

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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The Valley of Breakthrough

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On October 14, 1947, a B-29 bomber took off from an airstrip in Southern California. Attached to that belly of the bomber was a much smaller plane called the Bell X-1. That plane is now suspended from the ceiling of the Air and Space Museum and I'll tell you why. In the world of aviation, the assumption among many aeronautical engineers was that the speed of sound Mach 1 was in an unbreakable barrier. At 25,000 feet that B-29 bomber dropped the Bell X-1. It fired its engines it ascended to 43,000 feet and it accelerated to 500, 600, 700 miles per hour. At point 965 Mach the control panels on the dashboard went haywire. At point 995 Mach the g-force blurred Chuck Yeager his vision and turned his stomach in knots. And just when it felt like that plane would implode, there was a sonic boom. At 761 miles per hour the Bell X-1 broke the sound barrier and the air pressure that had been pounding the front of that plane shifted to the back. It was like the perfect storm became the perfect calm inside that cockpit, absolutely silent, absolutely still. Why? Because at supersonic speeds the plane was traveling faster than the sound waves it produced. The Bell X-1 reached 1.07 Mach, Chuck Yeager, cut the engine, and the rest is history.

Let me sidebar, in Mark's Gospel, there's a story about Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee. He's actually taking a nap, which I love, because that's all the justification I need. But just in case a NASA study has found that a 26 minute nap increases productivity 34%, so there you go. So Jesus is napping and the Amplified Version says, "A furious storm of hurricane proportions arose, and the waves kept beating into the boat." Sorta like the wind beating into the Bell X-1. And for what it's worth Sea of Galilee, about 700 feet below sea level surrounded by hills and mountains, the Golan Heights, which were called the Decapolis in Jesus day, about 2500 feet above sea level. It's that topography that makes the Sea of Galilee susceptible to very sudden, very violent storms. So you've got the perfect storm disciples scared to death, which is saying something when you're a professional fisherman, and they wake Jesus up. Now listen, part of me wonders if he's faking. As a parent I've done this on occasion to see what my kids would do if they thought I was asleep. One way or the other Jesus stands up in the boat it's this balancing act. And you're going to have to forgive me for this because I kind of see The Karate Kid crane which obviously I can't pull off. And it's this epic moment Son of Man versus Mother Nature. Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves and says, "Peace be still" to a storm. And it's almost like it's this Sonic Boom. Scripture says there was a great calm and a perfect peacefulness. Three words peace be still and the perfect storm turns into a perfect calm. Who does this? Who rebukes the wind and the waves? Who says to a storm, "Peace be still"? I'll tell you who the same person who tells water to become wine, the same person who says to a man four days dead, "Lazarus come forth". That's who!

Many years ago I had the privilege of hearing Chuck Yeager speak at the Air and Space Museum. For what it's worth he cracked two ribs two days before that historic flight. He didn't tell anybody because he didn't want to delay history. The Bell X-1 as I mentioned symbolically suspended from the ceiling of the

Air and Space Museum along with the Wright Flyer and the Spirit of St. Louis. Each of those aircrafts represents a breakthrough. The Wright Brothers defied gravity at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, December 3, 1903. Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic, May 20, 1927. Chuck Yeager breaks the sound barrier.

Now listen to me. Each of those breakthroughs, make the next breakthrough possible. And each of those breakthroughs redefines what is and what is not possible? I would suggest that's who Jesus is. That's what Jesus does when he walks out of an empty tomb on the third day, redefined reality, redefined possibility, redefined 1,000 other things.

Here's what I think. I think many of us are living at .965 Mach. The control panels on your dashboard are going haywire. It feels like your life is out of control, or at least your kids are. I think many of us living at .995 Mach vision is blurred, stomach in knots, problems we can't seem to solve, habits we can't seem to break. It feels like your marriage feels like your mental health about to implode. I've got some good news you are this close to a breakthrough. You are as close as the cross of Jesus Christ.

Seven weeks ago, we ventured into the valley of crisis and it turned into the valley of blessing. We hiked into the valley of giants, valley of tears, valley of dry bones, valley of heartbreak, valley of opposition. This weekend, last weekend in this series we venture into the valley of breakthrough. You can meet me in II Samuel chapter five. But before we hike into that valley, I want to climb a set of stairs into an upper room in Jerusalem. This weekend, we celebrate Pentecost. It is the birthday of the church. We're going to throw a birthday party, Pentecost Sunday night 8pm at our online campus [live.national.cc](http://live.national.cc). It feels like a weekend we ought to do a doubleheader.

Acts two - When the day of Pentecost came they were all together in one place. Now, don't you hear that a little bit longingly? Listen, that day is going to come where we can gather in one place. I don't think we're going to read that the same way after social distancing. The disciples gathered in an upper room. We're going to gather in an upper zoom, June one through 10. Now I know we just finished 40 days of prayer. Listen, this is our moment to press in and pray through so June one through 10 - 7:14am, [NCC.re/upperzoom](http://NCC.re/upperzoom). You cannot plan Pentecost but if you pray for 10 days, that God is going to show up and show off.

Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty wind storm. Sounds like another Sonic Boom. It filled the house where they were sitting but it doesn't just fill the house it fills those disciples. This is when and where and how breakthrough happens. This is the breakthrough that makes every other breakthrough possible. Heaven invades earth, eternity invades time, Spirit invades flesh. At Bethlehem He is God with us, at Calvary he has got for us, at Pentecost He is God in us. The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you.

II Samuel 5:1 *"And all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, We are your own flesh and blood."* <sup>2</sup> *In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'*" <sup>3</sup> *When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel."* <sup>4</sup> *David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years."* <sup>5</sup> *In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years."*

A lot of back-story right here, let me connect a couple of dots. Hebron is 19 miles south of Jerusalem, served as the capital city of the southern kingdom of Judah. But the most important fact maybe topographical the elevation of Hebron is 3000 feet above sea level. Now the significance of that is this, Hebron was the high ground, in other words, hardest place to conquer, easiest place to defend.

Now let me flashback about 400 years. When the Israelites enter the Promised Land, Hebron was controlled by a fierce fighting people called the Anak. Now the Anak were large enough in stature, that scripture actually calls them giants. So you've got a race of giants holding the high ground called Hebron. I want you to hear me. Physical superiority and topographical advantage is no match for a mustard seed of faith that can move mountains. In Christ, you are no one's underdog. In fact, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Without the Holy Spirit I'm below average, with the Holy Spirit game on.

An 85 year old spy named Caleb says give me the hill country. Caleb conquers Hebron and for what its worth this race of giants actually resettled in a town called Gath. That may ring a bell, because that is where Goliath is from. And so long before David duels Goliath of Gath, Caleb defeats Hercules of Hebron. Now, I said this a few times during this series, but I think it's especially relevant as we venture into the Valley of Breakthrough. Here it is. Your brave is someone else's breakthrough. We think right here right now God is thinking nations and generations Yes, Hebron was Caleb's inheritance, but your legacy is someone else's destiny. What God does for us is never just for us. He's the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the God of Judah, Caleb, and David. You can fill in the blank with your family tree. You are the answer to prayers prayed long ago, Caleb had no idea, none of us do. But his victory would turn into David's capital city.

Can I remind us of something? God is doing something through National Community Church that is so much bigger, so much longer than I think any of us could imagine. We have a hard time believing God for cities and God says, ask of me and I will give the nations. I remember sitting down to dinner a few years ago with Bob Goff and Lora and I it was the first time that we had met him. And one of the first things he said was, "You guy should take over a country". What? You know, just casual dinner conversation, right. Now we didn't know Bob well enough to know if he was serious or not. Oh, he was serious. See, Bob is one of those people when I get around him, I feel like I'm dreaming a little bit too

small. Listen, we need some of those people in our lives. I think Caleb and Bob Goff cut from the same cloth.

Now, on that note, let me give you a little update while we shelter in place. Demolition has started on phase two of our Capitol Hill campus. I think that is good news. I want to say thank you for your investment in this project. And I think that our child development center is going to be needed more after this COVID crisis than it was before. Every time I walk into phase two and it's just an empty shell right now. Psalm 22:31 just stirs in my spirit. Babies not yet conceived, we'll hear the good news. Listen, we aren't just doing this for us. We are doing this for those who aren't here yet. I believe that our faith is someone else's foundation. And so let's meet real needs in real time but let's do things that will make a difference 100 years from now.

All right, let me flash forward. Verse 17 *"When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold."*<sup>18</sup> *Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim;*<sup>19</sup> *so David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you deliver them into my hands?"* *The Lord answered him, "Go, for I will surely deliver the Philistines into your hands."*<sup>20</sup> *So David went to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them. He said, "As waters break out, the Lord has broken out against my enemies before me."* *So he called the place Baal Perazim, the Lord of the breakthrough.*<sup>21</sup> *The Philistines abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them off."*

Let me set the scene; David moves his capital city from Hebron to Jerusalem, and the Philistines send a delegation to congratulate him. Not exactly. As long as David was in Hebron, Philistines leave him alone, out of sight out of mind. When David moves the capital to Jerusalem, they immediately attack. The question, of course, is why and the answer is geopolitics. In the city of Jerusalem surrounded by valleys, one of which Valley of Rephaim is part of a series of valleys called the Shfela that run from the Judean mountains all the way to the coastal plain. It's I 95. It's route 66. The Shfela is the Interstate and it runs right between two nations. And I bet you can guess which ones. You've got the Philistines on one side, the Israelites on the other and that's why so much conflict happens in these valleys. But I also want to say, this is when and where and how breakthroughs happen. Hold that thought.

Two observations when it comes to God's anointing;

1) Don't expect people to recognize your anointing right away. David was anointed king by a prophet long before he was anointed king by the people. Best guess David was a teenager when the prophet Samuel anointed him. What did he do? Well, he kept on shepherding sheep. More on that in a minute. It's not until David is 30 years old that he is finally anointed king by the people. Listen, prophets see things in people about 15 years before everybody else. May God give us eyes to see potential in others. I think that starts with seeing the image of God in others. And when you see the image of God in George Floyd, you don't pin his neck to the ground until he can't breathe. Lord, help us. Lord, save us from

ourselves. May the gospel of reconciliation break the yoke of racism. In Jesus name, amen. The church ought to be the most reconciled place on the planet. Let it be.

2) When the Lord anoints you, the enemy will come against you. Whenever we do a baptism, I sometimes give a little warning. See when you go public with your faith you might want to expect the enemy to turn up the heat just a little bit. Now that doesn't need to scare us. Why? Because if God is for us, who can be against us, but let's not be unaware of the enemy's scheme, II Corinthians 2:11. The enemy uses shame and fear and division and distraction. You know what Corrie Ten Boom said, "If the enemy can't make you bad, he'll make you busy."

Two questions... What do you do when you're under attack spiritually? And what do you do when the enemy knocks on your door? So many subplots in this story let me focus on one thing that David does, and I think it makes all the difference in the world. It says David went down to his stronghold. Now, every time I hear that I gotta be honest, I think about the Fortress of Solitude, even Superman needed a break now and then. By the way, fun fact Fortress of Solitude originally called the Secret Sanctuary and I think that's what David is doing right here. Now, I know it looks like a defensive measure. It looks like David is retreating. I don't think so. I think this has Rocky III written all over it. Remember this Rocky getting clobbered by Clubber Lang? Apollo Creed says he's getting killed out there. Paulie says, "Oh, no, no, he's not getting killed, he's getting mad." I think this is David, retreating to a place where he's gonna find the courage and find the faith to face the enemy.

The stronghold is a place we go back to when the world is falling apart. I think it's the Ebenezer's in our life. So far so God. It's the places where we have built altars. It's the miracles that God has done in our lives. We've got to go back and so we don't run in hide. No, the stronghold is the place we go back to, to strengthen ourselves in the Lord.

I Samuel, chapter 30, verse six, "*David was greatly distressed for the people spoke of stoning him.*" And so David has been here before because all the people were bitter in soul each for his sons and daughters. What does David do? "*But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.*"

Lots of opinions by lots of commentators on what stronghold David went to. Truth is, we don't know. What we do know is this no one and I mean no one knew the Valley of Rephaim better than David. Why? It's where David played hide and seek with his seven brothers as a kid. It's where David tended his sheep as a teenager. It's where David hid out from Saul for nearly a decade.

Listen, everything in your past is preparation for your future. God doesn't waste our experiences. Shepherding sheep it cultivated a compensatory skill in David called the slingshot that would catapult him into the national limelight but let me take it one step further. When you shepherd sheep, you earn an honorary doctorate in topography, geography and meteorology. David knew this terrain like the back of his hand. I think what I'm saying is this God is getting you ready. God is preparing you. He was

downloading maps and apps so that David would be ready. Well, what is shepherding sheep had to do with the Philistine invasion? At first glance, nothing, second glance, everything.

Can I tell you a little something about the anointing? I think sometimes we think the anointing is God gifting us to do something that we've never done before. No, I think often it's God translating our past experiences into our present circumstances.

Let me go back to the stronghold one more time. Lots of mixed emotions for David, he goes back to a stronghold where he's been many times before. And so it reminds him of God's faithfulness, for sure. But don't tell me it doesn't trigger some traumatic memories. Listen, when you've been hunted like an animal for years, it affects the way you sleep, it affects your psyche. But I think its evidence that David had healed David had been reconciled with his past.

What does David do as he shelters in place? I'm going to close with these two thoughts.

1) You have to pray through to the breakthrough. It says David inquired of the Lord, he puts it to prayer. When you pray through, there comes a moment where there is a sonic boom where you know in your spirit that the breakthrough has already happened. It's almost like the pressure is pounding you down. And then all of a sudden in your spirit, you know, that the peace that passes understanding God's got this. Listen prayer is the difference between you fighting for God and God fighting for you. Whatever breakthrough you need can remind you; the battle belongs to the Lord.

2) Give God the sacrifice of praise. Whatever you don't turn into praise, it turns into pride or pain. And I know the hardest praise is so hard but it's also the highest praise. I think a lot of people would have thrown a pity party. What does David do? He turns this cave into a recording studio? What am I talking about? Text doesn't say that. Well, let me connect the dots. Psalm 142, *"When my spirit is overwhelmed, you watch over my way. You are my refuge. You are my portion in the land of the living."* David doesn't write these words in a palace. He writes these words in a cave, in the cave of Adullam. God inhabits the praises of his people. When our praise goes up, I think the breakthrough is around the corner.

I want to invite our worship team to come. I want to say this, if you need a breakthrough this weekend, we're going to give God the sacrifice of praise. I also want to say, our prayer team is ready and waiting to pray with you and for you. You'll see that little live prayer button. And I want to say this, I believe that the breakthrough begins with the person who makes it possible and His name is Jesus. He's the one who said peace be still. He's the one who said Lazarus, come forth. He is calling your name right now you can hear it. And if that's you, would you have the courage today to take a step of faith? That step of faith is going to turn into a giant leap in your life. If you're at our online campus, you'll see a little button. You can raise that hand. We want to help you take that next step in your spiritual journey. Let's worship the Lord in these moments and believe that as we worship as we pray breakthrough is coming.