

1-29-23 Sermon #4 The warrior

A few weeks ago Jim delivered a message from Psalms 23 and taught us how we can find tremendous comfort knowing how much God wants to walk with us and to lead us.

Life can be very hard at times and we need to depend on all of God's promises.

Recently I was talking to my granddaughter and asked her if she knew God makes promises. I also asked her if she knew any of them. Asking a 12-year old to answer this question really isn't fair, but many Christians struggle with this also.

Understanding the Holy Spirit and knowing God's promises kind of go hand in hand. The more we know His promises, the more we'll be able to experience God's Spirit living in our lives. Having confidence in God is real important for facing trials and hardships in our lives.

Trials come in many forms. Most common are in times of loss or when we're faced with health issues. But what about other types? Like when someone brings harm into our lives or when a spouse leaves a marriage. It could be the sudden loss of a job or a natural disaster. Sometimes people make bad choices that affect innocent people. Recently, in California and Georgia we've seen how hatred and violence destroy lives. The Boston marathon bombing and the twin towers come to mind.

Fortunately for us, these events didn't happen in our back yard but other things have. The world teaches us that if we flee from our enemies, it shows others we're weak.

In Psalms 18, David faces being pursued by his enemy and he writes about how God protected him. With God, fleeing doesn't mean were weak. When we decide to fight back, we can bring more suffering into our lives. Using physical weapons when others are threatening our lives is legal, but having to live with the aftereffects doesn't usually go well.

God wants His nations to have armies, but they're often used in ways that God doesn't desire. In the Old Testament, God gave the Ten Commandments, and no one has ever been able to keep all of them. Christ came to fulfill the law, and God has given the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe.

Luke 6:27-29 says,

²⁷ "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.

This is against everything our brain tells us and is really hard to do.

David is described as a man after God's heart but, he wasn't always pure. According to our standards, he sinned deeply, yet God never abandoned him. When we think about David's life, in many ways, we can relate to him and hopefully, in many ways not so much. David received consequences for his choices and suffered tremendous loss because of his sin.

In 2 Samuel 12, through Nathan, God tells David what is going to happen to his son. When illness took David's son, David didn't run from God, instead he ran to God!!!!

What about Paul? The bible tells how Paul murdered Christians, and we read how he was in opposition to Christ. Through divine intervention, God changed Paul, and both of these men went on to witness first-hand about how powerful of a God we serve is.

Even after finding favor from God, both of these men had to face many trials, but they found tremendous victory in having God lead them through their ongoing sufferings. They chose to live for God and because of FAITH, God sustained them.

None of us live a life that we would describe as a bowl of cherries, and we will always have to experience evil around us. I don't know about you, but at times it feels like when we finally get past one trial, along comes another.

Christ came to forgive, and for those who believe, He gives the gift of the Holy Spirit so we can walk in a newness of life. It's only by the Spirit that we can walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

Luke 6:29 is against our nature. It says that if we get struck on the cheek, we're supposed to turn the other. It's only by the Spirit that we can respond this way. Instead of fighting, our response is supposed to be: pray for them!

Who wants to do that?!?

Last week, we started exploring the power of the Holy Spirit. In the bulletin, I put in Psalms 18:1 & 2. Let's read the beginning of Psalms 18:

¹ I love you, Lord, my strength. ² The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Only a believer could say this. Having the Holy Spirit is what gives us the power that we need to resist returning evil for evil.

Instead of fighting, David says this in verse 6:

⁶ In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.

The Psalm goes on to tell how God responds to David's call and after that, verse 46 describes David's response:

⁴⁶ The Lord lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior! ⁴⁷ He is the God who avenges me, who subdues nations under me, ⁴⁸ who saves me from my enemies. You exalted me above my foes; from a violent man you rescued me. ⁴⁹ Therefore I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing the praises of your name.

When we don't return evil for evil and rely on God through the Holy Spirit, others see something different working in us.

Galatians 5:16 is a promise:

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Believing this and acting on it creates a natural "Ah ha" God moment in others' lives.

Mother Theresa is known throughout the world because of how much she touched people through living out what God desired. When we listen to the Spirit and don't give in to what the world says we should, it may sting at the moment, but it brings tremendous victory over time.

When God told David to flee, David chose to listen to God, and he had many opportunities to strike Saul. God fought the battle, and David went on to receive God's blessing.

In Psalms 18, I love the way David describes how God came to his defense.

Try to picture Psalms 18:6-14 in your minds:

⁶ In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears. ⁷ The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry. ⁸ Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. ⁹ He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. ¹⁰ He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. ¹¹ He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him—the dark rain clouds of the sky. ¹² Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning. ¹³ The Lord thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. ¹⁴ He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy, with great bolts of lightning he routed them.

By having the Holy Spirit, we can have this confidence. No matter what we're faced with, we're not alone.

Look at what Paul prays in Ephesians 3:14-19:

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

I don't know how people go through life without God. Living without God and having to face the trials of this world without Him are so sad. As Christians, we have to face many battles. We're no different from those who are lost, except we have God living in us to comfort us. Through prayer and calling on the Holy Spirit we have the ultimate weapon.

Paul got it!!! When the leaders of the law came right behind Paul and pulled the believers away, that crushed Paul. God fought them through Paul's letters. The Holy Spirit is what brought them back to Paul's teaching. This is why we must read the word and learn more of His promises.

Proverbs 3:5-6 is huge:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Walking with the Spirit and leaning not on our own understanding is only understood by claiming Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin.

Psalms 18:27-32 is so beautiful:

²⁷ You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty. ²⁸ You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. ²⁹ With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall. ³⁰ As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him. ³¹ For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? ³² It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure.

Having the Holy Spirit living in us makes these verses a reality. It's only through Jesus that we can be purified. The Holy Spirit is what we call on to be able to stand firm. Accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior requires Faith and humbleness.

Let's look at what Jesus prays in John 17:15-19:

¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

The Holy Spirit is so alive in every one of us. Having this gift and learning God's ways only comes with time.

Let's pray.