

Get Faith. Make a Breakthrough! 2 Chronicles 20

Our retreat theme is breakthrough. You may not know why or how you need a breakthrough. Let me give some suggestions. First, if you are not praying, worshiping, and reading the Bible every day, then you need a breakthrough in your spiritual growth. *(Friday night and Sunday morning is a good start, but not enough. If you only ate a meal Friday night and Sunday morning then you would not have energy and lose a lot of weight. There are people who come only for the Friday dinner and not Bible study.)*

Second, many Christians also need a breakthrough in understanding spiritual realities; that is, how the spiritual realm affects the physical. This is why the OT is helpful. The historical battles of the OT teach us realities about spiritual warfare in the NT era.

Breakthrough dictionary definitions applied to spiritual growth: 1: an act or instance of moving through or beyond an obstacle for spiritual growth. 2: a sudden advance in spiritual growth. 3: spiritual warfare: an offensive military assault that penetrates and carries beyond a defensive line.

What I want to show with 2 Chronicles 20 is how to breakthrough to a victory in the spiritual realm that produces spiritual growth. Breakthrough in the spiritual realm leads to victory in the physical/material realm. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood according to **Ephesians 6:10-13**.

Spiritual growth breakthroughs involve wrestling with your own flesh and blood, your desires - your desire to get up a little earlier in the morning or go to sleep a little later to spend some time in prayer, worship and scripture meditation - but the real wrestling match is with spiritual forces of evil that want to prevent your growth in Christ.

Historical note: Jehoshaphat was a good king who walked in the ways of his father David. (He lived 4 generations after David.) The best thing he did was to send the Levites into all the towns of Judah to teach the book of the Law of the LORD (1 Chron. 17). The worst thing he did was make an alliance with the evil King Ahab of Israel and it almost got him killed, but God intervened and saved his life (1 Chron. 18). He also appointed judges and

told them to do justice in the fear of the LORD and not to take bribes (1 Chron. 19).

2 Chronicles 20: Jehoshaphat and the Judeans got (renewed) faith and achieved a breakthrough.

4 principles for spiritual growth breakthrough.

P1: Purge fear: 20:1-4

Have you ever faced a situation that made you afraid? There is a natural enemy (the enemy army, the problem) and an invisible but very real enemy of the mind and heart - fear. I feel fear is the worst enemy! Fear is the enemy of faith; it suppresses faith in God.

Every breakthrough requires change, and change often generates fear and fear paralyzes us. Then the change doesn't happen and the breakthrough is unrealized.

The only good thing about fear is it drives us to prayer.

P2a: Prayer always precedes breakthrough: 20:5-12.

Breakthrough begins with prayer. The choice is either fear or prayer focused on God. Consider the contents of Jehoshaphat's prayer. He declares the sovereignty of God over all nations. Joe reminds God of his promise - the covenant he made with the descendants of Abraham. Joe quotes promises from the word of God. Joe defines the enemy as a threat against God's faithfulness to his covenant. Joe concludes the prayer with a confession of powerlessness and expression of faith.

Prayer confesses Powerlessness (20:12): *For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.*"

We acknowledge our powerlessness to overcome our problems. Being powerless is OK. We don't like the feeling of powerlessness. Do not despise or feel shame at being powerless. Powerlessness is the position to see God's power. Prayer feels like powerlessness.

When the Hebrew people were caught between the Egyptian army and the deep blue sea they were powerless. They began to panic. Fear overcame their faith. Moses said, And Moses said to the people (Exodus 14:13), "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again."

Prayer is fighting in the spiritual realm against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. We are powerless against these spiritual forces. Prayer deals with the spiritual aspect of victory. There are still things to do in the natural.

[After I had a rental car accident in May and received a bill for \$3500 from Avis, I had to get the police report from Livingston Parish, LA. I had to file reports with my car insurance and the rental car company. At the same time I was dealing with my daughter's car accident and waiting for the result of mediation between Liberty Mutual and the plaintiffs. We were afraid we were facing a lawsuit. We were thinking about declaring bankruptcy if the court awarded the plaintiffs a large sum of money. Sandie and I prayed often about this. We fought a battle in the spiritual realm while Liberty Mutual fought for us in court.]

P3: Prophetic Promises encourage, energize, guide and sustain breakthrough: 20:13-17. Jahaziel (son of... son of...) the prophet gave an encouraging prophetic promise to the people. "Do not be afraid. The LORD is with you."

Name the promises in God's word and confess them in the face of the enemy of breakthrough, Satan. Doubts and discouragement will attack, but God's prophetic promises energize and sustain breakthrough.

This is the word of God spoken by a pastor or another brother or sister in Christ. The Spirit of the LORD can come upon people and give them encouraging words to put courage in you. (Encourage means to put courage in.) We encourage one another with the promises in the word of God.

Faith recites the promises in God's word. Whatever your need there's a promise in God's word. Claim the promise acknowledging you are powerless. Stand your ground on the promise and don't let fear or unbelief push you off. Some people give up just before their breakthrough. God's promises are not a magic formula. They can only be claimed in a right relationship with God as we walk in obedience to him. God is a promise keeper.

P2b: Praise always precedes a breakthrough: 20:18-23.

The worship team went before the army! That is why we sing praises before the preaching of the word of God. I rediscovered and sang an old song called *The Battle Belongs to the Lord*. Prayer that confesses powerlessness and praise that declares the faithfulness of God and his power over all things precedes spiritual growth breakthrough.

What is the significance of praise? Why is it a powerful spiritual weapon?

- It expresses faith and gratitude: Psalm 28:7: *The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exalts, and with my song I give thanks to him.*
- It produces joy. The joy of the Lord is your strength: Nehemiah 8:10: *“Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”*
- Praise has a rational and subjective impact that displaces fear, doubt, and discouragement.
- Satan hates to hear us praising God! When I hear annoying noises I move away from them. Praise is an annoying sound to Satan. He backs off.

P4: Pick up post-breakthrough Plunder: 20:24-30. They took plunder from the defeated enemy! This means God brings good out of bad when he gives us the victory. The defeat of the enemy army is the best blessing, but the plunder is extra blessing. God has extra blessings for his faith children. This is Romans 8:28 - God works all things together for good to those who love Him. For example: If we can overcome our selfishness and fear and share *TrueLife* cards with a witness to people by saying “Jesus love you,” then we may be able to pick up some plunder. *(This is a big breakthrough for me!)* If this church can breakthrough, then there will be a plunder of souls as we witness and share the Gospel.

You’re never too old for a spiritual growth breakthrough. If you don’t think you need a breakthrough, then you really need one! Spiritual growth will never end until we become perfect in heaven. If you’re new in the faith, then you will probably have several breakthroughs in your walk with Jesus. I’ve needed a breakthrough in the same area more than once.

REPEAT the 4 Principles.