

ECCLESIA CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST
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Bible Study Series



HOW TO LOSE A BATTLE AND WIN THE WAR
August 2021

KEY VERSE: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. (II Timothy 4:7)

INTRODUCTION

Throughout this series, *The Reality of Spiritual Warfare*, we have studied many strategies. As we apply this knowledge, we should all advance in our ability to fight in the strength and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, despite our knowledge of these strategies, from time to time we may face failure. However, do not become discouraged...some of the greatest men of God faced similar situations.

In this lesson we will study about four great men who lost battles but went on to win the war. We will learn steps for recovering from defeat and going on to victory despite failure. We will also learn how to deal with the condemnation of the enemy. Failure can teach important spiritual lessons... and remember... it is possible to lose a battle and still win the war.

LOSING A BATTLE

There are several examples in Scripture of men of God who lost battles with the enemy:

JOSHUA: Joshua was a great military commander who assumed leadership of the nation of Israel after the death of Moses. One of the challenges God gave Joshua was to lead Israel across the Jordan River to claim their promised land. One of the warriors of Israel sinned by taking spoil (property) from the enemy, something God had forbidden. Because there was "sin in the camp," Israel lost the battle at Ai (Joshua 7).

KING DAVID: King David lost an important battle when the evil Amalekites invaded the southern portion of his kingdom and burned the city of Ziklag. They took the women captive, including David's wives. David's friends and soldiers were so upset with him that they threatened to stone him to death. David was greatly distressed and discouraged (I Samuel 30:1-6). King David also lost a great battle in the spiritual world at one point in his life. He committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba who was another man's wife. When this resulted in Bathsheba becoming pregnant, he had her husband killed to try to cover his sin (II Samuel 11 and 12).

THE PROPHET ELIJAH: A wicked queen named Jezebel sent a messenger to the prophet Elijah informing him she was planning to kill him. Elijah... ..

went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, it is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. (I Kings 19:4)

Here was the great man of God who had healed the sick, raised the dead, and commanded the elements of nature in the name of the Lord. Now he was hiding, fearful, despondent, and wanting to die.

THE APOSTLE PAUL: The Apostle Paul also faced defeat. He wrote once that due to experiences in Asia he was "pressed out of measure" and "despaired even of life" (II Corinthians 1:8). He had times when he was troubled, perplexed, persecuted, fearful, and cast down (II Corinthians 4:8-11; 7:5-6).

WINNING THE WAR

Each of the great leaders mentioned lost battles with the enemy. As you engage in spiritual warfare, you too may experience a loss. But although you lose a battle with the enemy, it does not mean you have lost the war. A war is made up of many battles. Each of these men lost a battle but recovered to win

the war. The spiritual strategies they used will help you when you have lost a battle. It is possible to recover from the snare of the enemy when you lose a battle:

And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive of him at his will. (II Timothy 2:26)

The word "recover" means to awake or arouse yourself. A snare is a hidden trap. "They may recover" indicates that YOU must take steps to recovery after losing a spiritual battle. Here are the steps to take to recover from the snare of the enemy:

STEP ONE: RECOGNIZE YOUR FAILURE:

- Joshua recognized and admitted the failure at Ai. He said:

O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? (Joshua 7:8)

- It was not hard for David to admit failure in the incident at Ziklag. The loss was apparent to the natural eye. The city was burned, and the women taken captive. But it was more difficult for David to admit failure in the incident with Bathsheba. No one knew of his sin except himself, Bathsheba, and the prophet of God. **But David admitted, "I have sinned against the Lord" (II Samuel 12:13).**

- Elijah admitted failure. He said:

...It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. (I Kings 19:4)

- Paul recognized his failures. He said he had been "troubled, perplexed, persecuted, cast down, and even despaired of life" (II Corinthians 4:8-9; II Corinthians 1:8). Do not let pride prevent you from admitting you have lost a battle. *In order to recover from the snare of the enemy, you must first acknowledge you are in his snare:*

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (I John 1:8)

STEP TWO: REPENT: It is not just enough to admit your failure. You must also ask God to forgive you: **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to**

forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:9)

- David repented of his sin with Bathsheba. *Read his great prayer of repentance in Psalms 52. This is a good Psalm to use as a prayer when you have failed.*
- Joshua searched until he found the cause of the failure at Ai. He discovered that a military leader among the people had disobeyed God and caused the army to lose the battle. He and the people repented before God (Joshua 7).
- Elijah repented. He admitted he was no better than his sinful ancestors (I Kings 19:4).
- Paul indicated that although he had a great battle with the flesh (Romans 7) he was able to gain victory through "repentance from dead works" (Romans 8; Hebrews 6:1).

STEP THREE: REBUILD YOUR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH:

In the natural world when an army has experienced a military loss, time is taken to rebuild combat forces before returning to the battlefield. Commanders analyze the problems, take corrective action, and strengthen and encourage the troops.

This is an important principle in the spiritual world also. *When you have experienced failure in spiritual warfare you must rebuild your spiritual strength.*

- Joshua waited before the Lord in prayer to regain spiritual strength before returning to the battlefield. He prayed to discover the reason for failure and receive guidance for corrective actions (Joshua 7:6-15).
- David fasted and prayed after his failure with Bathsheba. Later he received physical food after the death of his child by Bathsheba. In the Ziklag incident David "encouraged himself in the Lord" and reorganized his forces before returning to the battlefield (I Samuel 30:6).
- Elijah rested, was ministered to by an angel, and waited on Mt. Horeb until receiving strength through a special manifestation of God's power (I Kings 19).

- Paul encouraged himself in the Lord. He reminded himself that nothing, not even his failure, could separate him from God:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...

Nay, in all these things we are MORE THAN CONQUERORS through Him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35, 37-39)

Here are some ways to rebuild your spiritual strength:

- Study the greatest handbook on spiritual warfare ever written...The Word of God.
- Spend time in prayer and fasting. Incorporate the prayer and fasting principles you learned in this series including binding the power of the enemy in your life. Ask God to reveal causes for the failure you experienced and what to do to correct the situation.
- Review the strategies of spiritual warfare in this series. Ask God to renew your strength and help you put these strategies into practice.
- Rest physically. Man is body, soul, and spirit. When your physical body is exhausted, Satan can take advantage and affect your soul and spirit.

STEP FOUR: RETURN TO THE BATTLEFIELD:

One of the main strategies of the enemy is to tempt you to give up when you have lost a spiritual battle. While it is true that the Holy Spirit will sometimes convict you when you fail, there is a difference between the condemnation of the enemy and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always singles out a specific sin while the condemnation of Satan is generalized.

Satan will speak generalized words of defeat to you:

- "You might as well give up.
- Everyone has lost confidence in you.
- God does not care, or He would have helped you. You are so weak and good for nothing.

- You will never be able to make it as a Christian.
- You are no good."

Do not listen to the condemnation of the enemy. Acknowledge your failure, repent before God, and recognize that...

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1)

Use this verse to defeat the condemning strategies of Satan and then... return to the battlefield!

- Joshua continued military campaigns in the Promised Land with great success. He returned to Ai and conquered the same military forces which had caused his defeat. When you return to the spiritual battlefield after failure, you can not only recover all the enemy has taken from you, but you can also go on to win new victories.

- After the loss at Ziklag, David returned to the battlefield to great military victory. He recovered all the enemy had taken from him: And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away...

And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all. (I Samuel 30:18-19)

- Elijah recovered from his despondency, returned to spiritual battle, and performed some of the greatest miracles in the history of his ministry.

- And as for Paul...read the remaining portion of a passage we previously mentioned:

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. (II Corinthians 4:8-9)

Here is a spiritual warrior who overcame. He said he was:

Troubled....BUT NOT DISTRESSED.

Perplexed....BUT NOT IN DESPAIR.

Persecuted...BUT NOT FORSAKEN.

Cast down.... BUT NOT DESTROYED!

Remember, "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again" (Proverbs 24:16).

LEARNING FROM FAILURE

Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth:

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in the God which raiseth the dead;

Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us. (II Corinthians 1:8-10)

Paul explained that problems in Asia had taught him an important lesson. *The lesson was that "we should not trust in ourselves, but in God." This is a great lesson to learn from failure. You cannot trust in yourself in spiritual warfare. Your power, your authority, your victory is assured only in Christ Jesus.*

Paul looked beyond the natural world to see the spiritual benefits of problems, temptations, trials, and failures:

For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

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. (II Corinthians 4:16-18)

Paul had learned that even though the outward man perished, the inward man was being renewed. The light afflictions of battle were resulting in spiritual

growth. It was not what was visible that was important, it was what was happening in the spirit world.

Instead of giving up the battle, Paul learned from failure and went on to victory. In II Corinthians 1:10 he indicated that God...

- "Delivered" (In the past)
- "Doth deliver" (In the present)
- "Will yet deliver" (In the future)

ON TO VICTORY

Despite all the perplexities, persecution, trouble, and despair, Paul was able to say in the closing days of his life:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. (II Timothy 4:7)

If you learn how to win the war with the enemy despite temporary failure from a lost battle, you too will be able to echo... "I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT!"

TACTICAL MANEUVER

Have you been defeated in a battle with Satan? Follow the four steps given in this lesson to overcome this defeat:

- Recognize your failure.
- Repent.
- Renew your spiritual strength.
- Return to the battlefield.

Lesson adapted from Spiritual Strategies: A Manual for Spiritual Warfare; Harvestime International Institute