

13. No fear in the presence of your enemy

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Anyone who has been in battle can tell you that there are two types of fear before the battle starts. The fear of what the enemy can do to their loved ones can boost up insurmountable esprit of de corp among the soldiers to win or the other kind of fear that totally demolishes any will to fight before it even starts.

It is no different in spiritual warfare. Many believers of Jesus Christ have such fear of the demonic attacks that they completely give in to the devil's scheme before they get into any spiritual fight. Why do they have so much fear and lose their fight? Because they choose to take their eyes off Jesus and they look at themselves and their situations around them. Anyone of us would do the same thing if we only count on our own strength.

Tonight we will learn how to combat against the enemy of ours and God through the Word. In addition to that valuable lesson, the Lord will include lessons for other aspects of our lives.

A. WHEN YOU GO OUT TO BATTLE

Deuteronomy 20:1-4 "When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. 2 So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. 3 And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; 4 for the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'

If our military generals see this battle strategy, they will say, "It is a suicide mission for everyone to listen to a priest before the battle begins. What would a priest know about battle?" Probably not much. But we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places as it says in Ephesians 6.

Moses didn't minimize either the size or the strength of the enemy, because he knew that the nations living in Canaan had horses, chariots, large armies, and fortified cities.

Moses simply reminded the people that the Lord had successfully brought them from the land of Egypt to the plains of Moab and defeated every enemy that had attacked them. Just as the Lord had defeated Pharaoh and his army in Egypt, so He would defeat the nations in Canaan.

In the early days of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his Inaugural Address, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

There is a fear that mobilizes a person, as when you hear the fire alarm go off; but there is also a fear that paralyzes a person, and that's the fear that Moses was addressing.

When we fear the Lord and trust Him, we need not fear the enemy.

1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Romans 8:31b If God is for us, who can be against us?

In other words, when we are with God, it makes an unbeatable majority in spite of what we might face.

The Lord didn't ask Israel to trust Him blindly, but He reminded them of what He had done for them previously – something no other gods of the world could pull off. The Lord brought them, over 2 million of them, through the dry ground of the bottom of the Red Sea with the walls of sea water on both sides, then the same water that were held back for the Israelites came upon the entire Egyptian army and killed everyone of them.

God still keeps His promises in protecting His people, Israel from any enemy's attack against her. Though they might try, they won't succeed because of the Lord's protection.

I am sure that you all remember, twenty years ago, none of Saddam Hussein's Scud Missiles against Israel killed anyone. Yes, one Jewish old man died during a missile attack by a heart attack, not by a missile.

And the Lord still keeps His promises to everyone of us in this room. He has proven Himself mighty and faithful before and has a perfect track record which can be trusted.

Since the Lord will fight battle for us, does it mean that we do nothing other than rely on Him to do everything? This is about following the lead of the Lord, not about unpreparedness due to being lazy and neglecting.

The Lord expects us to do our part and He wants us to trust Him to do the rest. A good example is Moses right before they crossed the Red Sea.

Exodus 14:13-16 And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. 14 The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." 15 And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. 16 But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea."

God's most frequent commands to us is "Fear Not" and it is what every believer needs to hear when we confront the enemy. When we walk by faith and keep our eyes on the Lord, He will give us the peace we need.

B. FOCUS, FEAR IS CONTAGIOUS

Deuteronomy 20:5-9 Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying: 'What man is there who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. 6 Also what man is there who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten of it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man

eat of it. 7 And what man is there who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man marry her.' 8 The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, 'What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.' 9 And so it shall be, when the officers have finished speaking to the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

The priest encouraged the soldiers to face the enemy without fear, but the officers told them to go back home if they had any unfinished business. No officer wants to lead distracted soldiers whose minds and hearts are elsewhere.

James 1:8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Remember, spiritual warfare is not for a spiritual coward, nor for a person with spiritual ignorance. We are living in the midst of a spiritual battleground, not playground.

Distraction can sink us. In the spiritual army of God, He only wants willing, brave soldiers. In spiritual battles, we must have a determination to fight and win. The war is already won by Jesus. But each battle depends on our decision.

To God, the size of the army wasn't important. The heart of the army was far more important. He didn't want people who might be distracted from the real battle by worrying about the cares of everyday life – home, vineyard, and fiancée; nor did He want people who were not really trusting Him. God could do more through a smaller army that was really committed to Him than through a bigger army that was full of compromise.

The story of Gideon from the Book of Judge chapter 7 is a powerful illustration of this. Gideon started with an army of 32,000, but it was too big, so the Lord told Gideon to send home those who were afraid, and 22,000 left. But it was still too big, so God had him send home 9,700 more, so he only had an army of 300 to fight against a Midianite army of 135,000. Yet God gave him the victory.

Actually, Gideon's army didn't use their weapons to kill the enemy. All they did was shouting and breaking potteries and making a lot of noise. Then the fear of the Lord came upon the enemy that they killed each other.

We can learn from this event that fear and faith cannot coexist successfully in the same heart.

Matthew 8:26 But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

In addition to this, fear is contagious and could discourage the others. It was fear and unbelief that caused Israel's great failure at Kadesh in Numbers 13 and 14. Because they worried and feared the giants in the land instead of trusting the Lord who could easily defeat them for the Israelites.

Remember, God's odds are always better than anything we can face.

C. THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FROM THE LORD

From v10 through 20 of chapter 20, the Lord gave them two sets of the rules of engagement – one for the enemies far away, outside of the allotted territories and then the others within their territories.

During their invasion of Canaan, not only were the Jews to slay all the citizens, but they were also to destroy everything connected with the wicked Canaanite religious system, including temples, idols, and altars. This policy would help remove dangerous temptations from the Jewish people who were always prone to follow idols.

Great danger lies in the notion that we can reason with the devil. WE CANNOT.

D. UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

Deuteronomy 21:8-9 Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel.' And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood. 9 So you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.

From v1 to 9, Moses told them what to do when they found a dead body somewhere in the middle of their territories and they didn't know who killed this person.

It is more than what to do with an UNSOLVED mystery. It shows a great picture of God's grace and Jesus' atonement beautifully.

Fast forward about 1440 years to bring the scene to just a few hours before the crucifixion of Jesus in Jerusalem.

Matthew 27:24-25 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." 25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."

Like that innocent heifer, Jesus died for the nation and even prayed for them from the cross.

Luke 23:34a Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Jesus fulfilled God's will and upheld His holy Law, and He died for the sins of the world. The offering of the innocent red heifer pointed to the offering of the Son of God whose death brought cleansing, forgiveness, and the annulment of God's judgment.

The godless nations in Canaan so polluted the land that it vomited them out according to Leviticus 18:25.

Leviticus 18:25 For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.

Apart from Israel, no nation of the world is in a covenant relationship with the Lord. But the Lord still holds all nations accountable for their sins.

Like I've said many times before, America will face her own accountability with God for her people's wickedness and immorality beyond description. I wouldn't be surprised if this happens to America at the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

E. HE WHO IS HANGED IS ACCURSED OF GOD

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.

In the thinking of ancient Israel there was something worse than being put to death. Worse than that was to be put to death and to have your corpse left exposed to shame, humiliation, and scavenging animals and birds.

We are redeemed from the curse of the law by the work of Jesus on the cross for us. We no longer have to fear that God wants to curse us. He wants to bless us, not because of who we are, or what we have done, but because of what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) When we walk by faith and keep our eyes on the Lord, He will give us the peace we need.
- 2) We can learn from this event that fear and faith cannot coexist successfully in the same heart.
- 3) God's odds are always better than anything we can face.
- 4) Great danger lies in the notion that we can reason with the devil. WE CANNOT.