The Benefits of Being Stuck

# (Hebrews 4:12-16)

Welcome, it is great to have all of you with us today. I want to talk to you about the benefits of being stuck because we often hear people say or maybe you even say it yourself,

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

This comes from Romans chapter 8, verse 28, and no matter whether you are stuck in a situation, a circumstance, a job, a debt, or maybe some sort of addiction I want to give you the key to overcoming whatever it is.

You see, so many times we find ourselves stuck, because as believers we get so caught up in being led by God, being used by God, that we forget first and foremost that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. And so, we lose focus on the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord, and it’s because he is Lord, that he is working in all things for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose. These are two important qualifiers, loving him as he said:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30).

And then being called according to his purpose as Jesus commanded all his followers before ascending to heaven:

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).

And so, we’re talking about the benefits of being stuck, and so we want to understand what the Lord is saying to us, we want to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

If you have your Bible or your Bible app or you can find one under the seats around you, would you turn to Hebrews chapter 4, and I want to look with you at verses 12 through 16. As you find your place, I want to remind you that the theme of the book of Hebrews is that it is a book of better things. In other words, the Spirit of God wants you to understand the supremacy of what we have now compared to what we had then. And so, whatever we had done, wherever we’ve been stuck, he’s causing us to understand the priority of the Word of God.

As we come to Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12, the Holy Spirit wants us to understand that whatever God said, whenever he said it, however he said it, and to whomever he said it:

“The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:12-13).

The Word of God is so powerful, so sharp, that it gets on the inside, it gets beyond the physical realm, penetrating beyond the joints and marrow, judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. You see, that’s why only God can judge you. People can judge what you did, but God judges why you did it. Nothing in all creation is hidden from his sight, he is Lord of all, and therefore he is Lord over our thoughts and intentions, understanding the why and not just the what. That’s how deeply he cuts, dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, so that everything is uncovered and laid bare. He goes down in your thought life, down into the joints, down into the marrow of your heart.

For some of you this is kind of scary because the Lord is going to get down into your business, into your childhood, into your insecurities, your attitude and disposition. It’s uncomfortable because as we come to this passage we are being stripped and we don’t want anything that holy, that divine, looking at something that is so lowly. And yet the Scripture tells us that everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

And so, we are completely exposed, just like Adam in the garden, we’re just as naked as we were when we came into this world. There is nothing that he can’t see, and so we stand before God exposed in the most uncomfortable way, but in this very moment he covers us with the warm skins that clothed the nakedness of Adam. And to reject his scrutiny, his comfort, and his covering is to reject his grace, going from the bondage of sin to something even worse. Jesus said it this way,

"Whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

Therefore, we accept his Lordship over our lives, not believing that we can become somebody without him, that we have our own identity outside of him, or that we can effectively utilize our own gifts outside of his gracious sovereign control.

And so, we come to him in surrender, receiving his gifts, accepting his sacrifice on our behalf as he comes and covers us up. “Therefore,” verse 14 says,

“Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:14-15).

Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. The Spirit of God says, hold on to what I put on you, how I have covered you, because you have this man on the inside, this great high priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses.

Jesus is our great high priest, he understands who we are, he knows how we’re made, and he knows that everybody has areas of weakness. Your friends, your neighbor, your spouse or your kids may not be able to see it, but you know it and Jesus sees it all. And yet he can sympathize with your weaknesses, he can relate to your situation, he understands what you’re angry about and what you are afraid of. In fact, he knows it all, what happened, when it happened, and yet he is on the inside succeeding everywhere we fail. Not only does he see it all, but he has been tempted in every way just as we are and yet was without sin. In other words, everywhere we failed, everywhere we stumbled, he rose up victoriously. That is Jesus, our great high priest, our commanding officer, the man on the inside, he is the key that unlocks the door.

Some of you, that situation, that place, or that relationship where you’ve been stuck; the season that you’re in will change if you get what I’m saying right now. It’s a change of thinking, a change of perspective, believing and giving Jesus Lordship of your life, letting him take the throne of your life. He is the man on the inside as the Bible says,

“There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

And so, Jesus is on the inside explaining to God the Father what tired feels like, what hungry feels like, what thirsty feels like, what lonely feels like, what pain and rejection feels like. He’s able to sympathize with our weaknesses because he’s been tempted in every way just as we are and yet was without sin.

For those of you who are more biblically oriented, I want to illustrate it this way, Joseph in the Old Testament was a shadow of Jesus in the New Testament. You see, Joseph was a man on the inside, and the only way that Jacob’s sons survived, the only reason that they received favor from the Pharaoh was that they had a man on the inside. And so, let me give you a little bit of context before we get into the Scripture.

The Bible tells us in Genesis chapter 12 that God appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia and called him to leave his country and go to a land that he would show him. God promised him that even though he had no children he would be the father of many nations and gave him a son named Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob who had 12 sons who became the nation of Israel. These sons were jealous of their brother Joseph, Jacob’s eleventh son, born of his wife Rachel.

"Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt…” (Acts 7:9).

Many of you know the narrative in Genesis chapter 39 and following, you know what happened, Joseph’s own brothers plot to kill him out in the field. Their plan was to kill him and throw his body into a pit, but one of his brothers convinced the others to sell Joseph to a passing caravan. And so, they stage this whole thing in an attempt to get Joseph out of their hair forever. They even took his coat and covered it with blood bringing it back to their father Jacob saying that they found his coat and he must’ve been killed by wild animals.

Well, anyway life goes on and Jacob is left grieving the loss of his favored son Joseph and Joseph is taken away, alienated from his family, separated from his father, and sold into slavery in a strange and foreign land. The Bible says in Genesis chapter 39, that the Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, the Lord gave him success in everything he did, and he found favor in the eyes of his master. In fact, his master Potiphar put him in charge of his entire household, but that becomes a problem because his wife takes a liking to Joseph. But because he repeatedly rejects her advances, in anger she accuses him of attacking her, and the Bible says,

“Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined” (Genesis 39:20).

And so, Joseph is rejected by his own brothers, thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, and now just as things seemed to be getting better, he winds up stuck in prison on false charges.

But once again, Joseph rises above his circumstances and the Bible says,

"God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt; so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace” (Acts 7:9-10).

Even in prison God showed Joseph kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. By the time we get to chapter 41, we discover that the Pharaoh had granted Joseph clemency and he had risen to the pinnacle of power in Egypt.

And so, Joseph knew firsthand the benefits of being stuck because he refused to let the disappointing turns of life get him down. This is important for us to learn because we all come into life with expectations of good and happy things happening to us, but without fail disappointments come sooner or later. And so, the real question of life is how we will handle being stuck, how we will handle the pitfalls of life, because the difficulties of life are meant to provoke and not discourage. Great trials seem to be necessary preparation for great responsibilities. The Bible says that the Pharaoh…

“Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command… Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt” (Genesis 41:42-43).

Joseph was given a throne, he had great responsibility, and he was ruling in Egypt when people began suffering because of a great famine that was all around. People were struggling and the Bible says,

“The people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you” (Genesis 41:55).

And so, Joseph opened the storehouses where he had stockpiled grain and sold it to the Egyptians. However, the famine continued to spread throughout Egypt and into Canaan. The Bible says that,

“When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons… "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die." Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt” (Genesis 42:1-3).

When they arrived, they didn’t recognize Joseph because now it had been over 20 years since they sold him to slave traders. Now they meet him and he spoke the Egyptian language, dressed and looked much like other Egyptians, and so his brothers bowed to him fulfilling Joseph’s dream earlier in chapter 37. Now, Joseph used the fact that they did not recognize him to his advantage and began to question them as if they were spies. He was able to find out that his father and younger brother were still alive, and so he gave them grain to take home to his father.

As time went by the famine became worse and Jacob knew that he would have to send his sons to Egypt once again to get more grain. The Bible says that,

"On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family” (Acts 7:13).

When Joseph revealed who he was to his brothers they were terrified because the one whom they had sold into slavery now had the power of life and death over them, but his attitude was one of wisdom, humility, and understanding.

He told them, “God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt” (Genesis 45:7-8).

Joseph knew that God had been at work to save his family even though it had cost him so much. He recognized that it was the favor of God that allowed his family to come to Egypt only because he was the man on the inside. All that he went through, all of his brother’s rejection, all of their criticism, all of their hatred and lies was so that the sovereign hand of God could move him inside the Egyptian Empire. Joseph could truly say along with the apostle Paul said,

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

He saw the benefits of being stuck in situations and places that he never wanted and certainly never would have asked for. But like pawns on a chessboard, he knew God was preparing his people so that when famine broke out in Israel, they would have a man on the inside. A man who not only was family to them, but one who could sympathize with their weaknesses.

Joseph was a type of Christ, a picture of Christ in the Old Testament, he was our man on the inside just like Jesus. And the Bible tells us,

“After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. Then Jacob went down to Egypt…” (Acts 7:14-15).

“Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children” (Genesis 47:11-12).

Jacob and his sons had a man who was able to sympathize with their weaknesses. They had a man on the inside who knew the benefit of being stuck, who had been tempted in every way just as they were so that they could walk right into Egypt. And so, they came boldly into a country that they didn’t know or possess because they had a man on the inside. A son who had been rejected by his brothers, who was sold for 20 pieces of silver, tied up and carried away.

It all sounds so familiar, doesn’t it? Because what happened to Joseph was a type of what happened to Jesus. It was just a shadow of better things. And so, when Jacob got ready to go to Egypt, he was able to get in and take possession of the best land because he had a man on the inside.

This is the kind of confidence, the attitude that God wants us to come before him with. He wants us to come boldly because the Bible tells us…

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV).

You see, he has seen us in our weakness, but we have a man on the inside who can sympathize with our weaknesses, and therefore we’re able to come boldly just like your mother-in-law comes into your house. It’s that kind of confidence that God wants you to have because Jesus is on the inside, your Savior is on the inside, and so your boldness is an expression of faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus came near, he came where we are, and therefore he can sympathize with our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way just as we are and yet he didn’t do it, he was without sin.

In other words, Jesus stood where I fell, he won where I lost, he was victorious where I was defeated, and yet he got close enough to it that he could be touched, because he can sympathize with our weaknesses. And that’s why verse 16 of Hebrews chapter 4 is so important, the Bible says,

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

We are able to approach the throne of grace with confidence because we’ve got a man on the inside and it’s there at the throne of grace that we are able to receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Jesus, our great high priest, our man on the inside, has been tempted in every way, just as we are yet he was without sin. He died and rose again, pouring out his Spirit on those who believe, so that we can experience the miracles and supernatural benefits of the kingdom of God on earth. But in order to have the full privileges of a child of God, not only do you need to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, but you need to submit to him as Lord and God. He has to be both Lord and Savior, your King ruling over you, so that you are doing what he wants you to do.

That’s what we’re talking about, that’s how we are to understand Romans chapter eight:

“That in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

No longer is your life your own because you don’t have a life of your own, you have died to yourself, and you have been crucified with Christ. The life you live in the body, you live by faith in the Son of God, and so you no longer live but Christ lives in you. It’s just as the apostle Paul tells us,

“All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:3-4).

In other words, the old is gone and the new has come, it’s no longer about what you want to do, it’s not about your plans, it’s not about your ideas, because you don’t sit on the throne of your life. That’s why the words of the apostle Paul are so powerful, you’ve got to get off the throne of your life, and you’ve got to go to the cross, or as Jesus said, you’ve got to pick up your cross and follow him. In another place Paul said it this way, he said,

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me…” (Galatians 2:20).

In other words, you’ve got a man on the inside, Jesus is sitting on the throne of your life, and you can be confident that God is working in all things for your good and for his purpose.

Today, I want to encourage you to settle who is on the throne of your heart, because you may be stuck, but you may not know the benefits of being stuck. You see, the devil will tell you that because of what happened in your past, you have no hope or your future. He wants you to believe that because of what was done to you in that your life can never ever be restored or repaired again. He wants you to believe that there is nothing that Jesus can do to help you, but Jesus said in Matthew chapter 19, verse 26,

"With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

And so, the gospel of grace challenges and changes everything.

Some of you have been stuck, you’ve been faithful to something that hurt you so much, that abused you so much, even bringing you to spiritual or physical bankruptcy. And God was hoping to heal you and restore you so that he could take place of whatever that obsession was in your life. He wants to release you today and set you free to love and worship and serve him with the rest of your life.

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