

6: Walking Away With Victory

I want to discuss with you in this chapter the place that giving God thanks, has for a promise that He has made to us and that is fulfilled, before there is any external evidence. This is all tied up in the glorious experience of walking away with victory.

The first text that I would direct your attention to is Zechariah 12:8, "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them."

This text of scripture declares that the day is coming when men and women who are feeble will be like David in his strength. And those who are normally like David, will be like God. 1 John 3:1-3 declares that when Jesus comes again, those who are ready to go back to heaven will be like Him. This text says that there will be men and women who will be like God and like the angel of the Lord walking up and down this earth with victory in their hands and in their hearts. I believe with all my heart that the 'C' of prayer is very important if we are going to walk away with victory and be the means of helping others to experience the same victory.

By way of review: the 'A' of prayer is 'Ask'. Jesus invited us in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." The 'B' of prayer is 'Believe'. Mark 11:34 says, "...What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. The 'C' of prayer is claiming the promise and returning thanks that we have the answer before we have any sign that we have received it, except the promise that is found in God's immutable word. The 'C' of prayer is the difficult part of the prayer program. Most people find this part almost impossible to accept.

Most people must see the evidence of God's answer to their prayer. They are not satisfied to believe that what God says, is so, and that He will do it simply because He has said He would. Herein lies the reason for the failure on the part of so many.

Many years ago, I prepared a talk for one of our camp meetings. My heart was full of the subject we now have under discussion. I felt there was a real need for an understanding of reaching out and accepting God's promises on the basis of His word, in spite of not seeing a visible answer. I called my sermon, 'Talking Your Way Into Heaven'. I used as my text Romans 10:10. Notice its startling words:

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

You notice it says, "...unto salvation", not 'because' of salvation. There's a real difference! When we take God at His word and we declare that we have received what He wants us to receive and what He has promised us - this proclamation of reception is acceptable unto God. Then God performs His part and gives to us what we have by our proclamation said that we have already received. This takes faith - real faith.

An example of that kind of faith is demonstrated in the account of the visit to Mary, the mother of Jesus, by the heavenly messenger. Mary was told that she would become the mother of the Saviour of the world. She could not understand how this could be possible. There was no outward evidence that would lead her to know for certain that it could or would be accomplished, excepting the word of the angel Gabriel. Even though Mary could not see logically how this event could be - in spite of this - Mary said, "...be it unto me according to thy word." Luke 1:38

Here she was accepting a promise as though it had already been fulfilled. Had Mary taken any other attitude than the attitude she took, she never would have become the mother of Jesus. Christ was the

A B C's of Bible Prayer

Word of God made flesh, and He was made flesh by her accepting the word of God for her soul. Her attitude of acceptance was of vital importance to the accomplishment of this miracle of miracles.

All through the Bible are to be found incidents of where God accepted the expression of faith on the part of mortal man. Hebrews eleven is a chapter filled with this kind of an experience. In each case faith is the center of success. In each case it says, "...by faith...", and again, "...by faith. . ." Notice this example, verse 30: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down..." Here the falling of the wall is credited to the substance, Faith. But when you turn to the book of Joshua and read the sixth chapter and the fifth verse, it states that God promised the people that if they would march around the city once each day for six days and march seven times around that city on the seventh day, the walls would fall down flat. The instruction was simple but very definite. On that seventh day, after they had marched around the city seven times, the people were to shout. What were they to shout? They were to shout that the walls are going to fall down.

The record says that Israel followed the instruction of the Lord. On that seventh day they marched. Once, twice, three times. Nothing happened. After the sixth time around the city wall - there wasn't even so much as a crack in the wall! But when they marched around it the seventh time, the people exercised faith and shouted that the wall is now going to fall down - because God said it would. But notice, they had to shout first, not after the wall fell!

Verse twenty tells us how God fulfilled His word. The word 'faith' is not mentioned, however, in the entire chapter, but in the eleventh of Hebrews it says that the walls fell down as a result of the faith of Israel. God accepted their actions of faith and their words of faith as faith itself. But notice again, God accepted as faith only after they had acted and spoken their faith - only after they had given a practical demonstration of their belief in the promise of God.

This is so different from the way we do things today, isn't it? Most of us withhold our expression of faith until after the promise has been fulfilled. Instead of living by faith, as God says the just will live, we are prone to live by sight. This is not pleasing to God and is the reason why the church is so weak. We wait and say, "When we see it, Lord, we'll thank You for it." This is not God's plan for us. He would have us accept His promise on the basis of His word - before we can see fulfillment.

The experience of Gideon provides another example of faith. In Hebrews 11:32 Gideon is mentioned along with the other illustrious men as men of faith. What did he do to warrant being in this lineup of men who were giants of faith? Judges 6 tells us.

Gideon was instructed to arm his men with a trumpet, a pitcher and a lamp. They were to do things and say things. Success depended on their willingness to obey the command of God. The seventh chapter of Judges records the fact that Gideon and his chosen three hundred men followed explicitly the word of God. These mere three hundred men were to descend on the Midianite camp and at a given signal they were to break their pitchers, blow their trumpets and shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" Not until they did what God told them to do and spoke what God told them to speak, did He fulfill the promise in such a way that they could see it. Upon fulfillment on the part of Gideon and his host of the word of God, He demonstrated His power and an overwhelming victory was theirs. It could have been accomplished in no other way!

This principle is carried through all of the Old Testament and all the way through the New Testament as well. Let us probe a little deeper and notice two more incidents. The first is recorded in II Chronicles 20. The chapter begins by telling us that Jehoshaphat is in trouble. Great armies have gathered themselves together and are coming to fight Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat is afraid. He is so afraid that he proclaims a fast in all Judah and verse four says that Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord. Notice, it says they 'asked' help of the Lord. Verses five and on record the prayer that Jehoshaphat

A B C's of Bible Prayer

prayed in which he recognizes God as the Supreme ruler of heaven and earth; the One in Whose power former victories had been won. He then quotes a promise to the Lord taken from I Kings 8:33 and in this time of trouble presents this promise to the Lord. Notice, "If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help."

These words were first spoken by Solomon in I Kings eight as a request of the Lord. In I Kings nine the Lord says that what he has asked will be done. In other words the request has now become a promise because God said it would be so. Jehoshaphat knew this and with his people bowed in prayer came to God with this promise, presented it to the God of heaven and said, "Lord, this is what You promised. We are in trouble now and need Your help." In verse twelve he states it this way,

"O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us: neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. "

Notice that Jehoshaphat came to the Lord confessing that they, in themselves, were unable to meet this army. There was no question in his mind. But he came to God with the assurance that He would come to their aid - because He had said so! There was no other reason for the petition. God had said He would come to their aid when in trouble and Jehoshaphat believed God!

When we take our eyes off ourselves and place them on God, as the children of Judah did, and come to Him for the answer to our problems, then we have a right to claim what God has promised - simply because the promise was made by God and God cannot lie. He will always fulfill His part of the promise if we will in humility come to Him and accept His promise on that basis.

Notice now how the promise was fulfilled. In verse twenty it says, "And they arose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe...."

"Believe..." this was the burden of the message of Jehoshaphat. He wanted to impress upon the people that this message had come from the Lord God of heaven. He had made the promise. In effect he said if you believe God and His prophets you will have success. But belief was primary. This was the all-important ingredient to realize success.

Jehoshaphat had asked according to God's promise; he had focused his eyes on God, and now he says to the whole army and company of people - "Believe, Believe!" Without believing in what God had said, there could be no success. It is still so today.

My favorite author says in Testimonies for the Church volume five and page five hundred, fourteen:

"Say, 'I will believe, I do believe that God is my helper,' and you will find that you are triumphant in God."

When am I to tell Him I believe? On the basis of His promise before I have any external evidence whatsoever! This is the hard part. Here is where we so often fail in meeting the requirements of outstanding victories and accomplishments.

Now notice the tremendous things that Jehoshaphat did. In olden days the armies had a victory song. Each army had its own special victory song. But this song was sung after the victory was won. Not so with Jehoshaphat. He had his choir sing the victory song before they engaged in this battle. Notice, "And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth forever." verse 21

A B C's of Bible Prayer

My favorite author in commenting on this text declares that this is exactly what he did. He sang the victory song that the army usually sang when they returned from the battle, as they went into battle. When they claimed, by returning thanks to God that they have received it, notice what happened:

"And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another." verses 22, 23.

God came to their aid when they asked His help; when they demonstrated belief in His promise and now claiming the answer by returning thanks to Him. And it all took place before they had any external evidence that God had heard them. They were using the A, B, C's of prayer! Yes they were! And when they did this He turned these enemies against each other, as He did in the story of Gideon and his enemies. Verse twenty-four tells us that the victory that God gave was complete. Out of this horde of men who had armed themselves to come against God's people, but against whom He Himself would fight, the verse says, "....none escaped!" God gave the people more than just a decisive victory. He gave them spoil to the extent that it took three days to carry it away. Our God is a generous God as well as a powerful God. We can without question, walk away with victory - in the face of any problem. This is the way God works; He has in the past and He will again today!

My favorite author makes this statement in the book *Early Writings*, page 72, "True faith lays hold of and claims the promised blessing before it is realized and felt."

True faith claims the promised blessing. This the 'C' of prayer. Notice as she continues, "...We must send up our petitions in faith within the second veil and let our faith take hold of the promised blessing and claim it as ours." *ibid.*

This is the 'C' of answered prayer. Not only are we to ask God for big things - difficult requests, but we are to reach up and claim it as ours. This is the divine plan and only as we relate ourselves to it in the way God has ordained can we expect to receive the answer that is waiting for us. It is so simple, yet so important that we do it God's way.

"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."
Mark 11:24

This is faith. Naked faith! Belief in answered prayer before any indication is given that the answer has come, is demonstrated in this promise. This we must put into practise if we are going to experience all that God has in store for us. If we will do this, we can walk away with victory!

In Mark five is recorded the story of a woman who had been sick for twelve long years. She had spent all she had in an attempt to get well. But all attempts failed to bring her any relief. Now she hears of Jesus. Somehow in that heart is born the conviction that if she might just touch the hem of Jesus' garment she would be whole. Notice her words:

"If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." Mark 5:28

That woman put her A, B, C's all in one sentence, didn't she? It doesn't make a great deal of difference just exactly how we say them, as long as we will follow through and ask, then say that we believe. This is very difficult for most people to say. They just find it almost impossible to express belief in something they haven't tested, tried and seen with their eyes. And then to claim the promise and return thanks to God for having answered, before any external evidence is seen, is not easy, but it's God's way!

A B C's of Bible Prayer

There was a man that came to our home when I was a little boy, and he put the A, B, C's all in one sentence. He said, "I thank you for passing the bread." We boys wanted to snicker. We would always ask someone to pass the bread, and then when we saw it coming, we thanked whoever was passing it. But this man thanked whoever would pass the bread before it ever left the table!

That is how Jesus used the A, B, C's of prayer at the grave of Lazarus as found in John 11:41,

"Father I thank thee that thou has heard me.... Lazarus, come forth."

The woman with the issue of blood did this same thing, and she was healed instantly. Paul and Silas did the same thing in the prison at midnight. They thanked God for delivering them before ever a chain fell from their hands and legs. But when they thanked God, the very walls shook and the chains fell from all of the prisoners. This is what happens when we follow God's plan! The prison keeper was so impressed that he wanted to know of the power that attended these two men. He was instructed and became a follower of the way. He was a converted man - due to the display of the power of God in response to the request and faith of Paul and Silas.

During the time that I struggled to grasp this concept for myself and put it into practice, a young man came to me. I had performed the marriage ceremony for him and his new bride just a few days before. This boy's mother was a member of the church but his father was not. "I have a problem," he said, "and I wonder if you would help me?" He was to return to the service in a few days, but had this problem on his heart. He told me about his father and that the father would be coming to see me shortly. The father was a very timid man and the son was afraid that he wouldn't come to grips with the issue, and so wanted to tip me off before the father came.

"My father smokes," the young man confided. "That is why he is not a member of the church. He has tried to stop smoking on several occasions, but each time he stops, he begins to hemorrhage at the nose. He gets violent nose-bleeds, and because of this my mother has told him that she thinks that he will never be able to stop. He's coming to see you about this problem."

My first thought was, 'what can I do?' I had never heard of a thing like that before. I had never heard of a man getting a nose-bleed because he wanted to give up smoking. But then I thought, 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' Of course I had to admit I didn't believe there was anything too hard for the Lord. But I wondered just how the Lord would take care of this problem.

A few days later I was washing my car in the driveway and up drove this boy's father. He was a big man. He was a great big man! We talked about the weather and made a bit of small conversation. I invited him into the house and it wasn't long before we got to his problem. He told me frankly that he wanted to get rid of the tobacco habit. "Alright," I said, "here is what you do. Take the promise of Matthew 7:7, 'Ask, and it shall be given you.'" Then I said, "If I pay for something, is that a gift?"

"Why, no." he said.

"A lot of us think we have to earn salvation," I said. "But the Lord says, 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' We have a right to come to the Lord and claim a promise and God has already paid for it on Calvary by His gift of Jesus. He has already bought it. We are merely to receive what God has given."

Then I gave him a number of case histories, just as we have been reviewing together here. When it came time for us to pray I told him that we were not going to merely ask for deliverance, but we're going to receive it. We knelt to pray and both of us prayed. When we rose from our knees I gripped his hand and said, "Brother, not because you feel it, but because God has promised it, has He delivered you from tobacco?"

"Yes, sir," was his quick and firm reply.

A B C's of Bible Prayer

He said it so quickly that I wondered if he knew what he was saying. I said, "Wonderful," or words to that effect, but I wasn't sure that he knew what he was saying. I thought he might just go home and tell his wife that the preacher prayed for him but nothing happened, and his wife would say, "Well, I knew it wouldn't." So I claimed James 1:5 because I needed wisdom right then to know what to do. I wanted to exercise faith because I knew how important that was. But I wasn't sure that this man was going to walk away with victory. And so I said, "Look, I'm going to go home with you and I'm going to tell your wife of the wonderful victory you have gained." I had two purposes in mind. One was to impress upon his mind that he had received it; the other was to impress her that he had received victory, so she wouldn't talk doubt. He agreed to that.

On the way to his house I began to think of meeting his wife. I knew that she could talk more doubt in five minutes than I could talk faith in an hour. And I began to tremble in my shoes. So I prayed. He didn't know what I was praying about. I was praying, "Lord, help me to talk faster than a woman!" The Lord had answered that prayer for me before and I believed He would do it again. So I planned that from the moment I stepped into that house I was going to smother that woman with faith. I would smother doubt with faith.

When we got to the house, we walked through the front door and there she was in the middle of the living room. I said, "Sister, rejoice with us. God just gave your husband complete victory over tobacco!" Well, you know, she was so shocked that she just stood there and looked at me. And for a moment I lost my tongue and didn't say a word either. We just stood and looked at each other. It seemed like the longest few minutes. I wanted her to say something first. I didn't know which way to move, and I didn't want to move the wrong way. I could see she was about to speak. She said, "Well - I wish while the Lord is giving out victory, He would give me victory too."

"Give you victory?" I asked. Now I was shocked. "Victory over what?"

Then she told me that she was a slave to coffee. I think she called it 'coffee heart'. She knew it was harmful to her and told me that her doctor told her that unless she quit it was going to kill her. But she couldn't quit, although she had tried many, many times. She told me how that every time there was an altar call made at the church, she had gone.

"I've gone to my closet and fallen on my knees and begged God to deliver me," she said. "I've sobbed out my prayer, but then gone right back and had another cup of coffee. I keep the coffee pot on the stove twenty-four-hours a day," she said. I could tell she was speaking with great emotion. "I just can't quit," she repeated.

I wondered just what I should say. Then the Lord helped me to know what to say.

I said, "Sister, just suppose your son came home and he was in desperate need of five dollars. This wasn't just spending money, but he desperately and honestly needed five dollars. Now if you had the money, would you give it to him?" I asked.

"Why, yes. Of course I would," she said.

"And when you would hand out the five-dollar bill, what would you think of your son if he put his hand behind his back and keep pleading? I dare say you would not be too well pleased, would you?"

"No, I guess I wouldn't," she said.

"Now," I said, "you have asked, but you have never reached up and taken what God is offering to you." She saw what I was telling her was true in her case. She saw that she was failing to do something that was very important.

A B C's of Bible Prayer

"Now let us kneel and pray," I said. When we knelt we put our finger on a promise and asked God to give her the victory. She prayed a very nice prayer and it was evident that she really wanted victory. When we rose to our feet I went over to her and said, "Sister, not because you feel it, but because He has promised, has He given you the victory over the coffee?"

What was she doing? She was fighting faith. Did she dare to tell God that He had given her what she had sought for years and had never received. Did she dare to? The devil said, 'don't do it'. God said, "do it!" Finally she said, "Yes."

Again I said, for I wanted to have her impressed with her decision, "Sister, not because you feel it, but because God has promised, has He delivered you?" This time it came a little easier.

"Yes," she said.

Again, I took her hand and shook it and asked the same question. This time she responded with firmness and ease. God had delivered her, too. The next Sabbath morning I saw her at church and she fairly ran over to meet me. Had I been a woman she would have hugged me. She said, "Pastor, it worked, it worked!" Years later when we were about to move on to another church, at the farewell party they held in our honor, she came over to where my wife and I were sitting. She spoke of the day in her living room and the victory she had received. "I have never touched a drop since," was her testimony.

You, too, can walk away with victory by applying these rules to your problem!