

15 July 2012

The Battle is not ours but God's

This week we are taking a short break from our current word studies on *abound* and *honour*, and we will look at the words of encouragement that the Lord spoke to Jehoshaphat in 2Chr.20: 14-17. Let us read 2Chronicles chapter 20. From this chapter we will use verse 15 as the source for our points today.

2Chr 20:15 *And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle [is] not yours, but God's.*

From this verse we make three points:-

1. Be not afraid in the battle.
2. In the battle be not dismayed by the magnitude of our enemy.
3. The battle is not ours but God's.

Let us add a little more detail to each of our points:-

1. Be not afraid in battle.

2Chr 20:15 *And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle [is] not yours, but God's.*

The context of our verse is that Jehoshaphat has a multitude of enemies coming his way (he is about to enter a battle) and so he seeks the Lord's help. First he acknowledges that God rules over all the kingdoms of the heathen and that none are able to withstand Him (see verse 6). He acknowledges that God has all power and might none can withstand Him and they do not know what to do other than to seek the Lord (see verse 12). It is in this context of immanent danger from his enemies (a battle) that Jehoshaphat receives counsel from the Lord through his prophet. *Be not afraid* (which will be covered in this point) *nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude* that is coming to invade your land (this will be covered in our second point), why? *The battle is not yours, but God's* (this will be covered in our third point).

Before going in to possess the land flowing with milk and honey that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the children of Israel were often comforted by the Lord with the words; *be not afraid* (see Deut.7: 18). Such words were given to reassure Israel that even though the nations they were going to invade were greater in number than they, they were not to be afraid (see Deut.20: 1). According to the Oxford dictionary the word afraid means to be "alarmed, frightened of the consequences". So when the Lord says to His people before going into battle, *be not afraid*, He is saying, regardless of the fact that you are frightened by the thought of the consequences of the impending battle, do not fear, do not get alarmed.

There are many examples throughout the Old Testament where the Lord, either through his leaders or prophets offered comfort and support to His people before they went into battle. Joshua before he went in to take the land, told the children of Israel three times to be strong and courageous or of good courage (see Josh.1: 6, 7 & 9), which is a positive way of saying, be not afraid, don't be frightened. We see this link between being strong and courageous and not being afraid. when the Lord speaks with Joshua after Moses death (see Josh.1: 9), when David encouraged his son Solomon before he took over the throne of Israel (see 1Chr.28: 20) and when Hezekiah spoke to the people before they went to war (see 2Chr.32: 7). We also witnessed this with David as recorded in the Psalms where even though the number against him was 10,000 he was not afraid (see Ps.3: 6). How could one man face 10,000 foes and not be afraid? Sure he would have had some of his compatriots with him, even still the difference in number must have been huge, but David was not afraid.

You may be feeling comfortable at the moment thinking that at least you are not fighting a battle with shield and sword, at least you are not like the soldiers fighting in Afghanistan or Syria or like David in the Old Testament. Well, think again, because for all those who have not believed the gospel of Christ crucified in vain, for all those who are saved by faith in Christ, we are soldiers for Christ (see 2Tim.2: 3), we are in a spiritual battle (see 2Cor.10: 3-5, Eph.6: 12 & 1Tim.1: 18). And we can learn from our Old Testament passage that we should not be afraid, we should not be frightened in the battle.

If you are involved in any work that stands up to our adversary the devil, be weary of retaliation, but having said that, we know that we are not to be afraid, we are to be strong and of good courage. Why?

Because God still rules over the kingdoms of the heathen and none are able to withstand His might (see 2Chr.20: 6). If we are in this spiritual battle and the Lord is truly our commander and chief and it is He that is sending us into the battle, it is He that is equipping us to go to war, then we should not be afraid. But, let me suggest that if you decide to go up to Ramoth-galead (see 2Chr.18: 5) or to Turkey where 99.8% of the population is Muslim or Spain where there is 94% RCs, or any where in the battle and you do not ask council of the Lord, your commander and

chief, and He did not want you to go up, then *be* afraid! But if it is the Lord that you go, that you move to the left or to the right on the battle field, then as you go worship His holiness and praise His worthy name (see 2Chr.20: 18-21), and *be not afraid*. Don't be frightened of any potential consequences, because the Lord is with you, and if the Lord is with you, who can be against you.

Let us encourage and comfort our brethren in this battle that each one of us may know the Lord's courage and strength, that we war a good warfare, that we would not be afraid of the consequences of battle.

2. In battle be not dismayed by the magnitude of our enemy.

2Chr 20:15 *And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle [is] not yours, but God's.*

We have looked at the meaning of the word afraid, and considered it within the context of our passage, but in the same verse the Lord tells Jehoshaphat "nor be dismayed by reason of this great multitude".

Is the Lord repeating his request of Jehoshaphat not to be afraid, when he says, *nor dismayed*, or is He saying something different? If the meanings of the two words are similar then yes He is, but according to the Oxford dictionary the word dismayed means, "consternation or discouragement" and consternation means "a feeling of anxiety or dismay, typically at something unexpected". So the two words are different; afraid means frightened and dismayed means discouraged. This is confirmed in our verse where it says, *nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude*, hence because of the great number of the enemy they get discouraged. This is further evidenced in Deut.1: 28 & Num. 13: 28, where, speaking of the spies that brought back an evil report of the land when they spoke of the greatness of the sons of the Anakims, hence the people heart's were discouraged. So in battle the greatness of our enemy can both cause us to be afraid and also to be dismayed or discouraged.

The reason for the people not being dismayed is the same them not being afraid, that is; the Lord He is God, He is ruler over all the kingdoms of the heathen and none are able to withstand Him, so there is no need to be discouraged. The sheer number of our adversary makes no difference to God (see 2Chr.20: 6),

Take the example of a child who has an overwhelming father, continually at his children, provoking them, the child ends up dismayed, they end up discouraged and there is an encouragement just for Fathers in the Scriptures specically on this point. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged (see Col.3: 21). Such is the fragile spirit of a child, it can be easily discouraged and so a Father when he disciplines his children or in his everyday communication with his children, needs to allow for this, and not provoke them to anger, lest they be discouraged.

One of my work colleagues is a Christian and his nature is to be easily discouraged, even if the enemy is not overwhelming, he is still dismayed. There was one occassion where I was being less than charitable, where I raised my voice and laboured my point, he was so discouraged that the next day he came in and wanted to leave. I pointed out that if the Lord really wanted him to be where he was, then how can he simply decide one moment to leave just because the going is getting a little tough. He pointed out that he was feeling so discouraged by my words, so crushed by what I had said that his only option was to resign. I explained to him my weaknesses and what I was prepared to do to change and agreed to stay.

What did I learn from this?

I learnt again that our tongue is a leathel weapon, that can easily discourage others when used in haste or without thinking, its like one of those fire spraying guns that you see in WW2 movies, our tongue is like a fire, a world of iniquity (see James chapter 3) in this battle and as good soldiers we are to use it with caution, wisdom and charity. In the Psalms, David likens the tongue to a sharp sword (see Ps.57: 4), and Jeremiah likens it to the bow (see Jer.9: 3, suggesting that they bend their tongue like their bow for lies) and suggests that we can kill a man with our tongue (see Jer.18: 18).

It was also clear that discouragement can cause the biggest soldier to go AWOL. And in the defence forces simply leaving the battle field and going home is a crime and I don't believe it is an option for Christians either. When we get discouraged we need to come before the Lord and seek His strength, His courage to continue on in the battle.

Let us prayer for our brethren today that they will not be dismayed by the magnitude of the enemy who we cannot see, cannot touch and hates us. He has learnt man's weaknesses over many centuries and knows our personal struggles. But let us not be discouraged by the magnitude of our enemy.

3. The battle is not ours but God's.

2Chr 20:15 *And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle [is] not yours, but God's.*

Why should we not be afraid of our enemy, why should we not be dismayed even though he seems so huge and things seem so overwhelming sometimes? We have already suggested earlier that in 2Chr.20: 6 God rules over the kingdoms of the heathen and none are able to withstand Him, but why is that so important if God reigns? Its pivotal in the battle, because whilst God reigns over the whole earth, the battle we are in is not ours but God's! You might be thinking that you are the one in the battle, not God, so how can it be His battle and not ours? Well, that is true, it us in the battle, but the bible says that God is with us, and He goes before us and he strengthens us. In the Old Testament Is.12: 2 says, *be not afraid because the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song.* And Deut.31: 8 *-be not dismayed because it is the Lord that doth go before thee.* So the Lord God who made heaven and earth, the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy (see Is.57: 15), He is encouraging His children, His soldiers not to be discouraged, not to be dismayed, not to be afraid of the enemy because He goes before us and He is with us and so it is His battle, not ours.

When the children of Israel drove out the inhabitants of Canaan, did they do it themselves? NO, the Lord went before them and fought for them (see Ex.23: 28-31).

When David went out to fight against the Philistines, did he kill 1000 men in his own strength? No, the Lord was with him (see 1Sam.18: 27,28).

When Stephen was brought before the high priest for questioning and ended up being stoned to death in Acts 7, was he there in his own strength? No God was with him.

Did the apostle Paul preach the name of Jesus in his own strength? No, he was sent by Christ (see Acts 9: 6).

When Paul preached until midnight did he do so in his own strength? No, the Lord was with him (see Acts.20: 7).

The battle was not David's, Stephen's, Paul's and nor is it ours, it is the Lord's battle. So, don't rush in blind, don't get side tracked by the devil into quitting, but stand still a moment (see 2Chr.20: 17), and having done all to stand put on the armour of God (see Eph.6: 13, 14).

That's right, the Lord calls us to be soldiers, He equips us with armour and weapons to fight with, and He gives us His wisdom, strength and courage in the battle. Why? Because it is His battle, not ours! And when the truth of that sinks in you will not be afraid, you will not be dismayed nor will you open the door to the devil when you are discouraged by the magnitude of the enemy, but instead you will be strong and courageous.

Take the work of the preaching the gospel on the street, or Chick ministry, or the Bible Believers Bulletin:

Is these the work of the Lord? We believe so.

Does He equip those involved in the work, for the work? Yes!

Does He enable those involved in the work, for the work? Yes!

Does He give strength and wisdom to those involved in the work? Yes!

Why? Because the work is not ours, the battle is not our battle. Any shots we fire that hit our enemy in the heart, are not shots that we have delivered, or orchestrated, they are those which the Lord has ordained. Because the battle is not ours, it is the Lord's and so regardless of what happens to us as individuals we know that when we cry out to the Lord with our concerns, with our struggles, when the enemy attacks us, the Lord God in heaven hears and He will give us what we need to defend ourselves. Because it is His battle not ours! And we go in His strength, with His courage, just like Moses, Joshua, David, Stephen and Paul.

Let us remember that before the Lord can equip us, before can He enable us, before He gives us His wisdom and strength, we first must come to the point of acknowledging that we are nothing, that we have no strength of our own. Just as Daniel did when he prayed to the Lord in Dan.9: 1-27 and Jehoshaphat did (see 2Chr.20:: 3,4). It is only when we accept that we need God's direction and have no might, no strength of our own, that God will equip us with what we need be a good soldier in His battle, just as He did Daniel, Jehoshaphat, David, Joshua, Paul and all of His soldiers that have gone before us and will come after us.

Let us pray for our brethren in this country and around the world who are active in the battle, who are in the front line (so to speak) and are getting pounded by the spears and arrows from the adversary, let us ask God today, to strengthen them that they be not afraid. Let us ask God to encourage them, lest they be not dismayed or discouraged due to the magnitude of the enemy, because His word says, that this battle is His battle, it is the Lord's, it is not ours.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again.

1. Be not afraid in the battle.
2. In the battle be not dismayed by the magnitude of our enemy.
3. The battle is not ours but God's. Amen!