



This series was preached from Sunday Morning, February 18th thru March 10th, 2024

MIKE TYSON: “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face.”

STATEMENT (God gave me) – “Everyone thinks they are blessed until famine comes.”

BELOVED: When the enemy hits...you have a choice...you can either lay there (draw back) or you can get up and press on!

Battles come! Don't be surprised.

The enemy wants to TAKE YOU OUT or at least try to ruin your testimony.

ILLUSTRATION: I had some friends, growing up, who got some boxing gloves for some special occasion...they set up a “ring” in their basement on an oval rug. **The POINT IS...**I liked them, I didn't want to punch them...if they had been calling me names to hurt my feelings first, then maybe...but I ended up winning the fight because I just leaned on them and pushed them out of the ring.

BELOVED: The enemy hates you...he doesn't care if the punch hurts...he wants to take you out.

- It will stop your gifting, which is to glorify God and further His kingdom.
- It will stop your testimony.
- It will keep his kingdom safe from ruin.

We get uncomfortable when the pastor tells us that battles are coming. **However**, instead of getting irritated at him...thank him! He is telling you the truth and He is preparing you NOT JUST for the battle (that is a bad pastor) but for your victory.

BELOVED: Faith is a force! It doesn't work if you are pulling back...only if it is aggressive and moving!

In **Genesis 37** we see the account of Joseph and his brothers.

- Joseph was given a dream...a big dream of ruling.
- His brothers didn't like it...they had enjoyed their life...it was really good! They didn't need to have his help to be blessed...they could do it their own way...without him.
- So, they beat him up and sold him into slavery (they were gonna kill him).
- **FAST FORWARD** many years...and FAMINE hits...what do they do?
- Go to him...even though they didn't know it...**they needed him!**

ILLUSTRATION: We have a new puppy...did you know that ;-)...and when the door is closed and he hears any noise outside (person, animal, car, etc.) he stands defiantly and begins to bark...as if to say, "I will protect his house and my family!"

HOWEVER: As soon as we open the door and he sees the box that was left...or sometimes even a leaf blowing across the lawn...he tucks his tail and runs back into the house, cowering, fearful (sometimes urinating some).

APPARENTLY he isn't such a tough guard dog after all...as soon as the battle (box) comes he cowers!

BELOVED: We often see that same thing happen in our lives...when a battle comes our way...if we are not strong in faith...we begin to cower and be fearful!

Now, when things are going good...we are strong and "mighty"...but when faced with the battles, we tuck our tails and run.

Luke 22:24-30 – the disciples are arguing which one of them is the greatest...Jesus gives them some directions...about serving...about standing with others.

Luke 22:31-32

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, ***Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.***

32 But I have ***prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:*** and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Vs. 32 – Jesus was standing with Peter during this.

"Sift" – separate, break to pieces, shake, shatter, and discourage.

Sifting of wheat is a shaking or beating that gets rid of the chaff and only keeps that which is real.

UNDERSTAND: This sifting is an inward agitation to try ones faith to the verge of overthrow (take down). The enemies plan is to shake you...attack you...to get you to move off your stance of faith...to take you down!

BELOVED: The enemy's plan is to drain, weaken and wear down your faith through PRESSURE, DISAPPOINTMENT, and DISCOURAGEMENT.

He wants you to back down from your stand of faith...He wants you to live in a constant state of retreat.

Hebrews 10:38,39

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have ***no pleasure in him.***

39 But we are ***not of them who draw back unto perdition;*** but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

"Perdition" – ruin, loss, destruction

John 10:10 – thief comes to steal, kill and destroy

Psalm 103:4 – redeems your life from destruction

That is why Jesus says that He was praying that Peter's faith would NOT fail Him.

1 John 5:4 – "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and ***this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.***"

When we draw back and cower in fear it will keep you from the harvest...keep you from your testimony (importance of your testimony for you and for others).

Revelation 12:11 – they overcame the enemy by the blood of the Lamb and word of their testimony.

You may think...NO, NO, NO...I am not really tucking my tail and running...I am not cowering...that's crazy! I am just being reasonable about my situation...have to pull back on a few things, so I don't fail or end up short.

BELOVED: That is what the Bible says is pulling back and cowering.

LISTEN: My dog would say that his fear of boxes is reasonable.

Your tail tucking may...

- Look like cowering in fear or
- It may look like complacency.
- It may look like softening your stand.
- It may look like stopping and pulling back.

HOWEVER: No matter what you call it...it is your faith failing you and moving you to perdition (ruin, loss, destruction).

Get Aggressive

God is telling us today...

We are NOT living in a time period where it is okay to draw back when the sifting comes...the enemy is trying, like crazy, to get us to move off our stand of faith.

With what is going on in this point of history it is time for AGGRESSIVE FAITH!

God spoke to George Pearsons several years ago, when he was being confronted with one of these sifting times, and told him that he had a choice...***he could either be complacent or he could be aggressive***...the choice was his.

HOWEVER: Only aggressive faith will stand and bring victory!

He went on and asked him several questions about his life (his faith) and how he answered them would determine what he was going to receive.

THEREFORE: Today, I want to ask you those questions...I will teach a little on each point, because...

...we are either cowering or conquering!

UNDERSTAND: Aggressive faith is not one that comes in a book or from book learning. You can get insight...but not step into it.

But you have to work it to get it.

THINK ABOUT IT: If you are hungry, you have to do more than read the recipe book...you have to do the work.

JOKE: I have a friend who was so poor that often times his parents didn't have anything to eat, so his mom would sit him and his siblings down and read them the recipe book. His younger brother was hard of hearing and almost starved to death.

1.) Are you maintaining or PURSUING?

Philippians 3:12-14

- 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: ***but I follow after (I pursue)***, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.
- 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, ***forgetting those things which are behind***, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
NOTE: Not drawing back...but pursuing!
- 14 I ***press toward the mark*** for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
"Press" – same word as follow in verse 12.

BELOVED: Are you content with what you have?

NOTE: There is a dissatisfied contentment that we all need...but are you okay with the money you have...the position you have...the things you have?

It is when you are content or satisfied that you quit giving...quit sowing...quit tithing...quit obeying...quit pressing towards the call on your life.

The KEY to pursuing vs. maintaining.

“Pursuing” – to follow in order to catch

ILLUSTRATION: When you are dating your spouse...perhaps not even dating, just interested... you will do whatever to catch them.

Flowers, gifts, notes, dates, etc...you are pursuing them.

HOWEVER: Once you catch them and say, “I do.” You got ‘em! You quit the pursuing and maybe, at best maintain.

NOTE: The problem with thinking you are maintaining is that it doesn’t take much to lose ground.

QUESTION: What happens to a marriage when one or both parties stop pursuing? Things begin to fail.

PURSUING has in it the concept of preparing, also.

1 Corinthians 9:24 – “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”

Run to pursue the WIN!

ILLUSTRATION: If I decide today that I want to run in the Summer Olympics coming this summer. I get some kind of waver to run in the race, but I show up on the day of the race ready to run...just like I am right now...and I run as fast as I can.

QUESTION: Who is putting their money on me?

QUESTION: Have I really decided to run to obtain the prize?

QUESTION: Will I win?

ANSWER: Absolutely NOT!

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 (**PASSION**)

25 A true athlete will be disciplined in every respect, practicing constant self-control in order to win a laurel wreath that quickly withers. But we run our race to win a victor’s crown that will last forever.

26 For that reason, I don’t run just for exercise or box like one throwing aimless punches,

27 but I train like a champion athlete. I subdue my body and get it under my control, so that after preaching the good news to others I myself won’t be disqualified.

If you are going to obtain...you must prepare yourself beforehand.

BELOVED: Are you pursuing and pressing in to the things of God or are you “just” going to church...”just” doing the minimum?

BELOVED: To walk in AGGRESSIVE FAITH you must train...spend time with Him...in His Word.

THINK OF IT: If you are not obtaining...what do you need to do? Be happy that you finished? Or increase your training?

- Spend more time with Him
- Spend more time in the Word
- Give more

2.) Are you dry docked or launching out into the deep.

“dry docked” – out of the water, not in use

No chance for danger when a boat is on land...only when it gets out in the water.

Luke 5:1-11

Vs. 2 – They were washing their nets...they were calling it a day.

Vs. 3 – Jesus gave Peter a chance to sow a seed (a tired seed)

NOTE: The smooth still water of the lake must have served excellently to convey the sounds to those who stood on the shore.

Vs. 4 – At the conclusion of His message he told Peter to do something that didn’t make sense (the best time for catching fish was long past) and that would cost him (the nets were clean and the boats were ready to be docked).

Do something crazy! Do something WAY OUT THERE! Or stay on the land and get some rest?

3.) Are you simply holding the fort or taking new ground?

Joshua 1:3 – “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”

What would they have done if they just found an area that no one was on and just settled? They had to keep walking...keep taking new ground.

I always think in terms of the early settlers...any new settler (in the Bible or in America). My thought is...why take ground that isn't yours? Why not be satisfied with what you already had?

Because they wanted to keep moving...keep looking!
IN BIBLE keep taking land!

How comfortable did the children of Israel get in Goshen? Over 425 years as things got worse and worse! They got comfy in their bondage.

ALSO NOTE: Reuben and Gad SETTLED on the east side of the Jordan...but had to continue to take ground until all of their covenant partners had taken theirs too.

Your faith isn't just for you...it is for those that you've been connected to...keep helping others take new ground.

4.) Are you settled into the status quo or reaching to the next level?

Romans 1:17 – “For therein is the righteousness of God *revealed from faith to faith*: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

BELOVED: There are levels of faith.

Romans 12:3 – “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, *according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*”

NOTE: The fruit of the spirit comes into a man at the time of being born again and each man is given a measure of faith (same measure).

NOTE: I do believe that measure is what we would call a little faith.

As we read the Word we see several measure of faith.

a.) No faith!

Mark 4:40 – “And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?”

REMEMBER: They are in the boat in a storm and Jesus is sleeping and they are panicking!

Jesus is confused as to why they have been with Him and have NO FAITH at all.

PROBLEM: You burn faith...that is why you gotta keep it full...so that measure that you get when you are born-again gets burned and you gotta keep it full.

NOTICE: The only time this phrase of NO FAITH is used is when the disciples were placing blame on Jesus. He didn't care about them. If He cared...He would do something!

When you get into the “blame game” you are absolutely out of faith.

b.) Little faith.

Several times in the New Testament.

Matthew 6:30 – If you are worried about God not supplying for you...little faith.

Matthew 8:26 – Jesus is asleep in another storm...they are afraid and have little faith.

Matthew 14:31 – Peter walking on the water and begins sinking.

Matthew 16:8 – When disciples were afraid Jesus was mad because they forgot the bread...if Jesus wanted bread He could get bread!

NOTE: Little faith could be a measure of small amount or small time (only lasts a little while).

c.) Great faith.

Matthew 15:28 – The Syrophoenician woman (Canaanite woman) who wouldn't take no for an answer. Kept pressing.

d.) Greatest faith.

Matthew 8:8-10 – “speak the Word only”

BRING UP: You move from faith to faith by...

- Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word.
- Faith increases by working your faith.
- Faith is built up by speaking in tongues.

5.) Are you passive or pressing?

Matthew 5:21-34 (The woman with the issue of blood)

Vs. 24 – “**thronged**” – compressed, pressed on Him from every side

Vs. 27 – “**The press**” – like a grape in making wine

BELOVED: If she got to Jesus in a throng and press of people...guess what she was doing? Everything she could to keep moving.

Vs. 28 – She said and kept saying! Kept pressing with her words!

UNDERSTAND: You will NEVER make it through the PRESS of the enemy if you are NOT pressing in yourself (with faith).

Quit letting the enemy stop your confession of faith!

6.) Are you circling the wagons or leading a charge?

“**Circling the wagons**” is a defensive measure for protection (no movement).

2 Kings 7:3 – “And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?”

They could have sat and hoped things would change...or they could MOVE and make it change.

They moved and saved a nation!

1 Samuel 17 – We see two groups of people:

1.) Circled wagons.

Vs. 24,25 – The men are planning for defeat...hiding.

They are spending their time attacking those who believed.

BELOVED: If you are charging...you are not attacking your own (vs. 28).

2.) David!

David from the start...kept moving and charging.

Vs. 20 – Dad said go...he went.

Vs. 22 – He ran to see the battle field.

Vs. 26 – He made plans for victory, not failure.

Vs. 31,32 – He kept moving to Saul.

Vs. 40 – He drew near to Goliath.

Vs. 48 – He ran to the battle.

UNDERSTAND: David didn't have time to attack his own men...because he was focused on the victory that was ahead of him.

BELOVED: The giants of your life are not going to fall by you not moving...you've got to charge!

Bill Johnson uses the word "risk"!

7.) Are you protecting the little you have or are you aggressively possessing all that is rightfully yours?

I am reminded about the two women in the Old Testament...one with Elijah and one with Elisha.

1 Kings 17:8-16

She had a plan...hold on to the LITTLE...eat the LITTLE...then die!

God had another plan...sow to the man of God.

2 Kings 4:1-7

This lady had no hope...she didn't not even just have a little...she had nothing and owed the creditors too much.

The instructions? Get a lot of pots...a lot of 'em! And begin pouring out!

ILLUSTRATION: The pump in the well in the middle of the desert. If you walked up to it you would see the pump and then a small bottle of water sitting next to it. The temptation was...due to thirst...take the small bottle of water and drink it up (first thing).

HOWEVER: If you did that...you would end up dying in the desert. That water was NOT enough to hydrate you and once you drank that water, the well was just decoration in the desert.

YOU SEE: That small bottle of water had a purpose...to be poured out...poured into the bottom of the pump to lubricate the seal at the bottom of the pump. Once the seal was lubricated... you could use the pump and it would give you an unlimited amount of water. Without the lubrication...the seal would not seal and you would not get the water.

BELOVED: That is the way with your finances. If you can't let go of what you have...you will never hit the unlimited source of God's kingdom.

Give and it will be given.

Sow and you will reap.

BUT I only have a little?

If it doesn't meet your need, it must be a seed!