

[unified]

:: 1 chronicles 19.6-15 ::

Battle ready. We face enemies and ambushes out there as men of God and we want to be ready for them, so that we can remain strong, remain Godly, remain usable by Jesus Christ in these last days.

This morning we'll be looking at 1 Chronicles chapter 19 and we'll find that if we desire victory in our spiritual lives we must be men who are **unified**.

Let me set the stage for our passage.

During the time of David, the Ammonites had a king named Nahash who was a friend to David and treated him kindly.

When Nahash died, David sent an envoy from Israel to comfort and console Nahash's son, and to offer David's condolences.

Foolishly, the new king of Ammon took these servants, mistreated them, disfigured their beards, cut up their garments and sent them away in shame.

Not a great thing to do to messengers of King David.

So, with that set up, we find in verse 6:

1 Chronicles 19.6-7 - When the Ammonites saw that they had become a stench to David, Hanun and the Ammonites sent 1,000 talents of silver to hire chariots and horsemen from Mesopotamia, from Aram-Maacah, and from Zobah. They hired 32,000 chariots and the king of Maacah with his army, who came and encamped before Medeba. And the Ammonites were mustered from their cities and came to battle.

Lots to see here.

First, I'd like us to pause and consider our reaction to sin and evil, not only in the world around us, but in our own lives as well.

The passage says that the Ammonites had become a 'stench' to David. The word there can be translated as 'odious,' 'abhorred,' or 'loathsome.'

David had previously been friendly with these people, but now, back on track with the Lord, he sees what kind of intentions they have. They brutalized and shamed his servants and their true colors have shown through.

What is our reaction to sin? To godlessness? To immorality? To evil? Pretty simple assessment. Do we have a spiritual reaction? Do we have any reaction at all when we find *ourselves* sinning or witness corruption and immorality around us?

Desensitization is a very dangerous thing in the life of a Christian. I think if we're honest we admit that our particular culture is constantly desensitizing us to sex and to violence and to hatred and to greed and to lust and to selfishness. Certainly to selfishness. Spiritually speaking, friendship with Ammonites is not an option for us. Ammonite women drew Solomon away from God. They would at times make peace with the nation of Israel, while also fighting against them in battle. The Ammonites tried to stop Nehemiah from rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. They weren't friends of God, even if God's people cozied up to them from time to time.

I think sometimes we get desensitized to the Ammonites around us and we start thinking that they're not too bad. They're even sorta FRIENDS to us. But through and through, that which is not *cleansed* by Christ and separated to Him cannot benefit us spiritually.

Sin should be loathsome and abhorred by us. It should stink when we smell it. A proper reaction to sin will repel us from it, not draw us toward it.

Second here, we see that the Ammonites form a coalition with the Syrians to attack Israel.

They sent 1,000 talents of silver. Most scholars put that at between 10 and 20 million dollars today. This was quite a sum to pay and quite an army of mercenaries raised against David.

1 Chronicles 19:8-9 - When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty men. And the Ammonites came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the city, and the kings who had come were by themselves in the open country.

The battle met the Israelites on two fronts: the city and the country. It was a unified attack by a coalition of enemies who were well equipped, technologically advanced and determined to destroy.

Now, remember how this all started: This was all happening because David sent a 'our thoughts are with you' card to the Ammonite king.

And we, as generally blessed and protected people, sometimes have these sorts of sudden ambushes laid against us and it surprises us! We're going about our lives and suddenly something like this happens and we're thinking, "What is *that* about?!? Why am I suddenly under this trial or attacked by this temptation? Where did this obstacle come from?"

David had gotten comfortable with these enemies and expected friendship from them. He expected kindness. He expected cooperation and relationship from them. And the same can be true for us.

We sometimes convince ourselves that *this* temptation isn't really dangerous. This immorality isn't *really* immoral. We decide the enemy is really a friend. And one day you turn around and they're crouched at your door with some big consequences, with strong pressures and powerful blows against you.

The activities and attitudes that we are befriending in our lives have a great influence on us. And if we're spending time befriending the world, indulging temptations, cozying up to less-than-Godliness, then one day we're going to wake up to an attack that we aren't expecting. And the enemies we face, the world, the flesh and the Devil are *unified* in their desire to bring us down into sin, into failure, into uselessness before God. We need to accept this principle as true and plan accordingly.

So what is the response to an attack like this? We see in verse 10:

1 Chronicles 19:10-11 - When Joab saw that the battle was set against him both in front and in the rear, he chose some of the best men of Israel and arrayed them against the Syrians. The rest of his men he put in the charge of Abishai his brother, and they were arrayed against the Ammonites.

Gotta love Joab. Had his issues, but the man knew how to get things done. He was skilled. He was bold. He was always thinking. He understood the importance of overcoming enemies and he understood that he was protecting more than just himself when he went out on behalf of his king and the kingdom.

Joab assesses the situation and makes a battle plan to meet the challenge. He saw that they were being attacked on all fronts, so he was going to *defend* on all fronts.

And here we can find application for ourselves, because if we're not careful we start thinking that we can't really multi-task spiritually speaking. We start to think that we can only focus on one issue or one hurt or one problem. We pull back from serving or we pull back from prayer and devotion, or we draw away from our Christian friends and we focus all our attention on one situation, one struggle, one battle front.

But the truth is that when we walk in closeness to God, when we're walking in His power and in His will, then numbers and chariots and battle fronts don't make a difference at all. They are difficult. They are dangerous. But when we're in the service of the King we have all that we need to overcome any enemy that we encounter. The answer is not to draw back, but to reinforce and to recommit and to dig our heels in with the faith and the courage that we see demonstrated here.

Joab came, he saw and he dealt accordingly. We don't see him cowering or crying or retreating. He looks around, "yep, things are pretty bad...so here's what we're going to do."

It's inspiring really, to know that we can have this same bold understanding of God's plan for us. We can apply this attitude of Joab where, in one sense, this is just 'a day in the life.' Maybe it's the Ammonites, maybe it's the Philistines, maybe it's the Syrians, I don't care, because I'm a soldier of the King and I'm going to stand strong against these enemies, whether they're in front or behind, in the valleys or in the hills, I am unified with Christ, my life is unified in faith, my defenses are unified in vision and no challenge can separate me from my purpose and my calling and my Savior.

We get more of Joab's plan in verse 12:

1 Chronicles 19:12-15 - And he said, If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will help you. Be strong, and let us use our strength for our people and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do what seems good to him. So Joab and the people who were with him drew near before the Syrians for battle, and they fled before him. And when the Ammonites saw that the Syrians fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, Joab's brother, and entered the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.

The unique key to victory in this battle was that the forces of Israel were **unified**. "If the Syrians are too strong for me, you help me, but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will help you."

This battle strategy is interesting because it requires a few things.

First, it requires the understanding that though the enemies were different, the response was the same. They were all in it together we might say. One group was facing one nation with their tactics, the other group was facing a different nation with different tactics, different equipment, different abilities. But together, the forces of Israel understood that it was all the same battle, all the same effort for the kingdom and all the same empowering from the Lord.

We need to retain a unity within our hearts with the entire Body of Christ. That doesn't mean that we have to agree with everything that every other Christian does or says, but we do need to remember that we are *together* the family of God at large on the earth. We need to have a love for fellow believers, even if we must disagree with them from time to time on certain non-essential issues.

I know I personally am very quick to forget the words of Jesus in Luke chapter 9:

Luke 9.49-50 - Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us." But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side."

We're all on the same side. We need to have that unity within our hearts so that we're not devouring each other. So that we're focused on the battle ahead, focused on gaining ground, not fighting within our own camp.

Second interesting aspect of this battle strategy: it required that the 2 groups stay relatively close together.

As fellow-protectors they would need to be in proximity in order to assist and shield their fellow soldiers.

As men of God, it is essential that we be plugged in to each other's lives. This happens most efficiently and effectively in the gathering of the Church, where together we can be taught and equipped, where we're praying with each other and hearing from each other, where we receive provisions from the Lord and gifting from Him.

We need to stay in proximity with each other, not only for our own sake, but for our brother's sake as well. Who knows when you will need someone to step in and save? Who knows when one of us will need assistance, or encouragement or provision or exhortation? We have to stay connected and unified so that we are standing together against our spiritual foes.

Our culture understands this. Right? 'United We Stand.' 'Band Of Brothers.' 'Leave No Man Behind.' Those principles come from the understanding that when we're on the battlefield, we must be unified because the outcome of that battlefield effort is more important than all the other things that may annoy us or irritate us. Battlefield unity supersedes individualism or selfishness because we understand that our goal is common and our strength is found together, not separate.

Finally, not only does this strategy show us that the Body is to be unified, not only does it remind us that our strength increases when we're in close proximity to each other, but it gives us a practical reminder that we must watch each other's back.

These soldiers would have to have 1 eye on their own fight and one eye on their brothers. They'd have to be watching and listening for calls for help, watch for weaknesses or broken ranks.

As Godly men, we need to keep our eyes open. We need to see the warning signs in our fellow-Believer's lives. We need to listen and be ready when they call for help. We need to be bold to step in when another Christian has fallen and help that person, restore them, shield them.

What I love about this battle account is that, despite the fact that the Ammonites and Syrians came to fight, despite their technology, despite their strength and their zeal to destroy, despite all of this, they immediately fled before Joab and the men of Israel. They melted away. Because God was with His people in their calling, He was with them in their preparation, He was with them in their unity.

Their faith and their common-mindedness demonstrate what our lives with Christ can be like: You see this opposition and you say, Ok, it's time to fight. It's time to face this huge enemy. Let's prepare ourselves. Let's unify and assist each other. Let's be connected together in heart and vision. And let's show up with courage because we already know that God is with us.

That kind of trust and boldness brings victory in our personal lives. And when men of God are unified like these soldiers were, then we will see great victory for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.