

[exhaustive]

:: 2 kings 3 ::

Last week we studied the Battles in the Valley of Rephaim where we found that the key to victory was **boldness**.

Today we'll see the Battle in the Wilderness of Edom and learn that a key to spiritual victory is to be **exhaustive**.

Our passage is 2 Kings chapter 3. There's tons of stuff in here, but we're going to have to cut a lot of it out to focus on the battle. I strongly suggest that you read this chapter later today and see everything that's here, but let's start in at verse 1:

2 Kings 3.1 - Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned 12 years.

After Kings David and Solomon the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. During this period of the divided kingdoms, Israel had **no** righteous kings while Judah had an occasional righteous king. Ahab was one of the worst kings of Israel and while his son wasn't quite as wicked as his father was, he was pagan and evil all the same.

That said, we find that things get rough for him early on in his rule.

2 Kings 3.4-6 - Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheepbreeder, and he regularly paid the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred thousand rams. But it happened when Ahab died, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. So king Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel.

This rebellion was going to threaten the Israelites' security and prosperity and, as always, the enemies of God needed to be squelched before the rebellion overtook His people.

Now, remember, we're studying the battle. It's not that we want to be like the northern kingdom or have the kind of relationship with God that Jehoram did, but they were still God's people and they are still an example of how we can react when situations arise. We're not going to get into the whole aspect of if Jehoshaphat *should've* helped them or not, we're reporting on what *did* happen: how God led, what the people did and what the result was.

We see this phrase that the king 'mustered all Israel.' He gathered them in whole. Every able bodied soldier was numbered and brought together to fight against this enemy.

And here we see the first sign that a key to our victory is that we be exhaustive. You might use the word 'thorough' instead, but by the end of this battle we'll see that really 'exhaustive' is a better description of our battle strategy.

The king mustered *ALL* of Israel. Are we mustering up everything within us to serve God? Are we keeping track of our time and our efforts and our means that we might mobilize at any moment to

serve God or overcome temptation or worship Christ? Or have we let much of our fighting force out on furlough? Are we only deploying small portions of ourselves into this walk with the Lord?

Have we allowed ourselves to become idle or allowed our finances to get away from us? Have we lessened our defenses against lust or anger or pride? Have we given less time to spiritual training? Or are we a people who, at a moment's notice, could muster the *whole* of our lives to do that which God asks us to do?

It's an important question. Israel was ready to be mustered.

King Jehoram, as you can see from the map on the screen, was going to be heading south to engage with the Moabites.

On the way, he stops for some help:

2 Kings 3.7-8 - Then he went and sent to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, saying, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" And he said, "I will go up; I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." Then he said, "Which way shall we go up?" And he answered, "By the Wilderness of Edom."

Again, maybe Jehoshaphat shouldn't have helped Jehoram, maybe he should've, that's not the point this morning.

From a warfare point of view, this was a logical choice for the king of Judah. Again, refer to the map. We believe that these kings reigned around 850bc, so the best route was going to be on the west side of the Dead Sea and to engage the Moabites without having to go through the Ammonite territory.

The king of Israel sends down to the king of Judah to ask for his help. The king of Judah can look at a map just like we are and can figure out that if the Moabites are going to rebel against *Israel*, it's only a matter of time before their fortifications and strength pushes into the southern kingdom of Judah as well. So the 2 kings join forces to fight their common enemy.

Not only that, but we also read this down in verse 9:

2 Kings 3.9a - So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom, and they marched on that roundabout route seven days.

The Moabites sent a very large tribute regularly: 100,000 lambs and the wool from 100,000 rams. That tells us something about their size and strength. The king of Israel had counted the cost of this campaign and had enlisted the help of 2 other kings with their armies.

Are we exhausting our relationships for help and support? This doesn't mean we all have to become touchy-feely, but we do need the support and the sharpening of other mature men around us. We're not to be free agents out there just living independently of all other believers. Instead we're to be connected together as one body, communicating with and being accountable to one another.

The question here is, are we exhausting the resources that we have in our relationship with our fellow Christian men? Are we asking them for prayer? Are we asking them for accountability or

discipleship? Not so that we can manipulate or extort from them, but instead that our body here would be healthy and unified and fortified. So that we can become stronger and more prepared.

Other side of that coin, of course, is: Are we helping our fellow men? Are we lending support when they need it or ask for it? Are we praying for them and ministering to them? Are we serving the guys around us or are we acting like, 'that's not **GUY** stuff'?

Some of the struggles we face are too big for us to overcome on our own. We need to be unified and willing to ask for help when necessary and ready to give help when someone needs it.

So Jehoram and the boys head down to engage with Moab by way of the Wilderness of Edom. That stretch of land is a desert and, as you can imagine, caused some problems for the soldiers:

2 Kings 3.9b - They marched on that roundabout route seven days; and there was no water for the army, nor for the animals that followed them.

Real quick here, when I first read this I thought, "Well, ok, why are you bringing all kinds of animals into battle?" In a minute we see that they had cattle and sheep and things. And, for me, this was one of those reminders that I come to the Scriptures with certain assumptions and leanings and knowledge that has to be adjusted.

We think of warfare very differently today. Especially someone like me who has never been in the military or lived through a war on my own soil. Because, I'm thinking, "Hey, it's 35 miles from Samaria to Jerusalem, maybe 50 miles down to Moab...send a couple of jets and take care of those guys."

But things were a lot different then. They needed animals to feed the troops. It took a long time to move these armies on foot. They also needed animals, we'll see, for the sacrifices. For me it was just a little wake-up call that I bring my own cultural thoughts to the Bible, and I need to be careful when I do that.

So they get down there and they're out of water. Unfortunately for them, the closest water is the Dead Sea, and you couldn't exactly drink that. The Moabites had springs and cities and good land, so they were well supplied for a confrontation. The coalition of Jewish forces were in bad shape. They had run out of water before even getting to the fight. This is bad. You can't win wars without water.

2 Kings 3.10 - And the king of Israel said, "Alas! For the Lord has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab."

Don't act this way. Don't blame God for decisions that you made. So far they haven't taken the time to talk to the Lord about any of this, but they're real quick to blame Him for any trouble they get into. We need to honor the Lord more than that.

2 Kings 3.11 - But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?"

This is how we need to be. Jehoshaphat *expected* that God would speak to His people. He *expected* that God had a plan. So he started looking at his options to hear from God.

Are we exhausting the resources we have to hear from God? Where are we at in our personal devotions? God has promised to speak there. Where are we at in our personal prayer lives? God has

promised to speak there. What about our Church attendance? God has promised to speak in a special way when we gather together.

Look, God has promised to speak, so we should expect to hear from Him. And when we're looking for daily wisdom or when we're waiting for direction on a decision, then we should exhaust our resources that He has provided that we might find His will. In the Word. In prayer. At church. God has gone on record and said, "here's the ways I speak to you," so we need to be exhaustive in our search for His direction.

So the kings head over to talk to Elisha, God's prophet (who, by the way, is living in Jericho at the time). They go all the way back up and Elisha tells them this in verse 16:

2 Kings 3.16-18 - And he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Make this valley full of ditches.'" For thus says the Lord, "You shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you, your cattle and your animals may drink. And this is a simple matter in the sight of the Lord; He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand."

Now, again we see that God's methods and leading weren't necessarily rational from a human perspective. It was the vehicle of their victory, but it wasn't a regular battle strategy.

Not only that, but remember: these soldiers were exhausted. They were out of water. They were out of strength. They were out of rest. And God tells them to dig ditches so that He could fill them with water.

And here we see that often times the secret to our victory over sin or victory in our Christian walk is to fully exhaust every part of ourselves in obedience to the word of God. Right at the point where it seems like we can't continue God says, "Now dig a ditch so I can fill it."

We all know that water is a symbol for the power of God. We know that water is cleansing and nourishing. It often represents the Holy Spirit in the Bible. And here God says, "If you want victory, in your exhaustion dig a ditch. Fill the valley with ditches. Fill the landscape with areas that I can pour My water into."

And the question for us is are we exhausting ourselves with ditch-digging? Are we continually making space for God in our hearts and in our lifestyles? Are we digging places and dedicating them to the Lord? Are we creating wells in our lives, places that God can fill with His power and His cleansing and His life, His Spirit, or are we just sitting in the desert, tuckered out hoping things work themselves out?

John 7:37-38 - On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

This life with the Lord is about choice. What we will we choose to do? We want the water, no doubt about that. We want the guidance. We want God's will, but will we dig the ditches? Will we exhaust ourselves to find the Lord's plan or will we quit? We choose. God provides, but we choose.

2 Kings 3.20-27 - Now it happened in the morning, when the grain offering was offered, that suddenly water came by way of Edom, and the land was filled with water. And when all the

Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, all who were able to bear arms and older were gathered; and they stood at the border. Then they rose up early in the morning, and the sun was shining on the water; and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood. And they said, "This is blood; the kings have surely struck swords and have killed one another; now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!"

So when they came to the camp of Israel, Israel rose up and attacked the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they entered their land, killing the Moabites. Then they destroyed the cities, and each man threw a stone on every good piece of land and filled it; and they stopped up all the springs of water and cut down all the good trees. But they left the stones of Kir Haraseth intact. However the slingers surrounded and attacked it. And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not. Then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall; and there was great indignation against Israel. So they departed from him and returned to their own land.

The armies of Israel exhaustively attacked their enemies and the country of Moab. They fulfilled the direction from God and went inch by inch over this battlefield doing what they were commanded. With God's battle plan they completely overcame their enemies, even when they rallied for one more push against them with those 700 men, the armies had exhaustively prepared their defenses and were ultimately victorious.

We must be exhaustive if we desire to be men of valor before our God. What are we willing to do to prepare ourselves for this life? What are we willing to do to hear from God? What are we willing to do to overcome our trials?

We must exhaustively prepare ourselves, counting the cost of our decisions and our activities.

We must exhaust the resources of love and ministry and discipleship and accountability that we find within the Church with our fellow believers.

We must exhaustively listen for God in our Bible study and in our prayer lives and in our Church services.

We must exhaustively fortify our defenses in areas where we are weak or tempted for when they are fiercely attacked.

We must exhaustively overcome our flesh and the influences of the world around us.

Finally, we must exhaustively trust that if we fill our lives with space for God, if we fill our lifestyle with areas of time and resources and activities that are open to God then He will fill them with His Spirit, His living water, He will fill us and those ditches that we've dug with Himself, which will cleanse us, refresh us, empower us and protect us as we live our lives as faithful soldiers to Him.