

15. Facing your giant

August 23, 2009

It is not unusual for the Lord to allow me to experience the things that I am going to teach in advance. By doing so, I get to teach from my heart with faith in Him rather than from my head with Bible knowledge.

Last week it almost was like the Lord allowed the devil's cohorts to have a hay day with me. Those who are on our church Prayer Chain were informed what was going on with the building situation.

As I mentioned to you all, last Sunday, I gave a notice to the school about our moving out of this auditorium after September 27th. Then on Tuesday, I was told by the Sahuarita Town officials that we cannot have church services in Sahuarita Dance Center because there is not enough parking spaces; we are not allowed to set up the storage unit on the parking lot, and the occupancy limit is 120 maximum in that building – in other words, we are too big for that building.

So I thought, "OK, so much for moving out." When I contacted the school people on Wednesday, I was told that the auditorium is already dispensed out to other churches after September 27th. In other words, it didn't look like we have a place to go other than meeting somewhere in the middle of desert.

I didn't expect that the town government has anything to do with the transaction between our church and the building owner of the Dance Center. I didn't know that I had to meet all those requirements before we move into the place. I was facing the giant. I asked the Prayer Chain's prayer warriors to join me in prayers.

I prayed to the Lord that He should not punish you guys for my ignorance with the town policies. But I realized that this shenanigan didn't catch our God by surprise like it did to me. Our Lord knew this before the creation of the universe.

Are you facing your giant – feel like there is no way to turn and feel like somebody is chocking daylight out of you? But you still have one place to turn to – the Throne of Grace of our God.

A godly king Hezekiah of Judah was facing his giant – the invading army of Assyria king Sennacherib. Rather than giving up to the enemy, he turned to the Lord who was more than willing to protect Hezekiah and the people of Judah.

A. A REVIVAL IN THE LAND OF JUDAH

2 Kings 18:1-8 Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. 3 And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. 4 He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. 6 For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from

following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. 7 The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. 8 He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

The name Hezekiah means “the Lord strengthens”. He needed God’s strength to accomplish all that he did. He wasn’t perfect by any long shot, but he did seek to obey the Lord and please Him. He was one of the few kings who actually remove the high places and put an end of idol worship in the hills. He restored temple worship and encouraged the people from both Judah and Israel to come to the temple in Jerusalem and worship the Lord.

The sequence of events in Hezekiah’s life as recorded in Scripture – 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles and Isaiah – is not in strictly chronological order.

While Hezekiah’s reformation was mentioned in one verse in v4 in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles devotes three chapters to this important part of his life.

I asked you to underline the second half of v4. What is this bronze serpent? According to Numbers 21:9, this bronze serpent had been used to heal the Israelites who were bitten by the fiery serpents which were sent out to the ever-non-stop-complaining Israelites by the Lord. It was called ‘Nehushtan’ which means ‘Bronze Thing’. Jesus later showed that it was a symbol of Him in John 3:14. This idea was adopted as a medical symbol in later centuries.

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up

But the Israelites had dragged this bronze thingy all over the desert and set it up as an idol and worshiped it.

Even godly things can turn into an idol in our lives if we choose to do so. Doing God’s work can also turn into an idol. Can we do the work of God without Him? Yes, we can. But it becomes a men’s project, not God’s.

Psalm 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.

If we are to have revival in the Lord’s work, we must begin with cleansing. Over the years, individuals and churches can gradually accumulate a great deal of “religious garbage” while ignoring the essentials of spiritual worship. It’s not by doing some unique new thing to experience new thing from the Lord, but by returning to the “essential things” and doing them well. If we confess our sins and offer ourselves as living sacrifices daily to the Lord, the Lord will see and hear and will send His blessing.

B. IGNORANCE OF THE GIANT

2 Kings 18:17-22 Then the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh from Lachish, with a great army against Jerusalem, to King Hezekiah. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they had come up, they went and stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, which was on the highway to the Fuller’s Field. 18 And when they had called to the king, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to them. 19 Then the Rabshakeh said to them, “Say now to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king, the

king of Assyria: "What confidence is this in which you trust? 20 You speak of having plans and power for war; but they are mere words. And in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me? 21 Now look! You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. 22 But if you say to me, 'We trust in the Lord our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem'?"

In our logic, the Lord should have blessed Hezekiah for his dedication to Him. But to our amazement, the Lord allowed the Assyrian king Sennacherib to come after Judah once again and to boast against Him. Hezekiah was faithful to the Lord, but it seems as though the Lord wasn't faithful to Hezekiah.

It is one of the standing puzzles of the Bible. We constantly see this kind of examples around us. Godly and great people suffer while ungodly prosper and have healthy lives. Sometimes we honestly wonder, "Where is God's justice in this?" A Psalmist wondered the same thing like us:

Psalm 73:3-20 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm. 5 They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men. 6 Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment. 7 Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish. 8 They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily. 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth. 10 Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full cup are drained by them. 11 And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" 12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches. 13 Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. 14 For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning. 15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. 16 When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me-- 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. 18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. 20 As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.

We only see what is happening right in front of our eyes, not a few minutes later or a few hours later. It is not unusual for us to panic if we don't see a solution of the problem right away. We are much better at worrying about something that may never happen than trusting the Almighty God who keeps His promises every time.

Some Christians are professional worriers. They worry just about everything. When they can not find anything to worry about, that worries them. Worry is another side of doubt against God's faithfulness. And it is a sin.

We have a tendency to listen to the boasting and taunting voice of the devil rather than the promises of God from the Bible. That is exactly what the devil wants us to do. He wants our hearts to be filled with doubts of "what if" by listening to him instead of remembering the promises of God – "but God".

By the way, 'Rabshakeh' was not a person's name, rather it was a title which describes the 'field commander' for the Assyrian army. To them, Judah was just another victim to fall under their marching boots. Rabshakeh thought when Hezekiah removed the idol altars from the high places in Judah, the God of Israel was gone. It just showed his ignorance.

C. FACING THE GIANT THROUGH THE LORD

2 Kings 19:14-20 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. 15 Then Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said: "O Lord God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 16 Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. 17 Truly, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, 18 and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands--wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them. 19 Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone." 20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.'

Notice what king Hezekiah did here. Rather than looking for help from other kingdoms, he simply went to the Lord. He spread the letter of Assyrian king before the Lord. Then he reminded himself who God is in his prayer. In other words, he compared his nail biting situation to the God who created the entire universe by His commands.

To compare to God's eternal promises, His power and His faithfulness, the invasion of Assyrian king's army was nothing; the problem with our church building situation is nothing; all the chaos and havocs of the United States Congress and Senate are nothing; and all the crazy things what President Obama is doing are nothing. Nobody, I mean nobody is more powerful and faithful than our God. If God is for us, who can be against us, amen?

Putting everything in godly perspective is very important for our spiritual sanity. There are so many distractions and traps in front us to snare our spirits. But when we let the Holy Spirit remind us that He is a faithful God to keep His promises and a powerful God to protect us, all of sudden, the giant we are facing becomes a dwarf.

Are you facing your giant which threatens you with an utter destruction today and everyday? Your giant can be financial difficulties as so many people are experiencing lately, or it might be your marriage problem, or strong addiction to alcohol, or gambling or pornography. No matter how intimidating your giant is, our God is bigger and more powerful than them.

Just because you pray to the Lord, that doesn't mean that all the problems will go away at once. But the Lord will be with you as you go through this difficult valley of the shadow of death.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

When we read what prophet Isaiah said in v20, we, too, would like to have that kind of encouragement in person, do we not? But we should not forget that we have something better than a godly prophet. We have the very Word of God, the Bible in our possession. The Bible contains all the encouragements and promises we need and it is ready to give them to us anytime we seek. That is why I emphasize to you to memorize the Word of God, so that when you need encouragement from the Lord, the Holy Spirit will remind you His promises.

D. SO MUCH FOR THE GIANT

2 Kings 19:35-37 And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses--all dead. 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. 37 Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

The Lord sent out one angel to kill 185000 Assyrian soldiers overnight. Against all odds, and against every expectation except the expectation of faith, the Assyrian army was turned back without having even shot an arrow into Jerusalem. The unstoppable was stopped, the undefeated was defeated.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) When the outlook is bleak, try the uplook.

Look at the faithfulness of God. He has never broken His promises to anyone in human history and He is not about to start now.

2) Focus on giants, you stumble. But focus on God, your giants tumble.