

When the Fight Turns to Favor

I sought the Lord for the direction of this sermon and what I felt was the word “season.” The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18:

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. – 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NASB1995

Some of us are in a season of trial and testing. Others are just coming out of a season. There are still others who remain in a stuck position in life because they are too afraid to enter a new season of change. The prophet Elijah had just proven God was the only true God by calling down fire from heaven and killing hundreds of false priests. Then he gets into the wilderness and hears that the evil queen is trying to kill him. So, he just gives up. He tells God he just wants to die. My holy hunch is that Elijah was not afraid of Jezebel or anyone for that matter. My understanding is that Elijah was tired of fighting. He had just exited a season of fighting and didn't have the strength to endure another and new season. I believe what the Lord wants to tell you today is to not be afraid of another season in life. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is with you. You and I can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. Today I want to preach a message titled, “When the Fight Turns to Favor.” Pray with me as we ask a blessing on the preaching of the Word of God.

This past Wednesday at our Midweek service I gave a disclaimer. We are about to walk through seven weeks teaching about supernatural ministry. I told the people there that they would probably hear what I call “cornerstone testimonies.” I might have shared these testimonies before but they made such a huge impact on my life that I have to share them again in light of what we are teaching. I want to share another cornerstone moment in my life. It was 2011 and my wife and I had just purchased (through a miracle of God) a home in Southern California. Nikki really made it a home and not just a house and very soon we got ourselves a puppy and started planting things in our little backyard. When we moved in there was an apple tree and what I think was a white birch tree. They gave great shade for our little backyard but not very good apples. I didn't know it but the HOA had a rule that you couldn't have any tree or plant higher than the fence line. So, to be in compliance I decided to cut both trees down. The apple tree behaved itself and stayed a stump. But the birch tree was possessed by something supernatural. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that I cut that tree down to the dirt level and within six months the tree had grown back as high as our two-story bedroom. So, I cut it down again. This time it grew back four different ways. I needed professional advice. I talked to a friend who owned a tree trimming business and he said that if I hammered in 7-inch nails into the roots the tree would die. So, I went to Home Depot, got the nails and hammered away. I even laid down plastic and covered the thing with gravel. I am sure you can guess that the tree grew back. Grew right through the plastic and gravel. I couldn't figure out how this tree was growing. I never watered the backyard, and we were living in California which is a desert and never gets rain. It wasn't until I was walking my dog one day and discovered that the tree roots had grown under my fence, under concrete and latched itself in the flower bed of the clubhouse. The tree kept growing because it had found a steady supply of water. Because it had water, it had the fuel it needed to

keep growing even when I chopped it down or impaled it. I say this this was a cornerstone moment for me because the Lord spoke to me in that moment. He said that life could throw whatever it wanted at me but if I remained in the presence of God. If I would continue to abide in Him as the source of my life and strength, I would always bounce back. This promise goes all the way back to the first chapter of Psalms. Look with me at the screen at Psalm 1:1-3:

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. – Psalm 1:1-3 NASB1995

Here is the key: whatever your season is right now, keeping your focus on the Father is going to be the primary way to see the fight turn to favor. If you have your Bibles, go with me to 2 Kings chapter 3. Today we are going to begin in verse 9. To catch you up to speed, after the wicked king Ahab died the king of Moab rebelled against Israel and made ready for war. The King of Israel, Judah and Edom all go together to see what they could do about the incoming threat. It was a fight that would soon turn to favor. Let's read here beginning in verse 9 and see what the Lord did in the middle of their fight.

9 So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom; and they made a circuit of seven days' journey, and there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them. 10 Then the king of Israel said, "Alas! For the Lord has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab." 11 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?" And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah." 12 Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the Lord is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

I want you to notice that there were two responses to the incoming battle. The first response was the king of Israel who declared that God had just brought them into another season just to die. Don't you just love friends like that? They always have something negative to say and only see the glass as half empty. But then there was a second response. King Jehoshaphat said, "What can we do to hear the word of the Lord?" Right there in the beginning of the battle, Jehoshaphat looked to see what God had to say about it rather than the logic or reason.

13 Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother." And the king of Israel said to him, "No, for the Lord has called these three kings together to give them into the hand of Moab." 14 Elisha said, "As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you. 15 But now bring me a minstrel." And it came about, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him. 16 He said, "Thus says the Lord, 'Make this valley full of trenches.' 17 For thus says the Lord, 'You shall not see wind nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, both you and your cattle and your beasts. 18 This is but a slight thing in the sight of the Lord; He will also give the Moabites into

your hand. 19 Then you shall strike every fortified city and every choice city, and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.” 20 It happened in the morning about the time of offering the sacrifice, that behold, water came by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water. – 2 Kings 3:9-20 NASB1995

There is just so much good stuff in this small chapter. First, I want you to notice that the beginning of the answer began with worship. Elisha had the musicians come and play and then the clarity of the prophetic word came about. Next, the Lord directed Elisha to command the troops to dig trenches. Dirt in the Bible is a symbol of the flesh. The prophetic word was telling the armies to dig deep and get the dirt out of the way for what God wanted to do. With the dirt moved out of the way then water came from the Lord. Water is a symbol of both Holy Spirit and the Word of God. It is essentially power and truth. Notice the sequence here. First, there was a pause to recognize the presence. Then there was worship offered before the battle plan. Then there was obedience to the Word of the Lord by digging trenches in a desert expecting water. The result was lives saved from dehydration and victory in the battle.

Today I believe that whatever season you are in, about to get out of, or about to step into can be set up for favor if you stay focused on the Lord. I want to help you with that today so if you are taking notes please fill in point number one:

POINT #1 –Be Rooted and Ready.

Years ago, when I was serving as a pastor at a church campus, I had a member of my church ask me if I wanted to go flying. He owned his own little plane and had his pilot’s license. I didn’t know he was a pilot and asked him about his experience. He said the craziest part of his testing is when he has to fly blind. I said, “what?” He said that the evaluator would have him wear a visor so that he couldn’t see out the windshield and had to fly the plane using only the instrument panel. I told him, “See that’s why I’m a preacher.” He told me that it was totally safe and that the plane could almost fly itself. I mean there’s auto pilot and all.

Auto pilot is so interesting. We have it in cars now. Your vehicle can literally drive yourself. Gabe yelled out a few days ago while we were driving somewhere and said, “Look that guy in the Tesla is eating a sandwich and not driving!” With autopilot, if you were to take the wheel and steer towards the right, you will go right. That is until you take your hand off the wheel and the autopilot kicks in. It will redirect everything to the destination you have preset. Our hearts are the same way. Whatever our focus is gets our worship. We have preset destinations in our heart and we would be fools to have that destination be anything but the Lord.

The Scriptures give us two great examples of setting the autopilot of the heart. First in Daniel chapter 1 the prophet Daniel does not allow anyone in Babylon to change his focus. He wouldn’t even eat the luxurious food and drink the king offered. In verse eight he says, “I have resolved in my mind not to defile myself with the king’s delicacies.” In other words, “I have my mind made up, kill me if you want, I won’t change.” The second is what Paul says in Colossians 2:6-7: *“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”*

POINT #2 – Be Watchful in the Waiting.

If you are familiar with the story of the Israelites wandering the desert in Exodus, then you know the entire first generation died in the wilderness and never made it to the Promised Land. I always knew this, but it never dawned on me exactly why the first generation died. It goes back to Numbers 32. The tribes of Reuben and Gad spoke to Moses asking if they could not go into the Promised Land but instead stay in Jazer and the land of Gilead. Basically, the land they were standing on was fertile and had plenty of water and nourishment for their families and livestock. In their minds, the land was good, their prayers were answered. They were no longer slaves and were able to settle in a great piece of land. If they chose to go over to the Promised land, they would have to fight occupied people. Why go to war when this land was good enough right? Well, the problem was that God didn't command them to stay in Gilead. God commanded them to possess the land of milk and honey. Then in verse 11 the Lord's anger burned and He swore saying, "This generation will not live to see the land of promise." I always thought the first generation didn't make it into the Promised Land because they complained. In reality, they didn't make it to the Promised Land because they didn't want to fight. They didn't want another season. But what their actions proved is that they didn't really want God, they wanted what God could give. Whenever you seek God's hand over His face you find yourself in trouble.

We cannot put all our hope in the answer to whatever is troubling us. We need to realize that as we wait on the promise of God there is much to gain in the waiting. The Israelites wandered the desert for 40 years. In that time, they had all their needs met and most importantly, they had the manifest presence of God. Every morning when they woke up, they had God's provision and His presence. Rather than worship, seek His wisdom, and fellowship with the Lord, they continued to complain about their needs. If we are not careful, we can do the same in our lives. We can complain because our first world problems are not being met when instead we could have been receiving from the very presence of God. Your fight turns to favor when your focus is on His presence.

I don't know if you have ever made plans with someone to go to a restaurant and you didn't know where the restaurant was. The person who invited you would have said something like, "Oh just follow me." Now, if I am leading someone and they are following me, I know how to lead well. I drive the speed limit; I wait at right turns until we both can go. You know, simple common sense type things. We all have that one friend who does not know how to lead. They run through red lights, go above the speed limit, and make lane changes out of nowhere. God is a good leader. In the wilderness all the Israelites had to do was follow God. They failed to be watchful in the waiting and missed out on their purpose and blessing.

POINT #3 – Be Generous in the Victory.

Here's the good news, the season you are facing will not last forever. Good or bad. One Christian comedian said, "Do you know what my favorite Bible verse is? My favorite Bible verse is, 'and it came to pass...'" That was it. Whatever you are facing it will come to pass. So, there are seasons when we are battling and there are seasons when we are prospering. The key is that during the season of prospering, you need to take advantage

