

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

Week One: Break The Chains

Introduction:

Welcome to our 40 day journey to BREAKTHROUGH! As we journey together these next 40 days, may we keep before us the understanding that breakthrough is God's idea. God loves to see His people walking in the abundance of life and freedom which he sent His Son, Jesus, to secure for us. Nothing can be more secure than our salvation and the new creation and transformation of life Jesus has provided. However, many of God's children sit in a place of captivity, or are experiencing captivity in at least one area of their life. Today, let's establish that 'captivity', big or small, is *NOT* God's plan for you!

During week one of our journey we are going to establish where we are personally captive and perhaps corporately, then we are going to BREAK THE CHAINS that hold us back from moving forward! Breakthrough means, in military terms, an "act or instance of removing or surpassing an obstruction or restriction; the overcoming of a stalemate". It can also mean a "movement or advance through and beyond an enemy's front-line defense" (Dictionary.com). The Hebrew definition of the word *parats*: *to break through*, means to "break away, burst out, spread abroad, disperse, grow or to increase" (NAS Exhaustive Concordance). Once we have been able to recognize the chains/places of captivity that hold us back, we can begin to break away, spread out and increase into the abundant life Jesus has paid for us to receive. Let's start our journey to TRANSFORMATION!!

This week we will be walking through Isaiah 52:1-2, *"Awake, awake, Zion, clothe yourself with strength! Put on your garments of splendour, Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again. Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned, Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck, Daughter of Zion, now a captive."*

This passage relays a passionate call of God to his people through the prophet Isaiah. The call was to awaken them to the reality that God's "city" Jerusalem, where his temple resided—signifying the presence of God—was asleep and in captivity. Through Isaiah, God calls out to his people to awaken and recognize that instead of living in freedom, as they should be—they were experiencing ruin and destruction instead (NIV, footnotes). They were now living far below what God had purposed for them when they first entered the Promised Land.

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

Wednesday, May 21st

Day One: Awake!

Isaiah 52: 1, "Awake, awake, Zion..."

It is a sad day when God's own children are in captivity and they don't realize it. Could there be anything more devastating than to have transferred from a place of bondage and slavery to freedom, to have seen their enemies buried under the Red Sea, to have walked through the wilderness for forty years, to have experienced God's presence as the Israelites had and to have *entered into the Promised Land*, to now be sitting once again in a place of bondage and captivity? The Promised Land signified a place of rest for the Jewish nation—God's chosen people. It was in the Promised Land that they would be established in their own land, and would be prosperous, protected, and provided for by God Himself! God had promised that He would give them rest from their enemies around them. What happened?

Historically, we know that the Israelites entered in and began to conquer the land God had given them according to the territory that was allotted to each tribe. We also know that Israel's walk with God often went through cycles of obedience, to complacency to sin. When they had sinned against God's covenant, He would send a prophet to call them back to Himself, there would be repentance and the cycle would start over again.

In Isaiah 52:1-2, we pick up their story after they had been sinning greatly without any repentance and were now in captivity to Babylon. In the midst of their captivity they began to believe that God had abandoned and forgotten about them. However, God will never abandon his chosen people but will fulfill all of his promises, whether His people are faithful or not for God can't disown himself.

Therefore, God sent his prophet, Isaiah, to remind the people that He would restore Israel and bring restoration to her land. One of his promises to Israel, in the midst of her captivity was this, *"Though you were ruined and made desolate and your land laid to waste, now you will be too small for your people, and those who devoured you will be far away. The children born during your bereavement will yet say in your hearing, 'This place is too small for us; give us more space to live in.' Then you will say in your heart, 'Who bore me these? I was bereaved and barren; I was exiled and rejected. Who brought these up? I was left all alone, but these—where did they come from?'"*

What was God saying? He was promising his people that if they repented he would not only restore their land but he would give them increase! The number of their people would be too many for the return to their land.

God continues his promise in Isaiah 52 and encourages his children to *awaken to their captivity* that they might repent and call out to Him for help. He reminds his children that he has not abandoned them nor forgotten them in their captivity but he needs them to wake up to the enemy's schemes of trapping them in bondage to sin.

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

The first strategy to breaking away from things that hold us back is to awaken to the enemy's plans. We can't change something, or try to break free from something that we don't acknowledge is a problem. Secondly, God not only wanted his children to awaken to the enemy's schemes but he also wanted them to reawaken to hear, believe and receive his promises of restoration from captivity. He wanted them to reawaken to placing their trust, dependence and confidence in their God not in others around them.

Today, what is God asking you to *awaken* from or *reawaken* to? What do you need to acknowledge as bondage and captivity? What is in ruins or is seemingly devastated? What is holding you back from moving forward? What are the promises God is reawakening you to? What do you hear God whispering in your heart for your life, your family, your church or your city? God is calling us to awake, are you awake?

Take time to ask yourself the above questions and then pray the following scripture:

Prayer Focus: Ephesians 5:13-14, *"Everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

Thursday, May 22nd

Day Two: Clothe Yourself With Strength!

Isaiah 52:1, "Awake, awake, Zion, *clothe yourself with strength!*"

It is interesting to note that God says, "clothe yourself". What? Isn't God supposed to clothe me with strength? Yes, it's true—God is the one who clothes us. He clothes us with the righteousness of Christ, which is described in Revelation as a 'white robe of righteousness'. Isaiah 61:10 says, "*He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness*". Literally, Jesus has covered our sins and clothed us with His image and divine nature. We are a new creation.

Other translations of Isaiah 52:1 says, "put on your strength". To 'put' means to set to a task, a duty or an action (Dictionary.com). There is an activation of our salvation and righteousness that causes it to function properly, and when it's functioning properly we are made strong. We have no strength within ourselves it is only in Jesus Christ, through the person of the Holy Spirit. Zechariah 4:6 says, "*Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.*" The New Living Translation says this, "*It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.*"

Having awakened to our captivity and reawakened to the promises of God, then we need to establish that it is only by the strength of God, by his salvation and righteousness that we can be delivered from our captivity and restored to our rightful inheritance within the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 9:1-3 speaks of the time when Israel was about to enter the Promised Land and God reminded them through Moses, that they were about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than they were, with large cities with walls up to the sky. They were told that the people were strong and tall—Anakites! It was said, "*Who can stand up against the Anakites?*" But God said, "*Be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you.*" He goes on to say in verse 4, "*After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, 'The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.'*" In this passage, three times God relays the concept that "it was not because of Israel's righteousness" they were seeing the Anakites destroyed before them.

From this scripture we can glean the principle that it is never in our own righteousness or strength that we can completely destroy the enemy's schemes in our lives or over the lives of our loved ones, but it is only by the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. It must be established that we rest in Jesus' salvation and His righteousness and in that place of rest we can activate the strength of his atoning blood and the covenant promises.

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

Who's strength are you clothed with today, yours or God's? Is it possible that you haven't gained victory over particular captive areas in your life because of trusting in your own will power or perhaps strengths of intelligence, wealth or social status?

Now that you have awakened and now that you recognize where your strength to find freedom lies—begin to ask God to show you where you rely on your own strength and not His.

Prayer Focus: Exodus 15:2-3, *"The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God and I will exalt him. The LORD is a warrior, the LORD is his name."*

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

Friday, May 23rd

Day Three: Put On Your Garments of Splendour

Isaiah 52:1, "Awake, awake, Zion, clothe yourself with strength! *Put on your garments of splendour...*"

Once again, we read the words "put on" your garments of splendour. This is God's voice encouraging his captive children to stop accepting the lie of the enemy as true—that they are abandoned, forgotten and without any strength. He encourages them to again envision a day when he would restore them to their land, and subdue their enemies.

God began to renew their passion for taking hold of their rightful inheritance as a royal priesthood, a chosen people. He reminds them of their royal heritage and the garments of splendour that are theirs as a people of God. I can imagine his words, "Remember Zion that you are to be the head and not the tail—YOU are to be an influence to the surrounding nations, not the other way around. Remember that it is you I have chosen and called, and have entered into a covenant with. Remember *who you are*, Zion, not what you appear to be right now."

Who are you today? Do you remember that you have been chosen and called and are a royal priesthood? Do you remember that you are in covenant with the King of kings and the Lord of lords? Do you know that you are a son or daughter of God, a royal co-heir with Christ (Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:17)? Remember that what you may appear to be right now because of captivity, is not who you really are. Put on your garments of splendour.

Prayer Focus: Zechariah 3:4, "*The angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.' Then he said to Joshua, 'See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.'*"

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

Saturday, May 24th

Day Four: Shake Off Your Dust

Isaiah 52: 1-2, “Awake, Awake, Zion, clothe yourself with strength! Put on your garments of splendour, Jerusalem, the holy city, the uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again. *Shake off your dust...*”

Years ago, during prayer, I received a mental picture of a vast field of large, sleeping people. They had been asleep for a long time and were covered in a fine grey dust, similar to a plaster dust. The dust was thick as it covered those sleeping with layer upon layer until they were unnoticeable. Suddenly, there was a stirring and the sleeping people began to awaken from their slumber. As they did, the dust began to shift and slide off of them, but just the stirring wasn't enough to get all of the clinging dust off, the people had to begin to “shake off the dust” and to brush it off their clothes. As this vast field of people began to arise and shake off the dust, it became apparent that they were sleeping giants. In the moment, I sensed God saying that he was awakening a “sleeping giant”, His church.

In the Old Testament the term ‘dust’ signified mourning, as they would cover themselves in dust and ashes when they mourned for a loved one (Job 2:12-13) or were fasting and repenting before God. It was a symbol of their grief and a way of relating to the pain of another.

In this passage, Zion—God’s people—were full of sorrow and grieving at having been displaced from their Promised Land and at being dispersed into captivity to Babylon. Their joy had been replaced by mourning. But God arrived on the scene in the midst of His people’s captivity and declared that their suffering was almost over—they were going to be released, delivered and restored to their land, and inheritance. So He says, “Shake off the dust of grief and sorrow—shake off everything that is oppressive and clings to you. Shake off everything the enemy has tried to throw your way to weigh you down with depression, oppression and despair. No longer relate to your place of captivity.”

Today is a good day to shake off the areas that the enemy has held you captive far too long! Let a resurgence of life begin to flow again. Get mad at the enemy for holding you captive and let faith begin to stir. As faith stirs, allow hope to arise that things can and are going to be different. This is a time of breakthrough! Stir up the passion that’s on the inside of you; stir up the fire of God that lays dormant in your heart and spirit. Stir it up, child of God!! You were made for so much more than what the enemy is offering you. Awaken the sleeping giant and shake off the dust!

Prayer Focus: Isaiah 61:1-2, *“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.”*

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

Sunday, May 25th

Day Five: Rise Up!

Isaiah 52: 2, “Shake off your dust; *rise up...*”

By now, entering day five, you can tell that I like defining words. Definitions often lend insight that might normally have been missed had we allowed ourselves to just skip over the words as if we already have a full understanding of its meaning. In this case, to “rise up” refers to the idea of coming to the surface, to emerge, or to ascend. It can also mean to rebel or to protest (thefreedictionary.com). Let’s utilize both meanings within this scripture.

First, God says to Zion, “Rebel and protest the enemy’s hold on your life and all of the lies captivity has placed on you. You need not be in captivity any longer for I have redeemed you (Is. 52:3). No longer relate to, agree with, or accept your captivity—protest...rebel!”

Secondly, God says to Zion, “Now that you have awakened to your captivity, and now that you are remembering who you really are and not what your captivity has declared you to be—and as you’re resting in my righteousness and strength, and shaking off your oppressors—begin to ‘rise up’. Ascend and emerge as the son or daughter of the King of kings and take your rightful place of inheritance” (Eph. 1:5; 13).

Begin to align yourself with God’s Truth today. *“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”* You were not purposed for captivity or sin, or to be under the oppression of another father, you were purposed as a son or daughter of Abba, Father. *“Now that we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. And his Spirit tells us that God is our Father”* (Gal. 4:6). Recognize that today, you fight against spiritual forces in heavenly places, and in order to do that successfully you need to know your personal authority because of Christ’s salvation and his righteousness. Jesus has placed you at his right hand with all power under his feet and therefore under yours. Rise up and put on the full armor of God!

Prayer Focus: Ephesians 1: 5; 11, *“He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”*

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

Monday, May 26th

Day Six: Sit Enthroned

Isaiah 52: 2, “Shake off your dust; rise up, *sit enthroned, Jerusalem.*”

This is an interesting phrase as God is literally saying to Zion, “*Arise and sit*”. This could be quite confusing, much like the military term “hurry up and wait”. However, once we dig into it a little it will suddenly become clear as to what God is speaking to his children.

The commentaries on this passage suggest that Zion—God’s people—are likened to a woman who has been sitting in a beautiful, full gown under the shade of a tree with her feet drawn up under her. As time passes the edges and layers of her clothing has become covered with dust and she must arise from her place, shake off the dust, but then sit down again in her rightful place.

In this passage then, God is relaying to his people that the captive daughter of Zion, who has been,

“brought down to the dust of suffering and oppression, is commanded to arise and shake herself from that dust, and then, with grace, and dignity, and composure, and security, to sit down; to take, as it were, again her seat and her rank, amid the company of the nations of the earth, which had before afflicted her, and trampled her to the earth” (Barnes’ Notes on the Bible).

God speaks those same words to those of us who are captive today. Now that we have arisen and shaken off the dust of the enemy’s activity in our lives, we are now to ‘sit enthroned’—take our rightful place of inheritance and favour as a son/daughter of the King. We are a royal priesthood and are joint heirs with Christ. We ‘*sit enthroned*’ at the right hand of God with Jesus. Ephesians 2: 6 says, “*And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.*” The Amplified Bible states it this way, “*And He **raised us up together with Him and made us sit down together [giving us [a]joint seating with Him] in the heavenly sphere [by virtue of our being] in Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed One).***”

Wow! God ‘raised us up’ and then said, ‘sit down’ together with Jesus Christ. Amazing! But here is another amazing truth...Jesus was placed at the Father’s *right* hand. The significance of this is important for us to grasp if we want to successfully break the chains of bondage and captivity and see breakthrough.

The Old Testament refers to the right hand as being a place of equal honour, dignity and authority. Through Christ humbling himself and coming to earth, sacrificing his life and being obedient unto death (Phil. 2:5-11), he was exalted to a high place of honour, dignity and authority at God’s right hand. Now, through our salvation, we too are seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly places—a place of honour, dignity and authority! Just as all things are under the feet of Christ, so are they now under our feet.

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

So today, God says, “Sit enthroned daughter/son. Take your rightful place of honour, dignity and authority. Don’t let the enemy trample on you—YOU trample on the enemy because he’s under your feet!” Through Jesus Christ we have the power to subdue and annihilate the enemy.

Prayer Focus: Ephesians 1:19-21, *“I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come.”*

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

Tuesday, May 27th

Day Seven: Break The Chains!

Isaiah 52: 2, *“Free yourself from the chains on your neck, Daughter of Zion, now a captive.”*

It is exceptionally difficult at times to see through the fog of the enemy’s deceptions and lies enough to see the favour of God already resting upon us. It can be difficult to see past our own sense of imprisonment because of past experiences, but when we call out to God to free us and to help us see our captivity for what it truly is—then we can see our way clear to freedom.

In 1971, A Stanford University Professor ran an experiment now known as the ‘Stanford Prison Experiment’. He converted the basement of the University into a simulated prison environment and each student participant was assigned a role of either prisoner or guard. The prisoners remained in the simulated prison 24/7, but the guards rotated in three 8-hour shifts. Its purpose was to “understand the development of norms and the effects of roles, labels, and social expectations in a simulated prison environment” (prisonexp.org).

This experiment was to last for two weeks but the simulation became so real, and guards became so abusive that they had to shut the experiment down after six days. Interestingly, despite the understanding that the pretend prisoners could quit the experiment “through established procedures” many did not, and in fact “reinforced to one another the sense of imprisonment” and that there was no way out (prisonexp.org). Added to the ability to quit if desired, there were no locks on the prison doors. If desired the prisoners could have left the building at any time.

A crime television show utilized the idea of this experiment in one of their episodes, and I recorded a great statement and that was, “They *accepted* the idea that they were supposed to be in there—you don’t need locks for a prison, just prisoners.” Sometimes our captivity and sense of bondage or imprisonment is of our own mental making. If we continue to accept that our captivity is where we are supposed to be and it’s what we are, then it’s unlikely we will get free. It is likely that we will continue to define ourselves as captive.

Let’s recall what we read earlier about the meaning of breakthrough. In military terms it can mean “an act or instance of removing or surpassing an obstruction or restriction”. Isaiah 61:1-2 proclaims this, *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed and qualified me to... proclaim liberty to the [physical and spiritual] captives and **the opening of the prison and of the eyes** to those who are bound. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord [the year of His favor] and the day of vengeance of our God.”*

The original Hebrew text of Isaiah 52:2 states, “The bands around your neck **are** unloosened;” (Pulpit Commentary) i.e. I have caused your chains to fall from you—you need only to “rise”, and you will find that you are free.

It’s time to step into your freedom that Christ has already supplied for you. He has already loosened the chains; he’s already set you free. The doors of your prison are already unlocked,

Breakthrough to Transformation~ A 40 Day Journey

you can leave anytime. "Awake, to your captivity son/daughter; gain your strength from my salvation and righteousness; remember who you are and that you are chosen, called and a royal priesthood. Remove the enemy's activity in your life and emerge as a son/daughter of the King, take your rightful place of inheritance in the heavenlies with Jesus Christ, and put all things under your feet. Free yourself from the obstacles and restrictions that hold you back, you are not captive any longer." Remember that one of the definitions of breakthrough is to BREAK AWAY! Zechariah 2:7, "*Come now, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the residents of Babylon*" (ESV). In plain language, "Run son/daughter! Break loose from relating to and living with your sins or things that keep you bound up. Stop accepting your situation as fate."

Prayer Focus: 1 Chronicles 14:10-11 (LB), "*And David asked the Lord, "If I go out and fight them, will you give me the victory?" And the Lord replied, "Yes, I will." So he attacked them at Baal-perazim and wiped them out. He exulted, "God has used me to sweep away my enemies like water bursting through a dam!"* That is why the place has been known as Baal-perazim ever since (meaning, "The Place of Breaking Through").

Footnote: In regard to the Stanford Prison Experiment, in his book *The Lucifer Effect*, Professor Zimbardo wrote: "I was guilty of the sin of omission -- the evil of inaction -- of not providing adequate oversight and surveillance when it was required... the findings came at the expense of human suffering. I am sorry for that and to this day apologize for contributing to this inhumanity." (pp. 181, 235)