

Trusting God in the Hills and the Valleys

When the Enemy Demands Too Much

King Ahab and Israel were facing a massive threat—Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, along with thirty-two allied kings, had besieged Samaria. At first, Ben-Hadad demanded Israel's wealth, wives, and children. Shockingly, Ahab agreed without resistance. But when the enemy pushed further, demanding a full search and seizure of anything valuable, Ahab realized that giving in only invites greater oppression.

How often do we, like Ahab, surrender too easily to the enemy? Maybe it starts with small compromises—tolerating a sinful habit, neglecting prayer, or justifying disobedience. But the enemy never stops there. Sin always takes more than we intended to give. If we don't stand firm early on, we'll soon find ourselves losing ground entirely.

The elders of Israel advised Ahab to resist. At this point, even though Ahab was a wicked king, God sent a prophet to encourage him, promising victory. This reminds us that God, in His mercy, still speaks to us, even when we've been unfaithful. If you've drifted from God, don't think He has stopped speaking—He's still calling you back and offering help in your battles.

Victory Belongs to the Lord

With only a small army of 7,000 men, Israel went up against Ben-Hadad's vast forces. Meanwhile, Ben-Hadad and his commanders were getting drunk in their pavilions, overconfident in their victory. But God had a plan.

The battle began, and despite their small numbers, Israel completely routed the Syrians. Ben-Hadad barely escaped on horseback, and Israel's army struck a decisive blow.

What can we learn? God doesn't need numbers to bring victory. You may feel outnumbered—by struggles, doubts, or enemies—but when God fights for you, the odds don't matter.

But the battle wasn't over yet. The prophet warned Ahab: *"Strengthen yourself, for the king of Syria will come up against you again next year"* (1 Kings 20:22).

This is a lesson for us: Spiritual victories are often followed by renewed attacks. The enemy doesn't give up easily. Just because you've won one battle doesn't mean the war is over. Stay vigilant, strengthen yourself in the Lord, and be prepared for the next fight.

God is the God of the Valleys Too

When the Syrians regrouped, their strategy was based on a flawed theology. They believed that Israel's God was a "god of the hills" but not a god of the valleys. They thought that if they fought Israel in the plains, they would have the advantage.

This is where God steps in to make a point:

"Because the Syrians have said, 'The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,' therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:28).

How often do we limit God like the Syrians did? It's easy to believe in God's power when we're on the mountaintop—when things are going well, when we feel strong, when life is smooth. But what about when we're in the valley—when we're struggling, doubting, or feeling defeated? God is just as powerful in the valleys as He is on the mountaintops.

Whatever valley you're walking through—whether it's illness, financial hardship, depression, or uncertainty—God is still God. He is just as present in your struggles as He is in your victories.

Just as He promised, God gave Israel another miraculous victory. The small army of Israel faced an overwhelming Syrian force, but God delivered them completely, proving that He is the God of every season, every struggle, and every place.

The Cost of Disobedience

After the battle, Ben-Hadad begged for mercy, offering to restore cities and make a treaty. Instead of following through with God's command to destroy this wicked enemy, Ahab let him go.

A prophet disguised himself and told a parable to expose Ahab's mistake. When Ahab condemned the man in the story for allowing a prisoner to escape, the prophet removed his disguise and declared:

"Because you have let go out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people." (1 Kings 20:42)

Ahab had an opportunity to obey God fully, but he chose compromise instead.

This teaches us a crucial lesson: Partial obedience is still disobedience. When God calls us to get rid of sin, to stand for truth, or to follow His direction, we can't afford to only go halfway.

Personal Applications from 1 Kings 20:

1. Don't surrender to the enemy's demands.
 - a. Ahab almost gave everything away without a fight. Where in your life are you making compromises? Where do you need to stand firm instead of giving in?
2. God fights for us, no matter the odds.
 - a. Israel was outnumbered, but God gave them victory. You may feel weak or overwhelmed, but victory comes from God, not from your strength.
3. Spiritual battles are ongoing—stay prepared.
 - a. After one victory, another battle followed. Don't let your guard down; keep growing in faith, prayer, and obedience.
4. God is with you in the valleys, not just on the mountaintops.
 - a. Don't limit God to only the good times. He is still God when you're struggling, hurting, or doubting. Trust Him in every situation.
5. Obedience must be complete.
 - a. Ahab's failure came from partial obedience—he spared what God had told him to destroy. Are there areas in your life where you're only obeying halfway?

This chapter reminds us that God is greater than our circumstances. He is the God of the hills and the valleys, the God of the battles and the victories, and the God who fights for us when we trust Him completely.

Where is God calling you to trust Him today?