

The Lion, the Bear, and Goliath

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This teaching could actually have several names. It has much to do with God's requirement for His children to walk in faith before Him. It has to do with His children entering into their inheritance. It has much to do with the character of the sons and daughters that God will grant unprecedented kingdom authority to in this day. It is my hope that some who struggle with fear will be encouraged, as they read of my own experience, to walk worthily before the Father. I have never been what I would consider to be a bold person. I have been beset by many fears, but I have found God to be greater than my fears time and time again. Joyce Myers has a teaching called "Do it Afraid" and I will admit that this is often how I have followed God's leading, with fear and trembling entrusting myself to a faithful and loving God.

We sometimes have a view of certain Biblical personalities as being cut from a different mold than us. We think they were not beset with our petty weaknesses of the flesh, with doubts, fears, and uncertainty. In thinking this we actually make things more difficult for ourselves because when we find these weaknesses resident in our frame we become convinced that we are not cut from the same cloth as the saints of God whom we read about as overcomers. But let me assure you, they all experienced these same fleshly battles.

Abraham, the father of faith was afraid that he would be killed by foreigners when he sojourned in their land because of the beauty of his wife. He therefore had her passed off as his sister and she was even taken to be another man's wife, but God protected her from any sexual involvement.

Jacob ran for his life from the anger of his brother who vowed to kill him. He later deceived his father-in-law and snuck away from his household to avoid a confrontation with him. Later, as he approached his homeland, he was gripped with fear at the prospect of meeting his brother again and he was afraid that he and his wives and children would be killed. He took steps to at least spare some of them, even when God had told him to return to his homeland and God vowed to be with him.

David, who is often thought to be as fearless of an individual as there ever was wrote so many Psalms that expressed how his soul was being overwhelmed by his trials and adversaries that it is impossible to think that he didn't struggle with these same human feelings of weakness. He cried out over and over for God to come to him quickly lest he should perish and his soul should be swallowed up in despair.

But how about the New Testament? Wasn't Paul a man who endured so many things and who did so courageously without any fear at all? Listen to his own words.

I Corinthians 2:1-4

1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

3 **And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.**

4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
(NAS)

It seems somehow incongruent that Paul could preach "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power", yet he was physically "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." Yet Paul understood that God's power is not shown through our natural strength, but through our weakness. It is in our weakness that we deem ourselves incapable of performing anything of eternal value so that we throw ourselves unreservedly over onto the Father and say "God, if anything of worth or value is to come forth it must come from You, for I am unable to accomplish it." This acknowledgment of our weakness opens the door for the power of God to be manifest.

This has often been my petition and prayer before the Father as I was faced with an opportunity to teach or preach to a gathering of believers. I would cry out, "Father, this message You have placed on my heart cannot be given in my strength or by convincing words of man's wisdom. Father, only if You move by Your spirit will life come forth. Only if You prevail by Your Spirit can eyes see and ears hear and lives be changed. Father, I am totally dependent upon You. Father, may You move and accomplish all that is upon Your heart in this place this day."

It is from our weakness that we release God to move in power. If we feel sufficient, then we will try to accomplish that which can only be performed by the Spirit through our own efforts. This is folly, but it is done thousands of times a day throughout this nation and around the world among the saints of God.

What I would like to speak to you through all of this is that if you feel unable to accomplish the things that God asks you to do, then you are right on track. If you feel

weak, if you tremble at the prospect of going where God sends you and doing what He asks you to do, then you are a perfect candidate to see the power of God and the might of His Spirit released through you.

This has been my experience as a minister of God and as a son of His as I have sought to respond to His requests upon my life. I would like to share a few of my experiences so that you might be encouraged and built up and know that you too have what it takes to see God's power manifested in your life.

From my youth I have been beset with feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. I felt that I was somehow inferior to other people and that I was lacking in certain vital areas that I really couldn't define, but which I felt nonetheless. I rarely looked people in the eyes when I spoke to them because of my insecurity. I was placed in a public speaking class once when I was in High School and the first day we had to state our name and say one short fact about ourselves. I was mortified. I turned red and stammered and sweated and I went immediately afterward and dropped the class.

I became so frightened about being in the public eye and put on the spot that I would avoid every situation that held fear for me. I was consumed with a fear of other people and their opinions of me, thinking that people would see my lack and failings and I would somehow be rejected. One of the most trying episodes for me was getting a haircut. While getting a haircut I was a captive and could not flee until it was over. I was afraid that I would get nervous while getting a haircut and that it would be noticed. I would begin to sweat profusely and this was impossible for the barber to not notice since my hair would be glistening with sweat while he was trying to cut it. Haircuts for me became miserable times as I tried to do everything to not think about getting nervous, only to fail time after time and to have my head dripping with sweat while the barber cut my hair. I even had a barber hand me a towel to dry my hair and wipe my brow as he noticed my discomfort.

I share these things with you to show you that I have not been a bold or self confident person. You can then understand that when I tell you how I have seen the power of God manifested in my life that God has done these things through a weak and insignificant vessel that He has chosen to display His power through. We are told that He has chosen the weak and the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

First I will tell you that God has taken someone who could not even say his name in public and He has called me to publicly proclaim the word of God. This I have done now from my early twenties and God has used my own insecurity to cause me to cast

myself upon Him for His strength, His enabling, and His ability to have His word proclaimed. I have often stood upon God's own words to Moses, "Did I not create man's lips? I will be with your mouth and give you the words to speak." In our weakness we look to the promises of God and we press into them and rely heavily upon them. It is then that we see His power manifested.

I want to share three specific occasions that the Father has challenged me to step forth in faith and how He has been there to support and sustain me each time. I share these because in this day such steps of faith are being mandated by the Father for all of those who will go forth with Him into the land of their inheritance. The Father has specifically shown me that these three trials equate to David's trials with the lion, the bear, and Goliath.

I have two children, Kristin who is 12 and Josiah who is 10. Both of my children were born with a hereditary bone disease called Osteogenesis Imperfecta, which is also called Brittle Bone disease. By the time my son was born my daughter had already broken four bones. Soon after my son was born he broke his first bone as well. At this time some people told my wife and I about government SSI benefits that were available to children with disabilities. Without praying about whether we should apply for these benefits that provided complete medical coverage and a monthly stipend that amounted to between \$300 - \$400, we went ahead and applied.

Remarkably, my daughter who had broken four bones was turned down while my son who had only broken one was accepted. This I now know to be of God, for He wanted to demonstrate something to us. From this date forward my daughter never broke another bone while my son proceeded to break twelve bones, one of which required surgery and another required anesthesia while the bone was set in place. He did all this by the age of seven.

I was very distraught about my son's condition. He was not able to play normally with other kids. Other parents were even afraid to have him over for fear that he might become injured. I began to pray to God about his situation and to seek God for healing. During this time God spoke to me and He told me that He could heal my son, but that I would have to rely totally upon God and not upon government disability insurance. If I asked God to heal him yet continued to keep the SSI coverage then I was being double-minded and God required a step of faith and obedience on my behalf in order to heal my son. I considered that since my daughter was turned down for the coverage she had not broken another bone, but my son had broken eleven more.

When it came down to it there wasn't much of a choice. I could either keep the insurance coverage and they would pay for the medical expenses every time my son broke another bone, or I could cancel the coverage and trust God to heal him. In the end my wife and I made the right decision. We canceled his SSI coverage and committed our son to the care of God. My son had broken two bones in the year leading up to this decision and was freshly out of a cast at the time, so this went against everything we could see. But we are called to walk by faith, not by sight.

It has now been over three years since we followed God in this decision and our son has not broken another bone. God told us not to baby him, but to allow him to do all the things that boys do. My son skateboards, rides bikes, plays on trampolines, etc., and God has preserved him in perfect health. This was facing the lion for us.

During the next year God began speaking to me about trusting Him for the health of our entire family. I was working as a computer professional at a hospital and I had excellent health insurance at very reasonable rates. God spoke to me that I was to cancel this insurance and trust Him for the health of our whole family. This also coincided with God dealing with the same issues of faith at the church among which I was an elder and a pastor. This led to a tremendous struggle in my family as well as among the ministers of the church, and a lot of emotional heat was generated by the fears inherent in the fallen flesh of man.

At the hospital I worked at you could only make changes to insurance coverage one time during the year, this being in December. After struggling greatly with the issue within our family, my wife and I finally came to a verbal agreement that we were going to cancel coverage when the window of opportunity arrived. However, a test came just prior to this date.

Several weeks before the date that I could drop my insurance I began to manifest symptoms of diabetes. I began experiencing dry cottony mouth and constant thirst. I had extremely frequent urination, even having to get up 5 or 6 times a night to use the bathroom and get another drink of water. I experienced blurred vision and occasional dizziness. One day while at work I became dizzy and, being right there in the emergency room, I asked them to check me out and they checked my blood sugar and it was about 370 when it should be no higher than 120. The attending doctor told me I was diabetic and that I needed to go see my family physician and get started on a diabetic regimen for treatment.

Well, I knew what God had spoken to me about trusting Him for our health and His

instructions to cancel my health insurance. The timing of this physical attack, just weeks before I could cancel this insurance seemed more than coincidental. I knew it was a test. The pressure was poured on even more. Some nurses I knew at the hospital had heard about my case and they dealt with diabetic education and treatment. They began telling me regularly that I needed to see a doctor quickly. They gave me brochures about diabetes and they told me horror stories of amputated limbs, blindness, organ failure, and other effects of leaving diabetes untreated. They told me that they had patients in the hospital at that moment whose blood sugar was no worse than mine and these patients were on intravenous insulin drips.

I struggled greatly during the next weeks and my symptoms persisted. I became nervous and distracted by all that was coming against me and I even was so distracted that I pulled right out in front of an incoming van while driving and only avoided a collision because my wife screamed and I slammed on the brakes. I had great pressure from family to not cancel insurance, but again my choices seemed pretty plain.

As I considered it, I could go to a doctor and begin treatment for diabetes, a treatment I would be on for the rest of my life, or I could cast myself wholly over onto the Lord and trust Him to bring complete healing. The prospects of being healed when compared to lifelong diabetic management, knowing that there was no medical cure for diabetes and the condition usually worsened with age, caused me to prefer entrusting myself to God with anticipation of complete healing.

I need to mention that God had brought the issue of walking in faith with Him to the forefront of the ministers among which I was a part, and I knew that my decision had implications that went beyond my life to the body of Christ. God showed me that our promised land was defined by His names and that one of His names is Jehovah Rapha, the God that heals. In order to go in and possess the land we have to do battle, and fear is one of the enemies in the land that has to be conquered. I knew that God's challenge and the assault I was facing were not coincidental, but related.

Once again, in fear and trembling, I chose obedience and I cast myself over onto God wholly. I canceled health coverage on our whole family and I never went to see a physician for treatment of diabetes. Right after I took this step of faith I began miraculously to lose weight. I was not on a diet. I had tried to lose weight for years without success, but now the pounds seemed to melt away without effort. All the symptoms of diabetes disappeared completely and to this date they have not returned. God brought complete healing to my body. This was facing the bear.

I must say that looking back on these steps of faith and obedience, even if they were done in fear and trembling, is a great faith booster. To see that God challenged us to step out in faith and to see how He has perfectly rewarded those steps of faith is a real source of courage and strength. It has allowed us to face even greater trials. It has also been a tremendous testimony to our children. My son Josiah has a plaque on his wall and it has his name on it with this meaning, "Jehovah Heals." It is no coincidence that my son has manifested the reality that God does indeed heal. God took a boy who had a hereditary bone disease that has no cure and no proven treatment, a boy that had been breaking multiple bones every year, and He has healed him. I am thrilled when my son asks me if he can go play ball with the neighbor kids and without hesitation I can say "Yes son. Run along and play."

During this time the other ministers of the body I was a part of were not doing too well in facing the challenges that God was bringing to them. God had shown me that two particular areas were set before us as a body of believers to go in and possess the land. The first was the part of our inheritance defined by God's name Jehovah Rapha. The second was also defined by a name of God. This one was Jehovah Jireh, God our provider.

Over and over God brought the ministers and members of this body to tests in the area of health and finances and unfortunately the tests were failed more often than not. As a group, the ministers could not agree with what God was doing in our midst. Personal fears for individual health and financial issues led to missed opportunities to take a step of faith and obedience over and over again. The results were seen in the body as health and financial troubles became more and more pronounced.

Finances became an even more troubling area than health among the body. God began in some extraordinary ways to bring the issue of trusting Him for finances to the forefront. He even brought the head pastor of this body into contact with a couple who had been living totally by faith in the area of their finances for several decades and who had written a book of their experiences. A copy of this book was given to each minister, including myself, and I knew God was speaking to us through this encounter.

God began giving us challenges individually and corporately to step out in faith in this area. My biggest challenge occurred when God spoke to me and told me it was time to leave my job at the hospital where I had worked for fourteen years. He told me that He would bring me into a greater realm of ministry and through many prophetic words and other confirmations He made His will known.

One such confirmation was when I walked through our kitchen and I glanced at our calendar for the day and it had Exodus 14:14 as the scripture. This issue of leaving my employer was at the forefront of my mind at the time and when I saw this scripture I was struck by it. Exodus means to go out from a place. The double occurrence of the number fourteen also was significant in that I had been with my employer fourteen years. I was mindful that Joseph revealed to Pharaoh that when God repeats something it means it is settled and it will quickly come to pass.

This was a very big step and it engendered tremendous opposition within my family. I asked God to further confirm His word and He told me to go look up the number fourteen in scripture. On my computer study Bible I typed in the word “fourteen” and the very first occurrence in the Old Testament immediately came up. It was Genesis 31:41, and this fragment of the verse was shown on my screen: “I have worked for you for fourteen years.” This of course was where Jacob was leaving Laban’s household, which was another exodus.

The first occurrence of the word “fourteen” in the New Testament was equally significant. This is in the first chapter of Matthew where the genealogies are listed and three groups of fourteen generations are given. Each group of fourteen represents a transition and God was speaking to me that a transition was coming forth in my life.

I did end up leaving my employer after 14 years of service with them and I have not been employed for 12 and ½ months now. During this time we have never lacked for food or shelter or any necessary thing. We have also been able to do more than we ever did while I was employed. However, my step out to follow God has met with tremendous resistance.

At the time the ministers of the body I was in were refusing to step out in faith, God told me to step out. This brought a tremendous negative response from the other ministers resulting in my being labeled as proud and arrogant. God showed me that David was accused of the same thing when he went to face Goliath and no one else wanted to do so. It was David’s brother Eliab (symbolic of Christian brothers) who accused him of insolence and pride and unfaithfulness when Eliab was merely afraid himself to face the giant, and David’s willingness to do so made Eliab look bad.

In the end the ministers of this body ended up casting me out from their midst saying they could no longer walk with me in ministry. I then came under fire from family as well and the attacks and accusations and denouncements have been terrible as I have been accused of being deluded, of being an abuser of my family, of being an infidel,

having my very salvation questioned, and every manner of attack has been lobbied against my character.

I mention this to simply say that in a time when God has brought me to a place of testing in the area of trusting Him for my family's provision, that the test has been even greater because there has been such vehement opposition to where I am walking. I have been able to stand not because of my own abilities, but because God has sustained me. In my weakness He has supported and strengthened me and He has shown that His provision is always present.

Time after time during the past year when we have had a need the provision would come in just at the right moment from an unlooked for source. I believe this time of severe testing is coming to a conclusion for in a couple days we will be debt free and we will be free to be sent anywhere God desires us to go. One significant provision we needed was last month. We knew when our finances would be settled and we needed a place to stay for the next month and a half and we didn't have the money to rent a place to stay. As I was praying for God's provision the phone rang and a lady I had not spoken to in months and months was on the phone and she wanted to offer us her second house for us to stay in and she offered for us to stay for the next month and a half absolutely free. To top this off the electricity was already turned on in the house saving us the expense of having it connected.

A week or so later I needed some money and I asked God if He wouldn't provide for us and I had a sum of several hundred dollars in mind. That evening a brother came up to us and put an envelope in our hands. When I got home and counted it, it was \$300 dollars in twenty dollar bills. This has been the nature of God's provision for us.

I have been in many perils, in abandonment, in exile, in many fears and terrors during this past year, but God has delivered my family and I through them all. This past year has been my encounter with Goliath. More than facing a fear of financial failure, my Goliath has been having to face fear in general and to overcome it. There has been the fear of rejection, the fear of the opinions of men, the fear of violence, the fear of losing my family, and many other fears. I have not been able to shake all of these fears, but I have found that in Christ I can go forward with God despite the fear. When we respond in obedience to His call to faith then He is able to do tremendous things in our behalf.

God is raising up a people who will go in and possess the land before them. It is okay to have doubts and fears, but we cannot be ruled by them. We must press forward

despite our fears and we will see the mighty provision of our Lord. If you are being pressed forward and you feel inadequate to the task before you, know that you truly are inadequate, but your God is quite adequate. When we are weak He is strong. He delights to show forth His might through vessels of clay. Be encouraged!

II Chronicles 16:9

"For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

(NAS)