

Break Out – Break Through – Break In
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We're in a sermon series called Breakthrough and when I think of breakthroughs in the Bible one of the first things I think of is the story of the children of Israel breaking through the walls of Jericho.

God promised a land to Abraham and his descendants. They are called the children of Israel because they all descended from Abraham's grandson Jacob – whose name was changed to Israel.

Israel had 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel. They went to Egypt during a time of famine after God raised up their brother Joseph to second in command. However – the Bible says in Exodus 1:5-11

The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt. Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them. Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor.

So, the children of Israel had a promise that God would give them their own land – but that promise took 400 years to be fulfilled. And in the meantime - they became slaves in Egypt.

So, in order to get to their Promised Land – they first had to break out of Egypt – then break through the wilderness that was between them and their promise – and then break into the cities ruling their Promised Land.

So – my sermon today is entitled Break Out, Break Through and Break In!

All of us have promises from God – but in order to obtain them – we must break out of whatever is holding us back – we must break through the Wilderness between us and our promised destiny – and then we must break in to the reality of those promises.

1- Break Out!

I'm not going to preach long on breaking out or breaking through this week because I preached on it last week.

The children of Israel had an enemy named Pharaoh and they could never get to their Promised Land until they got out of Egypt. So God send a deliverer named Moses to set them free. And there were three keys to breaking out of Egypt – speaking the word of the Lord, the name of the Lord and the blood of the lamb.

God told Moses to tell Pharaoh that I AM sent him.
 God told Moses to tell Pharaoh to let His people go.
 And then God sent plagues on Egypt to convince them to let them go.

The last plague was the death of all firstborn sons. But God protected the children of Israel by having each family kill a lamb and then put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their house. When the death angel saw the blood – it passed over that house.

What we need to understand is that for us to break out of the clutches of the enemy who wants to hold us back from salvation, freedom and our promised destiny – we must break out in the same way – by speaking the word of the Lord in the name of Jesus and by applying the blood of the Lamb to our hearts and lives. Revelation 12:11 says

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die.

For us to be break out we must know the power of the word – the power of the name of Jesus and the power of the blood! But when we break out – there is still a wilderness between us and our promised land that we must break through.

2- Break Through

After the Children of Israel broke out of Egypt – they had to journey through the wilderness that was between them and the Promised Land. It should have been a fairly short journey – but they ended up stuck in the wilderness for 40 years! Why? Because of repeated sin and unbelief. Numbers 32:13 says

So the Lord's anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone.

You see, a wilderness is something God wants to take you through. His goal is to get you to your destiny on the other side. And He wants to get you through it quickly, but you have an enemy who wants to keep you stuck in the wilderness.

That's why wilderness times often follow close behind breakthroughs! And the only way to break out is through repenting of our sins.

But even then the battle is not over – we still need to:

3- Break In

When the Israelites got to their Promised Land – the fight was not over! There were giants to subdue and fortified cities to conquer. The first city was Jericho.

Joshua 6:1 says - *Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.*

Remember - breakthrough starts with identifying a problem or barrier.

The people of God had a promise from God – but they faced a big problem. Jericho had walls that were 6 feet wide and 50 feet tall. So – breaking in to that city was a huge problem!

And God has promises for all of us – but there are usually problems between the promise and the provision!

So – I have two questions today: What's your promise and what's your problem? What's your promised land and what's your Jericho? What's standing between you and your promise?

Breakthrough starts with identifying your Jericho.
What stronghold needs to come down?
What miracle do you need to march around?

You should have a whole list of answers to those questions. If you don't, then maybe this verse describes your life - James 4:2

You do not have, because you do not ask God.

Many times we don't receive simply because we don't ask. The biggest tragedy in life is not unanswered prayer – it's unasked prayer!

More than a thousand years after the Jericho miracle, another miracle happened in the same town. Matthew 20:29-34 tells us that Jesus was on His way out of Jericho when two blind men yelled: *“Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”*

So Jesus stopped and asked a pointed question: *What do you want me to do for you?*

“Seriously? Is that question even necessary? Isn't it obvious what they want? They're blind.” Yet Jesus forced them to verbalize exactly what they wanted from Him.

He made them spell it out – not because Jesus didn't know what they wanted - He wanted to make sure they knew what they wanted.
He wanted them to ask.

And when they asked to see, verse 34 says -

Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him.

What if Jesus asked you this very same question: what do you want Me to do for you? Would you be able to spell it out clearly?

I'm afraid many of us have no idea what we want God to do for us. And the great irony is that if we can't answer this question then we're as blind spiritually as these blind men were physically. Hebrews 11:1 says

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

If faith is being sure of what we hope for, then being unsure is the opposite of faith. Uncertainty equals unbelief equals unanswered prayer equals no breakthrough!

Well-developed faith results in well-defined prayers which result in breakthroughs! I want to remind you that prayer does not just involve you speaking to God – but God speaking to you!

Breakthrough is based on a word from God! You can't just arbitrarily pick anything you want from God – you must spend time in prayer – hear from God – then do what God tells you!

Then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days.

On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."

I'm sure that seasoned soldiers thought this plan seemed like nonsense.

So we're just going to march around the city?

Why not use a battering ram?

Why not scale the walls?

Why not cut off the water supply or shoot flaming arrows over the walls?

Instead, God told the Israelite army to silently circle the city. And their deliverance was based on their obedience!

Just like faith is linked with works - faith without works is dead – likewise, prayer is linked to the promises of God!

When you pray the promises of God – you can pray with confidence!

You don't have to second-guess yourself because you know that God wants you to pray His promises. In Joshua 1:3 God told Joshua

I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

The promise was originally given to Moses. Then it was transferred to Joshua. In much the same way, all of God's promises have been transferred to us via Jesus Christ. There are more than 3,000 promises in Scripture and based on what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross, every promise belongs to you. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen.

Every promise of God has your name on it. The question is: how many of them have you claimed?

What I'm about to share has the power to revolutionize your devotional life. We often view prayer and Scripture reading as two separate spiritual disciplines without much overlap, but what if they were meant to be linked? What if reading the Word became a form of praying and praying became a form of reading? One of the primary reasons we don't pray through is because we run out of things to say. The solution? Pray through the Bible! The Bible wasn't meant to just be read through – it was meant to be prayed through. And if you pray through it, you'll never run out of promises to claim.

But claiming a promise is not enough! Breakthrough always requires action on our part! It requires us to do God's will God's way. Joshua didn't just hear the word of God – he obeyed it. He ordered the people to march around the city like God said to.

So Joshua son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant of the Lord and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it." And he ordered the army, "Advance! March around the city, with an armed guard going ahead of the ark of the Lord."

For six days – they marched around the city once in silence.

On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the army, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city!"

After seven days of circling Jericho, the wall fell and God delivered on a 400-year-old promise.

The fall of Jericho shows us several things:

God's promises don't have expiration dates! The fall of Jericho happened 400 years after God promised Abraham his descendants would have their own land. God's pattern is for us to keep circling His promise in prayer and faith until He brings it to pass. Jericho fell as a testament to this simple truth: if you keep circling the promise, God will ultimately deliver on it.

In Luke 18:1 *Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*

When should you pray? Always!
When should you give up? Never!

I wonder how many of us give up too soon because we feel like we have failed if God doesn't answer our prayer right away. That isn't failure. The only way you can fail is if you stop praying. Praying without ceasing means don't give up on prayer! Too many of us give up way too easy and way too soon!

In standardized math tests, Japanese children consistently score higher than American children. While some assume that the Japanese are just naturally better at math, researchers discovered that it has more to do with *effort* than *ability*.

Researchers gave some students a difficult problem to solve. They weren't interested in whether or not the children could solve the puzzle; they simply wanted to see *how long they would try before giving up*.

The American children lasted, on average, 9.47 minutes.
The Japanese children lasted 13.93 minutes.
In other words, the Japanese children tried 47 percent longer.
Is it any wonder why they score higher on math exams?

Researchers concluded that the difference in math scores has less to do with *intelligence quotient* and more to do with *persistence quotient*. The Japanese students simply tried harder and stayed at it longer.

That study not only explains the difference in standardized math scores, but the difference in whether or not people make history! It doesn't matter whether it's athletics or academics, music or math. There are no shortcuts. There are no substitutes. Persistence is the key to mastering anything, including prayer!

What's your persistence quotient? How many times did you not get to the answer because the problem was too hard or you gave up too soon? Galatians 6:9 says

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

It's so easy to give up on dreams or promises.

We lose heart, lose patience, lose faith. And like a slow leak, it often happens without us even knowing it until our prayer life goes flat.

Is there some dream that God wants to resurrect?
 Is there some promise you need to reclaim?
 Is there some breakthrough you need to start believing for again?

Long before you woke up this morning and long after you go to sleep tonight, God is working on your behalf! Jesus is seated at the right hand of God interceding for you! The Holy Spirit is praying hard for you.

Our generation needs to rediscover the difference between praying for and praying through. Sometimes praying for something is enough. But there are certain circumstances that require us to take hold of the horns of the altar and refuse to let go until God answers.

- You intercede until God intervenes.
- You refuse to move until God moves.
- You pray through until God comes through with your breakthrough!

Miracles happen at the intersection of our weakness and God's power.
 We pray out of weakness, but God answers in power!
 We pray with limited understanding, but God answers with omniscience!
 We pray about impossibilities, God answers with possibilities!
 We pray in a place of defeat, God answers from the place of victory!
 We pray because prayer gives us breakthroughs!

So - Don't just read the Bible. Start praying the promises. Don't just make a wish. Say a prayer! Don't just talk about your problem - Claim your promise!
 In all things - at all times - in every situation - always pray and never ever give up!

I want to close with this.

The Hebrew word for shout means "to split the ears (with sound)." Some people think worship should be quiet in order to be reverent - But this command says to shout out loud - to make a joyful noise.

The Hebrew Dictionary says that one of the definitions of shout is: to triumph. So evidently, one of the ways we breakthrough is through shouting.

And we have a biblical precedent for that - the people of Israel defeated their enemy at Jericho by shouting! There is power in a shout!

When Pastor Deb does our laundry sometimes clothes get a stain that our washing machine does not remove.

Those stains need something more so she uses a product called Shout.

I went to their website and their ad says – Let Life Happen – You’ve Got Shout.
Under that it says – pick a stain – any stain!
Their point is that their product can remove any stain.

That got me to thinking about the stains of life. Life can get messy. Life can leave stains. But I want you to know – you can pick a stain – any stain – and the blood of Jesus can remove it and make it white as snow!

You can pick a sin – any sin – and the grace of Jesus can forgive it!

You can pick a problem – any problem – and the wisdom of God can solve it!

You can pick an addiction – any addiction – and the power of God can set you free from it!

I don’t know about you – but that makes me want to shout!

And I want to encourage you today with this-
Life Happens – so Shout it Out!
Life gets Messy – so Shout it Out!
When you face problems - Shout it Out!
When you’re facing walls that need to come down – Shout them down!