treatment of the patriarch Job, who held to his integrity in the face of excruciating testing.

Job refused to heap curses upon God, whom he knew to be his source of hope and strength. When the enemy realized his initial plan wasn't working—even though he had destroyed Job's cattle, his children, his relationships and the stability of his life—he stepped up his campaign and sought to touch Job directly.

Counting upon what he knew about human nature, Satan said to God: “‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’” (Job 2:4-5).

What a wicked—but exceptionally clever—strategy. In addition to stealing, killing and destroying the most important things

and people in Job's life, the devil shrewdly depended upon the likelihood that by afflicting Job personally and directly, he could achieve the fiendish outcome he desired.

What better way to overcome believers in Christ than by bombarding us with crisis after crisis that leaves us in a state of physical, financial or emotional lack, or even loss? What better way to erode our faith in God—and consequently our confidence and assurance of victory—than to attempt to manipulate us into a state of mind-numbing weariness, crippling depression and humiliating disappointment?

Calculating and cunning, the enemy of our soul expects us to engage in spiritual combat and is not easily daunted by the ferocity of our initial resistance and undertakings of defense. No, he reasons, let me wage warfare against them for a season, and then we will see who comes out on top.

Though Job did not relinquish his trust in God and never cursed Him, he did succumb to agonizing questions of the purpose of his own existence. The dire extremity of his circumstances caused him to curse not only the day he was born but also the fact that he had ever come to be alive.

Hear the cry of his spirit as he asks: "'Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?'" (Job 3:11).

Lay Hold of Your Faith

Considering the intense spiritual warfare that believers face, it is not surprising that we, like Job, are sometimes brought to the point of reasoning that it would have been better not to have been born at all than to have to deal with the pain we are confronted with. Nevertheless, I encourage you to take heart. Always be mindful of the force of the wind of faith.

David said, "I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the

living" (Ps. 27:13). He does not offer any flowery, sickly sweet "pie in the sky" platitudes. He is realistic in his assessment of the effect that opposition, negativity and delay can exert upon the life of the believer.

David knew swords and shields get heavy and that warriors get weary in battle and sometimes even have to retreat to regroup. He was sensitive to the fact that if everything had been left up to him he would have buckled and collapsed under the pressures that had been heaped upon him, and consequently he rightfully attributed the veracity of his confidence to the benevolence and goodness of God.

If we are honest, we must admit we share this testimony of David and are cognizant of the fact that the victories and successes we enjoy in our walk of faith are unquestionably due to God's faithfulness. We rest in the security of the knowledge that no matter what the devil says and does, our Lord will move in our lives and will answer our prayers—our faith will be honored and not rejected. Yes, weeping may last for a night, but by faith we believe joy is coming in the morning.

Fortunately, God has graciously made tenacity a built-in component of faith, and this tenacity kicks in at just the right time so we will hold on and refuse to let go. It causes us to fight back when circumstances try to dictate that we give in, makes us say yes when everything and everyone around us is saying no.

Buoyed by the encouragement of the Holy Spirit and the life-giving power of God's Word, we are emboldened to rise up and storm the gates that previously obstructed the attainment of promises and blessings. We come to enjoy a supernatural release in prayer that transcends life's circumstances and supersedes the effects of any pain our trials may be causing.

Like the apostle Paul, we bask in the intimacy that develops

as a direct result of knowing Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. Surprisingly, a divine paradox unfolds: The strategy that the devil used against us to debilitate us is empowering us!

The strength of Christ is made perfect in our weakness, and the biblical truths we learn through the trying and testing of our faith bring forth a bounty of spiritual fruit. Our discernment sharpens, our witness deepens and our ministry to others takes on a much greater anointing.

Because the exercising of our faith is causing us to see Christ in a light we had not seen Him in before, we come to realize that now we also are coming to know and experience Him in a way that we previously had not.

Instead of speaking defeat and being overcome by fear, we are able to speak victory and give vent to faith. In the very presence and face of weariness we find that our faith gives rise to an intestinal fortitude that just utterly refuses to give up.

We put on “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Is. 61:3). Instead of being vilified, God is glorified.

In the throes of his dilemma, Job was able to attest, “‘For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another’” (Job 19:25-27).

Clearly, his response wasn’t always perfect. God had to rebuke him for the rashness of some of the statements he made and for the “whiney” and petulant attitude he sometimes displayed.

All of us can relate. When we review things after the season of testing is over, we are rueful and even ashamed of some things we thought, said and did in the heat of the trial. We

see just when and where we overreacted and are able to count all the “pity parties” we threw. We become regretfully aware of how time that should have been spent in prayer and praise was instead wasted through murmuring.

But isn’t God good? In spite of the missteps Job made and the blunders we make, He still comes through for us. He keeps working on us and with us until our cloudy, misguided thinking and perception become crystal clear and precise.

Instead of allowing us to incessantly bumble around being ineffectual, the Lord sees to it that we become adept at wielding the weapons of our warfare. When He is assured that we have become spiritually enriched, He goes beyond what we ask or think and does for us what He did for Job—He gives us “double for our trouble.”

The Bible tells us: “The Lord restored Job’s losses. ... Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10.) Thank God, the exercising of faith has its privileges.

My friend, what’s standing in the way of your breakthrough? Renounce all fear, doubt and unbelief, and determine right now that you will allow yourself to be driven only by the wind of faith.

Unleash its prevailing power and watch obstacles, hindrances and obstructions be taken by storm. See the fortified city that represents the blocking of the manifestation of your promises? Release the prevailing power of your faith—and take it!

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