

OVERCOMING THE POWER OF SPIRITUAL DEFEAT

by Carter Conlon

God gave me this word to encourage you who have given up or are close to giving up. Perhaps you feel powerless and hopeless about ever becoming what God intended you to be. You may feel you've fallen too far. You say, "Once I was in the Master's hand, but I've failed. I am so limited and I have hardly anything of value left." There is good news: Jesus, the Master Builder, can rebuild your life. Using Old Testament types from the book of Zechariah, I will show you how God can accomplish it.

Zechariah 1:16-21: Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the Lord shewed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

Because of their disregard and careless response to God's Word and holy presence, Israel and Judah had been taken into captivity by Assyria.

They had ignored all the warnings spoken by the prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. During their seventy years of bondage, Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians, conquered Babylon and became their king. Cyrus released the first group of 50,000 exiles, allowing them to return to Jerusalem, their homeland, to rebuild what lay in ruins. In this post-exilic context, God raised up the prophet Zechariah to bring hope and comfort to his people and to remind them that the rebuilding would be accomplished according to the Word, *'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,'* says the LORD of hosts (Zechariah 4:6).

■ OPPOSITION AND DISCOURAGEMENT

Under the leadership of Ezra, a scribe, and Joshua, a priest, the people of Israel began rebuilding the temple with great zeal. But soon opposition and an awareness of their own frailty brought the work to a standstill. God brought prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to advise the people of the source of their strength to finish the rebuilding they were destined to do. In much the same way, you and I soon discover our frailties after we lay hold of God's promises and begin to walk in them, eagerly putting our hand to the plow. We find that we have an enemy, the devil, who constantly opposes us, causing discouragement in rebuilding the dwelling place of God (according to the New Testament, you and I are his "dwelling place"). Because of such opposition, many say, "We've gone as far as we can go," and they turn from what God is doing in them, focusing on other things.

■ A LINE STRETCHED FORTH

Despite these powers of darkness, God's word of encouragement comes to us through the prophet Zechariah in verse 16, *Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.*

In the original text, line speaks of a predetermined measurement. In other words, God is saying, "I have already designed it in my mind; I have the dimensions and I know what the temple of your life is going to look like. I am going to do a marvelous work in you, and people everywhere will stop and consider the reality of God because of what I will accomplish through your life!" Interestingly, this word line also means a musical string. It is as though the Lord is saying, "Strike up the band! There is going to be a new song in your life and people will see it and glorify me."

■ FOUR HORNS — FOUR POWERS

The prophet Zechariah goes on, in verse 18: *Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.*

Although there are several theories about the nature of the four horns, the historical premise is generally the accepted one. They represent four kingdoms: Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and Medo-Persia. All are symbols of power that captivated and enslaved the people of God and

ultimately brought them to a place of spiritual defeat. These powers are a type of warfare that you and I have to fight every day and we must trust God for the victory to overcome them.

■ ASSYRIA

Assyria is the first horn, a nation of assimilation. After Assyria conquered another nation, it was their policy to integrate them into a culture other than their own. They would scatter, resettle and intermix these nations with other people, causing them to intermarry. Ultimately, nations lost their identity and culture. Persuasive speeches and intimidation were also part of their tactics. This is depicted in 2 Kings 18:27-35 where the king of Assyria fought against King Hezekiah and the people of God. He sent messengers to persuade the people to give up, as other nations had done. He promised them land not unlike their own, a land flowing with milk and honey. The captivity of Assyria is a spiritual delusion—like the Christian who has succumbed to a level of disillusionment and is content to live outside of what God intended for him. As you read this, you may realize you have only partial victory in your life. You can still sing, dance, and shout, but there is an inward sense that you are not in the place God wants you to be. You go through the motions, but there is no life.

■ EGYPT

Egypt is another power of captivity that happened to God's people, Israel, and is a type of what can happen to the Christian today. Egypt was a place that initially welcomed the children of God. Joseph was sold to traders going down to Egypt. He preceded his father Jacob and his brothers and their families, about seventy in all. Pharaoh opened his arms wide to them with promises of provision and security, but what ultimately followed was slavery and bondage.

This is always the result of false promises. The voice of the enemy says, "You don't have to go to this extreme to be a Christian. Why not just come over here and take a little detour? You will find plenty of provision and security." The Israelites didn't know they would have 400 years of bondage—but it was this bondage that produced in them a cry for freedom.

■ BABYLON

A third horn, Babylon, means confusion. It is the power of false wisdom, of human thought and reasoning apart from God. Babylon is infamous in the scriptures for its seeming desire to acquire knowledge. Even when the king of Babylon conquered Judah, he told some of his officers, "Seek out young people who have wisdom and bring them before me..." Among those were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were the only voices that spoke for God in that entire evil empire. Babylon is a theology of human reasoning that says, "Well, I think God is like this, or I feel God is like that." It is the symbolic power of false wisdom that turns away from the indisputable Word of God and moves into the realm of human thinking. So when the enemy comes against you with this false reasoning, you have to be able to say from the Word of God, "Thus saith the Lord, this is what the scripture says, and this alone is what I choose to obey. I will not be drawn into the arena of false wisdom."

This false wisdom is exactly what Jeremiah had prophesied would bring the people of God into Babylon's captivity. Jeremiah 8:9: *The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?* How many professing Christians today are being captivated by the power of false wisdom? They continue sitting under ministries where

supposed prophets close the Word of God and say, "Now, let's see what God is speaking." They are communicating out of their own heart, which is nothing more than delusions of the human nature.

■ MEDO-PERSIA

Lastly, let us look at Medo-Persia, a fourth type of captivity. This conqueror was a rather benevolent one. King Cyrus had said to the people of God, "We won't bother you, and you don't bother us." This place of peaceful coexistence with the enemy is the most dangerous. Tolerance and compromise represent the true and final power of spiritual defeat! Although Cyrus had issued a decree to literally hundreds of thousands of Israelites, releasing them from living in captivity in Babylon, yet only 50,000 had the courage to arise and make the long journey back to Israel.

You see, spiritual defeat is thinking contrary to the Word of God. It is fear instead of faith; it is unbelief that says, "Maybe God is able to do this." But when opposition arises, many turn away from faith in God and his promises and continue living in a conditioned state of unbelief. Because of this contrary thinking, many of those who finally arose and headed back to rebuild never finished. That's the power of spiritual defeat. Others will not press on because they are convinced of their defeat before they even get started! They have been under the dominion of these kingdoms and in these schools of false thought for so long that when true freedom comes, they cannot embrace it. They are so conditioned to living in captivity that they cannot move beyond the oppression of their backgrounds, their natural thinking, or their own culture, and that is just what this enemy of complacency wants.

■ FOUR CARPENTERS

Zechariah 1:20-21: *And the LORD shewed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.*

Zechariah is saying that God is going to send four carpenters to overthrow all these powers. Remember, the horns are symbolic of the powers that came against God's people, causing them to slump in discouragement so that hardly a man had strength to lift his own head. So God says, "I am going to do something about it; I am going to send four carpenters to fray them and cast them out." Through these verses I see four men, carpenters, heading down the road, each carrying a toolbox with skills given by God. So you have to ask, "How can four carpenters cast out such great dominions and powers?"

The closest example of a modern-day carpenter I can give you is a missionary named Michael Beanne. After being saved for only two or three years, he sat in a service in a church in Texas and heard a missionary tell of the great need in Central America. Shortly after, Michael went to see his pastor, carrying a toolbox in his hand. As a handyman, all he knew how to do was plumbing and odd jobs. He was not qualified to be a missionary, but he had heard the call of God to go to Central America—and in obedience to the call, he arose to go! The pastor was not in the office that day, so Michael left a message with the personal assistant: "When the pastor comes in, please tell him I have left for the mission field."

Conditions in Central America were chaotic. Guerrilla rebels were killing people and drug

trafficking was flourishing. The society was perishing all around with mountain people living in abject poverty.

What kind of force would be needed to make a difference in such conditions? In the natural, it would take an army of people to make any change at all. Yet, I see one man stepping off the plane with a toolbox in his hand, a simple carpenter in the hand of a mighty God. Shortly after his arrival, Michael was pulled aside in his car by guerrilla soldiers and brought into a building for execution. Facing certain death, all he could say to his captors was, "Can't we have coffee together and talk this over before you shoot me?" Miraculously, God protected him, and today you see one of the greatest evidences of transformation among the mountain Indians that I am personally aware of...all because of one carpenter and his family. These Indians now have education, medicine, and a sense of law and order. The provision and prosperity of God has flowed to them. Powers are being broken off their lives on a daily basis. How did it happen? A carpenter showed up with a toolbox in his hands, not as a professional, but as a new Christian with a deep abiding confidence in a God who had called him and then sent him! Hallelujah!

■ JESUS CHRIST — A MASTER CARPENTER

You see this same principle recorded in 2 Chronicles chapter 2, when Solomon was building the first temple in Jerusalem. The Lord had sent him cunning and skilled craftsmen from throughout the land of Israel; there were iron workers, carpenters, and people who could work in silver, gold, and brass. Most importantly, Solomon sought out a master craftsman from the land of Tyre, whom he placed over all the other workers. So if this is a type of the New

Testament church, and I do believe that everything in the Old Testament does point to Christ and his church, then why did Zechariah speak of only four carpenters? Meditating on this, I wondered if it could be that the master carpenter was not yet born. There was a fifth carpenter who was still to come who would be over these four carpenters. I had always wondered why Jesus was born into a carpenter's home. Why was carpentry his trade? There had to be more significance than God just flipping through the Rolodex and saying, "Hmm, I wonder what my Son will do for a living." No! Christ was coming as the *Master Carpenter* who would be set over all other carpenters, just as Solomon had a master craftsman over all others. Christ would preside over all who would build with him in changing the lives of many and destroying all the powers of spiritual defeat.

■ THOSE IN CHRIST WILL CAUSE THE ENEMY TO FLEE

In Zechariah 1:21, we read that these carpenters will fray the powers of captivity. The word fray means to shake or terrify; to cause to quake, as in an earthquake. These carpenters are going to cause hell to shake, and everything of captivity is going to be put on notice. They are going to be powerful because they are walking in the strength of the Master Carpenter, using skills that God has given them. As they walk in God's divine order, the powers of hell that have been entrenched in the minds and hearts of God's people will begin to tremble. The demons of hell will be terrified by the simplicity of God working through ordinary carpenters who make up the five-fold ministry of the church of Jesus Christ.

Mathew 27:50-54 speaks about the Master Carpenter in this way: *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and*

the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

Remember, these carpenters are going to cause the shaking, causing the powers of evil to be terrified. I believe with all my heart that graves are going to open and some of you that have fallen asleep toward the things of God are going to arise. Like Lazarus, you will hear God calling you out of death into a fuller life in Christ. God has a plan for your life and although you may have failed, his mercy is going to rebuild you. He will not hold your sins against you, but as you confess your sin, he will freely forgive you. The church of Jesus Christ has to arise and receive her calling! This is a dark, oppressive hour when all humanity is moving quickly into rebellion against God. The power of death can put you in a grave long before you are dead. Spiritual defeat is a grave, but the scripture says that after Jesus cried, the rocks and the earth began to quake, graves were opened and many bodies of the saints who slept arose. Now is the season when the church must come out of the grave and this cry must be in the heart of the church, "I will rise up; I will get out of this place of death."

■ THE MASTER CARPENTER WILL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEED

Zechariah 9:9-12: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter

of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.

This verse tells us what Christ will do for those who trust him to finish the work they have been called to do. Through the Word, the Lord is saying, "I am going to give you victory over all your enemies. I will defend you and be your strength." Not only will he give you strength to defeat your enemies, the Master Carpenter will take you out of the dry places in your life where there is no living water, the places where you are being held captive. He will give you the double portion of the firstborn son. Everything that was won for you on Calvary will become yours. Hallelujah! You will have a new mind and a new heart; you will have renewed courage and a new spirit within. He will come and dwell in you, and raise you up as a mighty church this side of eternity. Glory to God!

Carter Conlon
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TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of "The Cross and the Switchblade." It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Church Service	
Thursday	7:00PM	Intercessory Prayer	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	

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