

Food for Thought: The Road to Greatness!

To get the most benefit from this article, be sure to look up the references in your Bible!

1 Corinthians 10:11—Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

For those of us who know and love Jesus, our experience in this life can be like a great schooling. The Lord is our Teacher Who wants to teach each of us all we need to know about Him and His love, salvation, and service, and He wants to help us learn to follow His Word.

God knows that none of us will ever be able to really accomplish anything for Him and His Heavenly Kingdom in our own strength. In fact, Jesus said, “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). But the Bible also says that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). If we will simply yield to the Lord and be truly willing to be whatever God may want us to be—not what we are, but what God wants us to be—then He can mightily use us!

Of course, to become submitted to the Lord is not something that we learn overnight. It takes time, and it takes lessons and experiences that cause us to draw closer to Him.

The list is almost endless of all the men in the Bible whom God had to humble before He could use them, of all the leaders God had to bring down to the depths before they could stand to be exalted—lest they would have taken credit to themselves and not given God the glory!

Look at **Joseph**!—Of Jacob’s 12 sons, he was his father’s favorite. His elder brothers finally became so jealous of him that they nearly killed him, threw him into a pit, and then sold him into slavery!—But that’s what the Lord used to humble him. Joseph had to be made a slave, and then a prisoner in Egypt and condemned as a criminal, before God was able to exalt him to become the savior of His people! (Genesis 37,39–41)

And look at **Moses**!—For 40 years he was groomed in the very courts of Pharaoh, and could have risen to become the second most powerful man in all of the mighty world empire of ancient Egypt. The Bible says he was “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22), but God could not yet use him to lead His people to freedom, for he was full of the ways of the world and not the ways of God. Moses had to be broken first, and God allowed him to become a fugitive from Pharaoh, and he had to spend 40 years in the wilderness doing nothing but tending sheep, before he was finally broken and humble enough for God to use him for the task He had designed him for! (Exodus 2, 3).

And consider King **David**, the greatest king that Israel ever had: When he fell in love with Bathsheba, purposely arranged for her husband to be killed in battle, and then tried to lie and cover up the entire crime, God had to completely expose him, humble him, and severely judge him!—And he soon was driven from the throne by his own traitorous son, Absalom. (2 Samuel 11,12, 15).

But was David’s fall really a fall downward, or a fall upward? God’s way up is sometimes down—usually in fact!—Just the opposite of what we think! And David was humbled, and the whole kingdom was humbled, and they were all reminded that it was only the Lord Who made them great! And from that squeezing and twisting of David’s life came forth the sweet honey of the Psalms, and the fragrance of His praises to the Lord for His mercy!

The great, brave and mighty prophet, **Elijah**, was able to call down fire from Heaven to confound the false prophets of Baal and to prove that he was right! (1 Kings 18). But after slaying hundreds of false prophets, he panicked and ran away from one little woman, the wicked Queen Jezebel! Hiding out in the wilderness, he became so discouraged that he wished that he might die! But there in his time of desperation, this prophet of fire and thunder became a meek little man who learned to listen to the still, small voice of God! And he became a much better, humbler instrument in the hands of the Lord—a prophet who fearlessly returned to face not only the queen, but also the king and all of their soldiers!

And look at the apostle **Peter**!—He swore to Jesus, “I will lay down my life for Your sake. . . . Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death” (John 13:37; Luke 22:33). But just a few hours later, when Jesus was seized by the Temple guards and hauled before the Jews’ religious court, some people outside of the building recognized Peter and pointed him out as a friend of Jesus. Peter vehemently denied that he even knew the Lord, cursing and swearing that he had no idea what they were talking about! (Mark 14:66–71).

As he was denying the Lord the third time, Jesus, Who was being led by His captors to another part of the building, turned and gazed upon Peter, and Peter remembered how he had sworn that he would never deny Him. The Bible tells us that Peter then “went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). Was this the end of Peter’s service for the Lord?—No!—It was shortly after this humiliating defeat, this great failure, that the Lord used Peter to become the leader of the Early Church!

Or consider the great apostle **Paul**: He was a prominent Jewish leader, known as Rabbi Saul, and had personally taken it upon himself to put an end to the fast-growing sect of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Journeying by horseback to Damascus, where he intended on capturing, imprisoning and executing as many Christians as he could find, God had to literally knock him off of his horse and blind him with the brilliant light of His presence!

Trembling, helpless and blind, the great Rabbi Saul had to be led by the hand into the city where he was so astonished that he was unable to eat or drink for three days! A disciple of the Lord then came to give him God’s message and pray for his eyes, and Rabbi Saul was converted and became the great apostle Paul! But God had to humble and break him first, and make him a new man before He was able to use him! (Acts 9)

So even if you don’t always understand why you’re going through tests, trials, hardships and breakings, remember, God knows what He’s doing! He knows all the purposes and reasons behind each test, trial or trouble.

He promises “all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28). He is not going to allow anything to happen to you, His child, except what is for your good!

Of course, we often feel like, “My goodness! A lot of things happen that don’t look very good to me!” But sooner or later you will find out that somehow or another they were good for you!

You will find that God gets some of His greatest victories out of seeming defeats—victories of yieldedness, brokenness, humility and utter dependence on Him, which you must have if you’re going to be what God wants you to be! So take heart from these examples from the Bible and don’t be discouraged when things seem to go all wrong and your hopes are disappointed.

Everyone who has ever been of any real use to the Lord, had to first be broken, humbled, and brought virtually to the end of themselves. Otherwise, they would be too proud and self-confident in their own fleshly talents and natural abilities, and would take the glory to themselves if God were to use them. This is why He chooses to use the weak things and the foolish things, “that no flesh should glory in His presence!” (1 Corinthians 1:25–29).

God does not always see things as we see them, “For His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways” (Isaiah 55:8–9), and He does not judge or reward us according to our success or failures, but according to our faithfulness. In Heaven, one day He’ll say to those who are true to Him, “Well done, My good and faithful servant!” (Matthew 25:21). He won’t say “My failure servant,” or “My successful servant,” but He’ll say, “My faithful servant!”

So above all, stay faithful to Jesus! And remember, your seeming defeats can become great victories for the Lord if you will humble yourself and learn the lessons He is trying to teach you, like these men in the Bible did.

Reflections: Strength To Serve

2 Corinthians 4:7—But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

A message from Jesus

Throughout all the ages of man the struggle has been between leaning upon the arm of the flesh and the strength of man, and leaning upon the power of God. All of My children from the beginning until now have struggled between leaning upon their own strength in their service for Me, and leaning on Me to perform their service. For they struggle, feeling that they must do this and they must do that, and they have not fully understood that I wish for their service to be done through My power and My strength and My might (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

Always in My service there is so much to do, for the harvest is plenteous but the laborers are few, and My Spirit compels them to do all that must be done. But they feel they must do it in their power and in their might, and they have not sought Me and My power, nor trusted Me and My power. They have not fully understood all My power can do through the power of prayer, through the power of My Word, through the power of My direction (Isaiah 41:10).

And those few who have understood and who leaned upon My power in prayer and who sought Me in all things have accomplished more than any men, for they operated in the power of My Spirit. For the power and might of God is so strong, yet My children do not tap into it nearly as much as they could. And this has been the battle throughout the ages.

When the children of Israel did not trust Me and did not lean upon My power, they turned to the armies of men for their protection. And in these days when My children trust Me not, they turn to the thoughts of men, whether they be the thoughts of other men or whether it be their own thoughts.

But those that would perform in the power and in the might of God turn to Me, and they seek Me and they follow that which I say to them and that which I show them, and thus do they accomplish My will with effortless ease. For have I not shown you how much easier it is to seek Me and to ask Me? And how that which I show you accomplishes My purpose with very little effort on your part?

And so would I have it for My children, that they be not so strained and burdened. When they have a problem with their children, they should pray and seek Me. When they have a problem in their home, they should pray and seek Me. When they have a problem with their work, they should pray and seek Me. When they have a problem with their finances, they should pray and seek Me. When they have a problem with those in their family, they should pray and seek Me, for I do have answers. I do have the strength. I do have the power. It is there.

Have I not said, 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Have I not said, 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know' (Jeremiah 33:3). That 'they that seek Me early shall find Me' (Proverbs 8:1). 'When you call out to Me with a whole heart, I will answer' (Jeremiah 29:13). 'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you' (Matthew 7:7).

These are not mere words of man, My children, these are the promises of God. Avail yourselves of these, My promises, and believe, and you will have strength and might and power that ye know not of.

But oh, you work so hard. And, oh, you toil and strain and struggle, but My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matthew 11:28–30). These burdens were not designed for you to carry, for they are My burdens. You are My children. For does not the father of the household take care of the heavy burdens of the household and carry the weights of the household? Does he not supply the needs of the household? Does he not supply the protection of the household? And does he not decide the weighty matters? For he does not ask the children to decide these things or to defend the house or to supply for the house, for he loves his children, and he wishes to supply for them and protect them and keep them. He wishes to answer their questions and help them to grow, to teach them. So it is with Me.

So let Me be your Father. Let Me carry the burden. Bring it to Me. Ask of Me and seek Me, for I promise to show you and to give you those answers that you seek, that you may find true rest in Me.

And thus you will understand My Word when I say, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord’ (Zechariah 4:6). And so shall you understand when I say, ‘Stand back and see Me fight.’ And you shall know that you have this treasure in earthen vessels that the power and excellency may be of God and not of man, that no flesh should glory in My presence (2 Corinthians 4:7; 1:29).

So let Me do the work, and seek Me, and hear My voice, and do those things that I show you, that you shall know that it is by My Spirit that these things are accomplished, and thus shall I receive the praise and the honor and the glory that I deserve.

It is humbling to come before Me and admit that you need these answers. And it will be humbling for you to see My power in comparison to your own. But in humility is great peace. And in humility is great rest. So come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. I will give you the rest of My answers, and the rest of My strength, and the rest of My power, if you will but seek Me, if you will but hear My voice, and if you will operate according to My plan.

So rest in Me and be freed from the heavy burdens. For though the questions may not go away, the answers can come forth, flow forth in great abundance if you will but tap into the source, My Spirit. For in Me is great power, and in Me is all that you need, for I am all in all, and I am here for you.

Faith-builders: Jericho—The Walls Came Tumbling Down!

The walls of Jericho did come tumbling down as recounted in the Bible, says an archaeological study.

“When we compare the archaeological evidence at Jericho with the Biblical narrative describing the Israelite destruction of Jericho, we find remarkable agreement,” said archaeologist Byrant Wood.

After studying data from excavation reports of British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon, Wood wrote in an issue of the scholarly journal, *Biblical Archaeology Reviews*: “Here is impressive evidence that the walls of Jericho did indeed topple as the Bible records.”

Read the story of the fall of Jericho in Joshua 6:1–20. Now look at these amazing discoveries!

Jericho, the first city captured by the incoming Israelites under Joshua, is now an eight-acre mound called Tell es-Sultan that lies beside the copious spring known as Elisha’s Fountain.

Excavations down to the fourth occupational level, which archeologist Garstang called City D, proved to be of primary importance to Bible students and historians, as well as to archaeologists, who had often discussed the correct date of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt and subsequent entry into Palestine. Scholars had differed by two centuries or more in their date for this event. Of all places, Jericho was the place where the question could be studied most thoroughly. This fourth occupational level seemed indeed, the very city taken by Joshua and the excavators proceeded with eager caution.

There were two 30-foot-high walls that ran nearly parallel, circling the summit of the mound. They were made of sun-dried brick some four inches thick, but varying in length from one to two feet. The inner wall was from 11 to 12 feet thick, and was constructed on the foundation of an earlier wall. The outer wall, of later construction, was about six feet thick and stood on the edge of the mound.

The space between the two walls varied from 12 to 27 feet and at frequent intervals the two were tied together by brick walls. On the outskirts of the old city mound Garstang discovered a cemetery where he opened scores of graves that yielded quantities of pottery vessels, considerable jewellery, and about 170 scarabs (beetles sacred to the Egyptians).

After examining approximately 100,000 fragments of pottery, 1,500 unbroken vessels, as well as 80 scarabs, the fallen walls, and other evidence, Garstang had no hesitancy in dating the fall of the city at about 1400 B.C.; and identifying it as the Canaanite city of Jericho, which fell before the incoming Israelites led by Joshua.

The burnt and charred remains evident everywhere were to him a confirmation of the biblical account that the Israelites burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein (Joshua 6:24).

The fallen walls were a confirmation of how the Israelites entered every man straight before him (Joshua 6:20).

Yet another case of archeology validating the historical record of the Bible!