

The Weapon of Israel Joshua 11:1-9

After defeating Gibeon, the Israelites fought and won against the allied forces of the 5 kings of southern Canaan.

The reason why the Israelites were able to defeat these great powers was because of the training and hardships they went through for forty years in the wilderness. It's easy to think that the Israelites' time in the wilderness was a waste, but it was only through those forty years that their foundation was made secure and the promises of God made real.

Our spiritual life is the same. To grow in our faith there are times when we need to go through hardship. The longer our training, the greater our faith will be.

Today's passage is about Joshua's confrontation with the northern Canaan Kings. In the heart of northern Canaan was Jabin, the king of Hazor. Hazor's geography made it so that horses and chariots were not only good, but necessary.

When Jabin, king of Hazor, heard of this, he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph, and to the kings who were in the northern hill country, and in the Arabah south of Chinneroth, and in the lowland, and in Naphtoth-dor on the west, to the Canaanites in the east and the west, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites in the hill country, and the Hivites under Hermon in the land of Mizpah. (Joshua 11:1-3)

The leader of the kings of northern Canaan was Jabin, king of Hazor. And to defeat the Israelites, Jabin gathered all the kings and their people together. Their plan was to destroy the Israelites early in the battle with their many horses and chariots. Geographically and technologically, the Israelites were in an inferior position. They were not familiar with the land of Canaan. They didn't have horses or chariots, which were essential weapons for combats on plain ground.

Under these circumstances, Israel made a sudden attack.

So Joshua and all his warriors came suddenly against them by the waters of Merom and fell upon them. (Joshua 11:7)

Joshua fought with a strategy that he was familiar with. He won battles in the past using sudden attacks. In a sense, he used his strength to his advantage.

The same is true with spiritual warfare.

We need to fight with a strategy that we are familiar with. When David fought Goliath, he laid down the heavy helmet and armor he was wearing. He entered into the fight with five smooth stones, a weapon that was very familiar to him.

When we go before God, we should utilize our spiritual strengths. God delights when we use our strengths for his glory.

At the end, Israel won the battle. But following their victory, God gives an odd command to the Israelites.

And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” (Joshua 11:6)

Out of everything that Israel obtained through the battle, the horses and chariots were the most precious gain. These things would have been important for future plain battles. But God commands the Israelites to cut the hamstrings of the horses and burn the chariots with fire.

Why would God give such a command?

It is so that Israel would continue to rely on God alone and nothing else.

And that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand. (1 Samuel 17:47)

If the Israelites had advanced weapons or strategies, they would not have relied on God. They would have fought their battles without any prayer. Because they were weak and had nothing rely upon, their only hope was to cling onto God. God reminded the Israelites that He is their ultimate weapon.

We need to be careful not to rely on things other than God. When we think our problems can be solved in ways apart from God, pride begins to cripple inside of us. In a battle, the most basic way to fight is going colliding with strength. Deceiving the enemy is a slightly more advanced. The most advanced fight technique is making the opponent stumble in pride. This is why God gave Paul a thorn in the flesh. Paul was able to stay away from pride and cling onto God because of his physical pain.

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. (2 Corinthians 12:7)

The fact that we have weaknesses does not mean we mean are in a disadvantage. It is a blessing to have weaknesses, because it allows us to depend on God. Our weaknesses act as a safe guard against pride.

Lastly, we must remember to be diligent with our faith.

So Joshua and all his warriors came suddenly against them by the waters of Merom and fell upon them. And the Lord gave them into the hand of Israel, who struck them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and eastward as far as the Valley of Mizpeh. And they struck them until he left none remaining. (Joshua 11:7-8)

Through a sudden attack, Joshua was able to defeat Canaanites who were much powerful than him. Joshua was not complacent about his situation. He was victorious because he diligently fought over the land of Canaan.

Think about this. In order to execute a sudden attack at night, you need to stay awake and alert. In order to execute an organized attack in the dark without getting caught, the soldiers needed to keep their formation while being silent. This means, the army needed to be well trained prior to the battle.

We can apply this principle to our church life. If our church body wants to be victorious spiritually, we cannot get comfortable with our present state. We need to train hard, which means, we need to give up worldly pleasure and fun.

If we participate in God's ministry with this mindset, others will naturally notice our passion for Lord. Just like a passionate conductor or musician can induce a crowd to move, diligent believers can influence people's bodies and hearts with their passion for God.

When we are diligent with the work of God's ministry, we are no longer influenced by our circumstances. Even a dead body adjusts to the temperature of the room. If gets cold in a cold room... warm in a hot room... However, a living body is different. It overcomes its surroundings rather than adjusting to it. When it is cold, we put on more layers to overcome the cold. When it is hot, we take off extra layers to adjust to overcome the heat.

Although we live in the world, we must to be influenced by the world. Although a ship sails above the sea, the ship sinks moment water enters in. In the same way, although we live in the world, we cannot allow the world to consume us.

As members of the Shining Star Community Church, I pray that you will always walk in faith, fighting the good fight, not being influenced by the world, remembering that God's favor is your ultimate weapon in life.

Sharing-----

1. God commanded Israel to cut the hamstrings of the horses and burn the chariots so that they would continue to rely on Him alone. What is something you need to give up in your life in order to rely more on God?
2. Passionate believers influence others around them. Have you ever been challenged by a passionate believer? Or have you ever influence someone else with your passion for God?
3. What part of this message spoke to you the most? Share with one another.