

# Three Steps to Victory—Part 1

## Overcoming Problems, Part 1

☑ **Target: Identify your problems and win victories!**

### Key Verses

*Hebrews 12:1b—Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*

*Psalms 55:22a—Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you.*

*Isaiah 40:31—But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

### Suggested Bible Reading

- Noah: Genesis 7–9
- Samuel: 1 Samuel 3
- Book of Jonah (4 chapters)

### Other Recommended Reading

- Obstacles Are for Overcoming (Get Activated! book)*

### Prayer and Praise: “Guide me”

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○ Lord, grant me the blessing of greeting the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon Your holy will. In every hour of the day reveal Thy will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul, and with firm conviction that Thy will governs us all. In all my deeds and words guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events let me not forget that all are sent by Thee. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of this coming day with all that it shall bring. Direct my will, teach me to pray, pray Thou Thyself in me.

—Drizdov Philaret, 1782–1867

### Meditation: A Message from Jesus for Trying Times

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Even though you stay by Me and you feed on My Words, you'll still go through some storms and there will still be difficulties. Staying near Me and staying in My Word won't take those away, but it will bring you through them! My Words are like a wonderful instrument that can be used in so many ways. When you're stuck in a storm, they'll be a cover and a shelter. When you're cold, they'll be a blanket. When you're hungry, they'll feed you. When you're tired, they'll help you rest. When you're weak, they'll strengthen you. When it's foggy, they'll shine a light on your path and help you be able to see where you're going.

As you're going up the mountain, don't just keep looking down and around you at the ground and the rocks under you, but stop as often as you can and look up! Look up to the beautiful blue sky and to the mountain peaks that you are climbing toward, and that will encourage you and refresh you and give you the stamina to keep going a little longer.

You'll hardly notice the muddy paths because you'll be looking up! You'll be looking in My face and you'll be looking up at the beautiful blue sky. You'll be looking forward, and when you have that vision, these little nagging problems won't get you down. That's a promise!

## Getting to Know the Bible—Listening to God

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The key to the greatness of the lives of any of the men of God of history (or today!) is their dependence on the Lord and listening to Him and following His instructions. Here are three examples:

**Noah** was instructed by the Lord to build the ark. He had never even seen a boat before. How could he do it?

Noah took time with the Lord. Not only did he have the general vision of the impending disaster that the Lord was about to bring through the Flood and the desire to save his family, but he also needed very detailed instructions on how to do the work that the Lord had called him to do, and this took time.

He had to research materials. He had to take into account what type of materials should be used that would weather the conditions, and the Lord gave him specific instructions because he asked. He had to take into account the way the material would be fitted together, the type of fastenings to use, the type of covering, the type of material to use to waterproof it. All these were details that he had to ask the Lord about, and He answered him and told him where to get them, and in some cases even how to get them—and this took time.

He had to get the exact specifications, the length of the ark itself, and then break it down into the individual increments of the specific measurements for each piece of wood. Each plank had to be cut and fitted in the right place. He had to have a big picture, a big scheme of how it was all going to fit together.

He couldn't just chop down a tree and start hammering it up against another piece of wood without any scheme or overall plan. The boat never would have been waterproof. It never would have been strong enough to weather the huge waves of the Flood. It never would have been able to house all of the creatures in the different compartments that needed to be fashioned specifically to meet their needs.

All this took time and prayer. It took listening and then meticulously recording things that the Lord gave him, so that he wouldn't forget. Several times in the Biblical account we read that "God said to Noah," giving him various instructions, then a few verses later, "Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did" (Genesis 6:13).

So follow his good example, as the Lord has referred to it in His Word. "As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37). In these Last Days, we need to cultivate the habit of hearing from the Lord and getting our instructions from Him, just like Noah did!

**Samuel** was a priest, prophet and judge. See 1 Samuel 3 for the account of how Samuel received his call from the Lord. The key: "Speak Lord, I'm listening."

The prophet **Jonah** listened to the Lord's voice, but he had a problem with obedience! Read his story in the book of Jonah. Notice how he only obtained deliverance from the "great fish" when he cried, "Deliverance is of the Lord." Praise is often the path to victory!

### Keep Trusting; Keep Fighting; Keep Going for God!

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A maker of violins searched all his life for wood that would serve for making violins with a certain beautiful and haunting resonance. At last he succeeded when he came into possession of wood gathered from the timberline, the last stand of the trees of the Alps, 12,000 feet above sea level. Up there where the winds blow so fiercely and steadily that the bark to windward has no chance to grow, where the branches all point one way, and where a tree to live must stay on its knees all through its life, that is where the world's most resonant wood for violins is born and lives and dies.



An old deacon who used to pray every Wednesday night at a prayer meeting always concluded his prayer the same way: "And, Lord, clean all the cobwebs out of my life." The cobwebs were those things that ought not to have been there, but had gathered during the week. It got too much for one fellow in the prayer meeting, and he heard the old deacon one time too often. So when the man made that prayer, the fellow jumped to his feet and shouted: "Lord, Lord, don't do it! Kill the spider!" That's what needs to happen.



It is said that if you put a frog into a pail of hot water he will jump out, but if you put him in a pail of cool water and then gradually heat it up, the frog will permit himself to be cooked. Apparently he is unable to decide when the water is so hot as to be unbearable. When major temptations rear their ugly heads, most people instinctively shrink back; but the thing that causes many to get away from God is the almost imperceptible day-by-day drifting. The best protection is to get out of the pot when the water even begins to get warm.



Said Dr. Will Mayo: "I have seen patients that were dead by all standards. We knew they could not live. But I have seen a minister come to the bedside and do something for him that I could not do, although I have done everything in my professional power. But something touched some immortal spark in him and in defiance of medical knowledge and materialistic common sense, that patient LIVED!"

—The Mayo Brothers, Doctors Will and Charles, were founders of the world-famed Mayo Clinics.



The storms of life no more indicate the absence of God than clouds indicate the absence of the sun.



Oliver Cromwell's secretary was dispatched to the continent on some important business. He stayed one night at a seaport town, and tossed on his bed, unable to sleep.

According to an old custom, a servant slept in his room, and on this occasion slept soundly enough. The secretary at length awakened the man who asked how it was that his master could not rest.

"I am so afraid something will go wrong with the embassy," was the reply.

"Master," said the valet, "may I ask a question or two?"

"To be sure."

"Did God rule the world before we were born?"

"Most assuredly He did."

"And will He rule it after we are dead?"

"Certainly He will."

"Then, master, why not let Him rule the present, too?"

The secretary's faith was stirred, peace was the result, and in a few minutes both he and his servant were in sound asleep.

When the evangelist and preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon was riding home one evening after a heavy day's work and feeling very wearied and depressed, the verse "My grace is sufficient for you" came to him (2 Corinthians 12:9). He immediately compared himself to a little fish in the Thames River (in England), apprehensive lest, drinking so many pints of water in the river each day, it might drink the Thames dry, and hearing Father Thames say to it, "Drink away, little fish, my stream is sufficient for you."

Then he thought of a little mouse in the granaries of Joseph in Egypt, afraid lest it might—by daily consumption of the corn it needed—exhaust the supplies and starve to death: When Joseph came along and, sensing its fear, said, "Cheer up, little mouse, my granaries are sufficient for you."



The blue of heaven is larger than the clouds.



The darkest hour has only sixty minutes.



When you have real love for others, it's a lot easier for you to let things pass. In school they call it passing when you graduate from one grade to the next. When you're traveling along in a car, you know you're moving because you're passing things! That's how you know you're making progress, because you're passing things.

Well, the same thing is true in your spiritual life. When you start letting things pass, when you don't worry so much about things, that shows that you're making progress. When you don't hold it against somebody for some idle remark or something foolish that they did, something they said, when you don't get hypersensitive and all upset about it and hold it against them, then you're passing things. "Love covers a multitude of sins," and will give you the grace and power to just let things pass, to forgive others as you know that you yourself need to be forgiven.



A small boy sat quietly in a seat of the day coach on a train running between two western cities in the United States. It was a hot, dusty day, very uncomfortable for traveling, and that particular ride was perhaps the most uninteresting day's journey in the whole land. But the little fellow sat patiently watching the fields and the fences hurrying by, until a motherly old lady, leaning forward, asked sympathetically, "Aren't you tired of the long ride, dear, and the dust and the heat?"

The lad looked up brightly, and replied, with a smile, "Yes, ma'am, a little. But I don't mind it much, because my father is going to meet me when I get to the end of it." What a beautiful thought it is that when life seems wearisome and monotonous, as it sometimes does, we can look forward hopefully and trustingly, and like the lonely little lad, not "mind it much" because our Father, too, will be waiting to meet us at our journey's end!



A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough for the next six months or take sufficient air into his lungs at one time to sustain life for a week. We must draw upon God's boundless store of grace from day to day as we need it.



"Trust" is the word used in the Old Testament. "Faith" is the equivalent in the New Testament. "Belief" is the precursor of both. Belief has to do with the head, trust and faith with the heart.

John G. Paton was making a translation of the Scriptures into the language spoken in the country where he was a missionary, and searched long for a word for "believe" as the local people had no word for it. One day, while working on his translation, a man entered his room and, tired out, flung himself down on one chair, resting his feet on another chair and remarking how good it was to "lean his whole weight" on the chairs. Dr. Paton noted the word he had used for "lean his whole weight." He had his word for "believe" (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9–10).



They say that the great London fire which destroyed most of London after the horrors of the "Black Plague" had decimated most of its population—they say the fire probably was the best thing that could have happened to London, to literally wipe out rat-infested buildings full of those flea-carrying pests,

and literally purge London from the putrefaction left by the plague, and purifying the city—lest, trade center that it was, it might have infected the entire world! The fire that destroyed London seemed a catastrophic holocaust at the time, but is now known and realized as a blessing that blotted out the plagues of the past! Both plague and fire seemed like the judgments of God on a wicked generation of Londoners, but like most of God's merciful judgments, they turned out to be blessings of chastisement to purge and purify His children and bring a change for the better!



Dr. Handley Moule, Bishop of Durham, visited West Stanley immediately after a terrible colliery explosion. He addressed the crowd at the pit's mouth, among whom were relatives of the entombed miners. "It is very difficult," he said, "for us to understand why God should let such an awful disaster happen, but we know Him and trust Him, and all will be right. I have at home an old bookmark given me by my mother. It is worked in silk, and when I examine the wrong side of it, I see nothing but a tangle of threads. It looks like a big mistake. One would think that someone had done it who did not know what she was doing. But when I turn it over and look at the right side, I see there, beautifully embroidered, the letters, 'God is love!' We are looking at all this today," he continued "from the wrong side. Some day we shall see it from another standpoint and we shall understand."



Have you ever gone to your parked car and found a parking ticket on it? The experience doesn't make one feel happy. For years, I had been parking my car in an alley near my Chicago home. Neither I nor others doing likewise had ever been ticketed, as there was no regulation against parking there. Going out one morning, I found a ticket on the car. I paid the fine and thereafter had to find another place to park. For a while, I was hesitant to include the unpleasant experience among the "all things" which work together for good to God's children. Not until some days later did I see the hand of God in the experience. During a wind storm a mammoth oak went down and fell right across the place where I had been parking my car for years. Had my car been in its accustomed place, it would have been smashed right in the middle! I humbly thanked God for the fact that nothing of a chance nature can ever befall His children who are "the called according to His purpose."



Nobody can keep temptation from coming, but you don't have to yield to temptation. Like the old saying, "You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can sure keep them from building a nest in your hair!"

In other words, you can keep the problems from roosting there and entertaining them full time and letting them take over. You just have to keep resisting and fighting until they see you're not going to surrender or give up, and they give up, and go away and leave

So let's try to be able to take our testings and our temptations, and yet not fail and give into them! The Lord says He will never give you more than you're able to bear and that He will always make a way of escape. Somehow He'll make it easier for you or at least help you to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

There is a story along these lines:

"I once learned a lesson from a dog we had. My father used to put a bit of meat or biscuit on the floor near the dog and say, 'No!' and the dog knew he must not touch it. But he never looked at the meat. He seemed to feel that if he did so, the temptation to disobey would be too great, so he looked steadily at my father's face. There is a lesson for us all. Always look up to the Master's face."

## **Mountain Streams: Dumps!**

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*Excerpts from an article by David Brandt Berg*

The problem is that when we're downcast, if we start talking about the situation, we usually end up voicing our complaints and doubts and speaking defeat.

When you have the "poor mes," you're usually just trying to get attention and sympathy. When the children of Israel complained in the wilderness, they were trying to make Moses and the Lord feel sorry for them (Exodus 16:2-3). Your pride is wounded, your ego has been a little deflated, your self-confidence has been a little shaken, and you begin to wonder then if everything is a mistake. Maybe you are never right about *anything!* In come Mr. and Mrs. Doubt and all the little Doubtlets,

and Mr. and Mrs. Devil and all the little Devils, and you pull up a chair and invite them to talk it over—and pretty soon you start agreeing with them. “Yes, that’s right! I never was very much of a Christian after all! How could God use *me*? I don’t really have a very victorious, overcoming life, and I’m not perfect. I’m just a big mess. I might as well quit!”

It’s because you get your eyes on yourself instead of the Lord—introspection instead of Heaven-spection. You think so much about yourself and your own faults, frailties, mistakes and sins that your “self” really gets you down. The Devil can tell you a lot of truth about yourself that’s horrible, not to speak of the lies he tells you, so if you start listening to the Devil, there’s no end to it. If you listen to him, he can make you sound even worse than you really are, and that’s pretty bad!

Then you start listening to your critics. Sometimes even friends or a member of your family makes some casual remark that they don’t really mean or that you misinterpret, and the Devil exaggerates the situation until you get disheartened and feel like giving up.



Just a little bit of doubt, a little bit of fear, a little bit of complaint, a little bit of discouragement, can grow and grow until you are completely defeated and a terrible influence on others. It seems innocent enough at first and the Devil tries to persuade you that it’s not so bad, but it has a bitter end!

You’ll go one way or the other—up or down! There’s no standing still. You’re either climbing and getting to the top, or you’re sinking and drifting downward, ever downward! And when you start going down there’s no stopping place. You never stop until you hit bottom—unless you repent and snap out of it and ask God to forgive you and throw out the Devil’s whole pack of lies and all your doubts and fears and discouragement, and follow Jesus and His Word, and hold on to His promises. The future is as bright as the promises of God! You’ve got to keep your eyes on Jesus, because there’s no other way to look but down—and that’s the pit, the dismal abyss of horrible nothingness.



Sometimes you don’t know what to believe: Somebody says, “Hang on!” and somebody else says, “Let go!” Well, if you put each in the right context, they’re *both* right: Let go of the Devil’s discouragement, doubts, fears and burdens, and hang on to the Lord. Hitch your wagon to His star and there’ll be no stopping you! But if you fill the wagon with all the rocks the Devil would like to pile on, you’ll sink for sure. Just roll them overboard and let them fall behind, while you go on with the Lord.

Maybe you think the Lord can’t bear the weight of some of your problems. Some people are like that. They remind me of the fellow who was crossing a frozen river one winter, many years ago. Fearful that he might fall through the ice and drown, he was crawling very slowly and cautiously on his hands and knees. Hearing a noise in the distance, he looked behind him and saw a team of four horses confidently coming towards him, pulling a large wagon full of heavy scrap iron over the very ice on which he was so hesitantly crawling! Let me tell you, God can take it! He can handle any load you want to give Him.



Don’t just stand there, *do* something! Sing, shout, praise the Lord, quote Scriptures! Hit the Devil back! Rebuke him with the Word! That’s what Jesus did when the Devil tempted and lied to Him in the wilderness. He just quoted the Scriptures: “It is written!” (Matthew 4:3–10). The Devil is a liar and the father of it, and he can’t take the Word. “Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). He will turn tail and run. Put on the helmet of salvation and the breastplate of righteousness, use the shield of faith to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One; gird yourself with the truth; be shod with the Gospel of peace, and take up that white-hot sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and cut the Devil to the heart! (Ephesians 6:10–17). Drive him away! Tell him that you have no part in him and he has no part in you!

Then get busy working. Tell others about Jesus and salvation. Get positive. Help somebody else. Get so busy with someone else's troubles that you can't think about your own stinking self. Get so busy trying to make somebody else happy that you can't help but be happy yourself.

Talk about Jesus. Talk about the Word of God. Talk about the needs of others. Talk about the *good* things. "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8). Speak evil of no one—not even yourself! (Titus 3:2).

Keep the faith! Keep your eyes on Jesus! Get busy helping somebody that needs help, and forget your own stupid self. Of course you're a failure! Of course you're a big mess! We all are! When we start looking at ourselves, we really get down.

Let's get going with God! He's the only One who can make it, and He'll pull you through if you just give Him a chance. Hang on to His Word, and let Him hang on to you. Let go and let God! There's an old song that says, "He'll hold me fast!" I can't hold myself. I can't help myself. Only God can help me. He's my only hope.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise," commit your way, your life, your mind, your thoughts, your time (Jude 24–25). "For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Timothy 1:12). Only *He* can do it! Just give Him a chance. Keep your eyes on *Jesus*! Let's talk about Jesus! Let's talk about love—*His* love!

*Only Jesus, only Jesus, only He can satisfy.*

*Every burden becomes a blessing, when I know my Lord is nigh!*