

So, what you must understand, bear with me if you will, is that Paul resists the temptation to get into a battle of wits with Apollos and his followers. He "concludes, I planted, Apollos watered, God gave the increase". It says, it doesn't matter who plants. It doesn't matter who waters. God just gives the increase. He refused to allow them to entice him into a battle where there was no spoils. You know, people will try to draw you into a battle where there is no spoils. They'll play on your ego, and your pride, and your emotions, to try to get you to get involved into something that you ought to stay away from. You have to be mature to walk away from a fight sometimes.

You have to grow up enough to say, "Listen, I can't fight every battle. I can't get into every skirmish. I'm preserving my strength and my energy for my highest use". And so, sometimes you gotta turn the other cheek, not because you're weak, and not because you're not able, but because you are focused on your purpose and your destiny. Oh my God, my God, my God. Touch three people, say, "I just don't have time for it. I don't have time. I don't have time. I don't have time. I don't have

time. I don't have time. I don't have time for it. Not only do I not care, I don't have time for it. I don't have time at this stage in my life. I'm, having to focus on some things. I'm having to forget some things that are behind me and reach to some things that are before me. This is a time for me to focus".

And then, the third thing Paul recognizes is that the enemy, the enemy, the saboteur of our souls is always working behind the scenes. He has a strategy, as it were, to lead to your demise, that he has been studying you, that he has been watching you. The text of my predecessor used that Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat. That word desire means, I've been lusting after, I've been longing after, I've been watching your habits and your mannerisms so that I could develop a way of wooing you.

The enemy's not just attacking you like some school kid on the back of a fifth grade bus. He's not just throwing punches any kind of way, but he has a strategy. He has a strategy. Yeah, you have a strategic devil. Yeah, you have a devil that's been watching for several

generations. He knows where you're vulnerable. He knows what breaks your heart. He knows what hurts your feelings. He knows what will sap your strength and take your peace. He knows how to keep you up at night. He knows how to frustrate your joy and your grace and your peace. He knows what will give you insomnia. He knows what will make you sick at the stomach. He doesn't waste time landing blows that have no effect. He takes aim to sabotage you, particularly when you're on your way towards your purpose and your destiny. The closer you get to your destination, that's when all hell begins to break loose in your life. Somebody knows what I'm talking about tonight.

Touch your neighbor and say, "I must be real close". I must be real close. Why do you say that you're real close? 'Cause it's getting harder now. Gettin' tougher now. Yeah, I shed more tears now, have to push a little harder than I used to have to push. Things that used to be easy don't come so easy right now, 'cause I'm getting closer to my breakthrough, and the closer you are to your breakthrough, he starts dispatching specialized demons that have been strategically released for such a time as this

to detonate, to explode like dynamite, to bring you down, down, down, down to your knees.

And God told me that if I would preach this tonight, he will draw people who had been under fire. I don't know your story, and I don't go home with you, but I presume tonight that if you are here, you've been up under fire. People see you all dressed up and smelling good, your hair combed. They don't understand that you are under fire. They see you clap your hands and stand up when people sing, and they think you just got a joyful, wonderful life. They don't know you had to fight to get out the bed. You had to fight to hold on to your integrity. You had to fight to keep your family afloat. You had to fight not to have a nervous breakdown. You had to fight not to throw in the towel. You had to fight not to walk away. They don't know you've been up under fire, bombs falling at your right side, bombs going off at your left side. They don't understand that the miracle is that you are still here.

Shake somebody and say, "He just missed me. Yeah, that last one just missed me, almost took me out, almost lost my mind, almost walked

away. That last one just missed me. When you see me shouting, I'm not shouting 'cause I got a new car. I'm not shouting 'cause my hat was on sale. I'm shouting because it just missed me. It came so close, I didn't know whether I would survive it or not, having received help from God". Have you ever had God help you? Paul says, "Having received help from God, I continued on to this moment". Glory to God. Glory to God.

You're shouting 'cause you're successful. I'm shouting because I'm a survivor. Bump success. I'm, just glad that I'm still here. The Bible said, "A thousand may fall at your right side, 10.000 goin' down on your left side, but it shall not come nigh thee". Have you ever wondered how you saw so many people go down, people you knew, and people you Loved, people you went to school with, and people you went to work with, and yet, some kind of way, you bounced back. You just bounced back. You're just the comeback kid. When everybody thought you wasn't gonna make it, you just made it any way. You just came out of it. Sometimes you don't even know yourself how you came out. You went to bed thinkin' you wasn't going to come

out, weeping all night long, woke up in the morning with a peace that you couldn't even explain it. Am I preaching to anybody?

And then he stops and says, "If the princes of this world would have known what they were doing, they would not have crucified the Lord". He said, "I'm going to draw strength in my suffering, from Christ's suffering". Christ did not land on the cross accidentally. There were manipulators, orchestrators who were committed to his destruction. And some of them, some of them, some of them, you could see them in their Roman garbs, and their shining swords, and their dominion over Jerusalem was proof positive that the Romans did not love the Jews. It was quite clear they had besieged their country and taken their land and controlled their worship and taken over the temple. There was no mistaking the fact that the Romans had stock in his destruction.

Why would the Romans be concerned about the crucifixion of Christ? He was getting too popular. They didn't mind him turning a little water into wine, healing a few sick folk. They didn't mind the woman with issue of blood. They

didn't mind blind Bartimaeus who received his sight. They didn't mind the ten lepers who say that Jesus said something that caused him to be delivered. They didn't mind his little cute sermons on the Mount of Olives, the little Beatitudes. It was beautiful. It was cute, but the problem was, they had started giving him some authority. They started calling him the king of the Jews. And then, there was a following, there was an entourage when Jesus got in a city. He would turn a city upside down.

When Jesus preached in the deserts, thousands flocked out into the deserts to hear him preach, and that's a lot of power. He wasn't just some fly by night, Johnny come lately, uprise superstar, overnight wonder, midnight blunder. No. He was drawing a crowd. He was getting influence. He had some backing and he had some support. They had to pay that some attention. Ten years prior to Christ's crucifixion, they had had an uprising amongst the Jews, and then had to bring in special military to get control. So, they are a little bit nervous. We understand they were. They were a little bit nervous about him, and you can

understand how somebody from Rome would attack this Jewish boy.

When he did that spectacular event down there with Mary and Martha, when he missed the death of Lazarus, and showed up after the funeral, and walked up to the grave site, and rolled the stone away, and said, "Lazarus come forth". That's when Caiaphas said, "Oh, no, he's gone too far". They got indisputable evidence. Got to get him out of the way. So Jesus not only had to deal with the political ramifications of Rome, he had to deal with the theological interrogations of Caiaphas. But that was not the worst of it. It's one thing to have a political problem. It's another thing to be attacked theologically, but when somebody in your own ranks touch in seasons, the sword we could withstand, the Scriptures we could debate, but oh that kiss, that kiss that can only come from somebody who is close enough to walk up to you and you don't push 'em back, because they're one of your inner inner circle.

When Judas got into it, all of these, all of these things are working together, because I want to take just a moment because whoever I'm

preaching to, you're not just fighting one thing. And through all of it, you gotta keep on walking, through all of it, you've gotta keep on standing, through all of it, you've gotta keep on functioning. Anybody can shout when things are going well, but you gotta learn how to praise God when all hell is breaking loose. Anybody can sing when all the bills are paid, but you gotta sing your song when your pockets are empty and your heart is broken. Does anybody know? Jacob said, "Joseph is dead. Simeon is dead. All these things are against me".

I want to talk to somebody who's backed in a corner, and shoved to the wall, and before you can deal with Caiaphas, here comes the Roman soldiers, and before you can find some recluse from the Roman soldiers, here comes somebody you love kissing you with the kiss of death, and your heart is broken, and your mind is overwhelmed, and you don't know what to think, and you don't know who to believe in, you don't know where to go anymore. I want to remind you that if the princes of this world would have known what they were doing, they would not have crucified the Lord.

Now, watch this. They thought that if they crucified him, they would get him out of the way, they would shut down the movement, they would close down the noise, they would incarcerate his influence, they would alienate his power. They thought that if they drove nails into his hands and into his feet, they would shut him down once and for all. They thought that if they rose up against him. See, I'm talking about what the devil thought. The devil thought that when you went through that last test that he would shut you down forever. I'm talking about thinking, thinking thoughts, Apollos, Paul, devil, all I'm thinking, thinking, thinking.

The devil thought that if you lost your job, you's lose your mind. The devil thought, if your husband walked out, you'll sit down and go crazy. The devil thought, he thought, he thought, he thought, he thought, he thought. The devil should have read his Bible. I said, the devil should have read his Bible because the Bible said, the more they afflicted them, the more they grew. Is anybody in here been growing up under pressure, growing in a storm,

growing while you're bleeding, growing with nails in your hands and nails in your feet, and you're still preaching from your cross?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm talking to you tonight. I'm talking to you that's been faithful in a storm. I'm talkin' to you that's been nailed down and still preaching anyway, been set back and still shouting anyway, been up under attack, but you still came to church anyway. In fact, if you had to fight your way out here, take 30 seconds and give God a praise. Reach over and tell your neighbor to testify faith, "The devil thought I wasn't gonna make it. He thought he was going to take me out. He thought I was gonna lose my mind. He thought I'm gonna start drinking again. He thought I'd just shoot up and die. He thought I'd just walk away from the church and go on about my business". Oh, but the devil is a liar! I said the devil is a liar. I said the devil is a liar. Somebody give God a victory shout right now.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You ought to run. You ought to jump. You oughta holler. Anybody been through what you've been

through? You got a right to give God the praise. Tell your neighbor, I told you I don't care what you think. I got to praise the Lord. I'm up under attack. I'm in a storm. I'm in a battle. I can't worry about being cute tonight. I will bless the Lord at all times. What they did, the princes of this world, they messed up, 'cause until they crucified him, all they had to deal with was his Word. But when they nailed him to the tree, the blood came out. Somebody say the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood, the blood. The power is in the blood. Deliverance is in the blood. Healing is in the blood. Life is in the blood. Salvation in the blood.

Somebody thank him for the blood, the blood, the blood. Wait a minute. I thought Caiaphas, the Roman soldiers, and Judas were all plotting against Jesus, which made me wonder, "Why didn't God stop the plot"? Because God could stop the plot. I wondered that till I realized that God was using the plot. You see, your enemy has got a plot against you, but God is gonna use the plot for his glory. Slap somebody

and holler, "backfire". Backfire. Backfire.
Backfire. Backfire. Somebody shout Touch seven
people and holler, backfire, yes, backfire,
backfire, backfire. They meant it for evil, but
God's gonna make it good. Get ready, get ready,
get, get, get ready, get, get, get ready.

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