

When you're outnumbered

From reading 7/25/20

Preached Sunday, August 23

Update: Sunday 8/23 - 9:00am

Call to worship

- This morning we are gathered together in the Lord's house - with the Lord's people!
- What a privilege
- As the service concludes we'll partake of the Lord's supper together (you should find the supplies in the pew where you've been seated)
- I was thinking about one of the aspects of Christ's death this morning.
- **Luke 23:44-46** *By this time it was about noon, and darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. 45 The light from the sun was gone. And suddenly, the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn down the middle. 46 Then Jesus shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" And with those words he breathed his last.*
- The veil was rent in two! We used to sing *Let the veil down, let the praise go up...*
- Reminder: All that separated us from the presence of the almighty - was done away with in the death of Jesus.
- My point: Christ died that we might enjoy the presence of God - the fullness of the Lord
- The enemy is hard at work trying to keep us away, but we can have access to the Lord today.
- My prayer for us is that we enter in today.

- Don't let anything keep you away!

Introduction

- I want to loop back to a story we read at the end of July
- We've focused on Spiritual Warfare these last few weeks - I want to give a practical illustration from the life of Asa!

Background:

- Let me set the scene for the text today, since it's been a few weeks since we read it
- Asa was the son of Abijah who'd stood against the wicked king of Israel
- God allowed Asa to have a time of peace (10 years - see 14:1)
- Asa didn't squander that peace time - but according to **2 Chron 14:2** *Asa did what was pleasing and good in the sight of the Lord his God.*
 - He removed foreign altars and shrines
 - Commanded his people to seek the Lord
 - He took steps to fortify the city against future attack
- But the Lord allowed conflict. Let's pick up our story in v9

Exegesis

2 Chronicles 14:9-13 *Once an Ethiopian named Zerah attacked Judah with an army of 1,000,000 men and 300 chariots. They advanced to the town of Mareshah,*

- A much larger enemy (According to v8, Asa had 580,000 troops) advances against Judah and begins to attack them
- We are tempted to blame ourselves when we feel like we are under attack.
- **First point** Sometimes God allows the enemy to advance for a bigger reason.

10 so Asa deployed his armies for battle in the valley north of Mareshah. 11 Then Asa cried out to the Lord his God, "O Lord, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty! Help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in you alone. It is in your name that we have come against this vast horde. O Lord, you are our God; do not let mere men prevail against you!"

- He didn't retreat but attacked (as we've been teaching about re: spiritual warfare)
- Instead of whining or complaining or being angry with God, Asa prayed.
- And trusted in the name of the Lord!
- **Truth:** We can come against the enemy in the name of Jesus Christ (as we've been teaching)

12 So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians in the presence of Asa and the army of Judah, and the enemy fled. 13 Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar, and so many Ethiopians fell that they were unable to rally. They were destroyed by the Lord and his army, and the army of Judah carried off a vast amount of plunder.

- God granted the victory!!
- Praise the Lord that whatever the enemy is doing, God is greater!!
- There is no attack or oppression that God doesn't see and is willing to fight for!

Applications

How should I respond when the enemy attacks?

- Introspection is a good place to start.
- See the Psalmist's prayer **Psalm 139:23-24** *23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*
- Having done that and addressed / repented of any sin the Spirit shows us we must move forward
- Deploy the troops!
- Stop blaming yourself - what have I done wrong?
- Stop complaining "Lord why me"?
- Instead march out
- And PRAY for God to get the victory!!
- Asa didn't rely on anything other than God's power
- He humbled himself - acknowledging he was in need!
- Note: he came in the name of the Lord **11b** *It is in your name that we have come*
- We have the powerful name of Jesus through which to come!

God is working on a bigger picture

- Just because we don't see it, doesn't mean God isn't working for our good!
- We have to trust him.
- Let's look at this story and see what else God was doing
- Not only did God show up in a powerful way, this event became a turning point for Asa and God's people.
- The Holy Spirit speaks through Azariah son of Obed. He went to meet Asa and the troops as they returned to battle.

- He told them: **2 Chronicles 15:2b** *"The LORD will stay with you as long as you stay with him! Whenever you seek him, you will find him. But if you abandon him, he will abandon you"*
- This is the lesson for us.
- These things that are happening / will happen should bring us back to the place of seeking the Lord
- God is with us, when we are with him.
- As a nation we need to seek the Lord
- As individuals we need to as well.
- Azariah encouraged Asa in **v7** *But as for you, be strong and courageous, for your work will be rewarded."*
- This prophetic word - uttered at this moment encourages Asa to go on to even greater exploits for the Lord!
- This sparked a revival in the nation! (vv11-15)

A reminder as we're older

- Just one more piece of information from Asa's life
- For 25 more years, Asa and the people enjoyed peace and God's blessing.
- However in **1 Chronicles 16:1** we read *1 In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign, King Baasha of Israel invaded Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from entering or leaving King Asa's territory in Judah.*
- Another enemy (Israel) attacks.
- 25 years previously when this happened, Asa marched out and prayed - trusting in God, and God granted the victory.
- Here however, he's forgotten this moment. See **2-3** *Asa responded by removing the silver and gold from the treasuries of the Temple of the Lord and the royal palace. He sent it to King Ben-hadad of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus, along with this message: 3 "Let there be a treaty between you and me like the one between your father and my father. See, I am sending you silver and gold. Break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel so that he will leave me alone."*

- Asa hired the Arameans to come and fight against Israel (breaking the treaty they'd had with Israel)
- He tried to fight this battle in human strength and wisdom
- Hanani the prophet confronts him **16:7-9a** *At that time Hanani the seer came to King Asa and told him, "Because you have put your trust in the king of Aram instead of in the Lord your God, you missed your chance to destroy the army of the king of Aram. 8 Don't you remember what happened to the Ethiopians and Libyans and their vast army, with all of their chariots and charioteers? At that time you relied on the Lord, and he handed them over to you. 9 The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him..."*
- Instead of humbling himself and repenting, he had Hanani thrown into prison!
- He reigned for a few more years - and God even gave him a physical affliction - but he didn't seek the Lord.
- **Point:** there is a danger of turning away from the Lord even when he's been so good to us. As we get older, we tend to trust less in the Lord!
- **Ask yourself** - to whom are you turning right now - in the middle of all that's going on?

Conclusion

- Let me put one verse from Hanani's speech on the screen **16:9a** *The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*
- I know these are tough times - but are you seeking the Lord, fully committed to him?