

**DESTROY  
YOUR  
ENEMY**

## DESTROY YOUR ENEMY

November 23, 2014

**Sermon in a sentence:** When God gives us victory, we must *destroy* our spiritual enemies.

**Congregational reading:** Ephesians 4:17-27

**Scriptures (NKJV):** 1 Kings 20; John 10:10; Isaiah 54:17; Romans 4:6,11

Ephesians 4:17-27 NKJV This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup> having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; <sup>19</sup> who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. <sup>20</sup> But you have not so learned Christ, <sup>21</sup> if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: <sup>22</sup> that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, <sup>23</sup> and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup> and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. <sup>25</sup> Therefore, putting away lying, *“Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,”* for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup> *“Be angry, and do not sin”:* *do not let the sun go down on your wrath,* <sup>27</sup> nor give place to the devil.

**Our story today is a cautionary tale, teaching us how to handle ourselves in the battle for our souls against the wicked one, Lucifer.**

Our main character is King Ahab, the 7<sup>th</sup> king of Israel, after it had split away from Judah. Up until this point in their history, there has been a steady decline in the wickedness and idolatry of these kings, and Ahab is described as being worse than all who preceded him (1 Kings 16:30,33).<sup>1</sup>

This is like a number of other stories in scripture that seem utterly fantastical. It is a story of God's greatness and care for His people, followed by incredible human stupidity in response to His divine intervention.

1Kings 20:1 Now Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings *were* with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it. <sup>2</sup> Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, "Thus says Ben-hadad: <sup>3</sup> "Your silver and your gold *are* mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.'" <sup>4</sup> And the king of Israel answered and said, "My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have *are* yours."

This should be understood as a fairly standard approach of one king to another king he wanted to conquer: "I own you, I am tougher than you, and everything you have belongs to me".

In a subservient yet diplomatic sense, Ahab said, in effect: "Yes, I acknowledge that you are much bigger and stronger than I am, so let's figure out a way to cut a deal that works for both of us". (Ahab's response is not *quite* as bad as it seems at first glance!)

1Kings 20:5 Then the messengers came back and said, "Thus

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<sup>1</sup> Previous kings: Jeroboam, Nadeb, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri

speaks Ben-hadad, saying, “Indeed I have sent to you, saying, ‘You shall deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children’; <sup>6</sup> but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants. And it shall be, *that* whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they will put *it* in their hands and take *it*.”

Now Ben-hadad moves from the generic, ‘I’m going to get you’ approach, to a very specific, time sensitive threat: “I am sending my men into Samaria *tomorrow*, and they will strip you of anything and everything that is precious to you. I am not just waiting for you to surrender it all to me. I am coming to get it myself. Tomorrow.” The situation has escalated rapidly.

1Kings 20:7 So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, “Notice, please, and see how this *man* seeks trouble, for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not deny him.” <sup>8</sup> And all the elders and all the people said to him, “Do not listen or consent.” <sup>9</sup> Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, “Tell my lord the king, ‘All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.’” And the messengers departed and brought back word to him. <sup>10</sup> Then Ben-hadad sent to him and said, “The gods do so to me, and more also, if enough dust is left of Samaria for a handful for each of the people who follow me.” <sup>11</sup> So the king of Israel answered and said, “Tell *him*, ‘Let not the one who puts on *his armor* boast like the one who takes *it off*.’” <sup>12</sup> And it happened when *Ben-hadad* heard this message, as he and the kings *were* drinking at the command post, that he said to his servants, “Get ready.” And they got ready to attack the city.

Now Ahab and his advisors come together and say: “Well, it looks like this man is really pushing for a

**fight. We are horribly outnumbered, but at least, let us respond to him like men and not just roll over and be trampled.”**

**1Kings 20:13 Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I *am* the LORD.’ ”**

**Now here is something we really need to hear and remember. God sees and knows all things. And yes, we are His dear children. He is only too willing to fight for us so we will know that He is our God!**

**From what we have already learned about Ahab, he was clearly a very poor example of what an Israelite should be. He and his wicked wife Jezebel had done everything in their power to provoke God to anger by leading His people into idolatry and the worship of false gods. Yet, in this time of crisis, God sends His word to let Ahab know: “I am here to fight for you and give you victory over your enemy.”**

**1Kings 20:14 So Ahab said, “By whom**

***[shall deliverance come?]*”**

**And he said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘By the young leaders of the provinces.’ ” Then he said, “Who will set the battle in order?”**

**In other words: “Who is going to start the fight?”**

**And he answered, “You.”**

**Let us not miss the fact that the story has taken a dramatic turn. We began with a weak king whose**

best hope was to try to make a deal with an aggressor who was after everything of value in Israel. As Jesus said about the enemy's design against His own sheep: **"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy"** (John 10:10a).

We must never lose sight of the devil's plan against the people of God. He only has one plan - our death and destruction.

Jesus however, has another plan. A much better plan! The last part of the verse tells us what it is: **"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly"** (John 10:10b, emphasis added).

1Kings 20:15 Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces, and there were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, all the children of Israel—seven thousand. 16 So they went out at noon.

This was not a nighttime or early morning attack under cover of darkness. They went out at noon, when the enemy could clearly see what they were doing. There were 232 young leaders that led the fight - absolutely pathetic in the eyes of the enemy against their massive forces. (Anyone getting a sense of *déjà vu*, remembering another battle similar to this?)

Meanwhile Ben-hadad and the thirty-two kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post.

**"What do we have to fear from the people of God?"**

<sup>17</sup> The young leaders of the provinces went out first. And Ben-hadad sent out *a patrol*, and they told him, saying, "Men are

coming out of Samaria!" <sup>18</sup> So he said, "If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive." <sup>19</sup> Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them. <sup>20</sup> And each one killed his man; so the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the cavalry. <sup>21</sup> Then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter.

**Please remember this, child of God. When God is on our side, we cannot lose! He gives us the power to confront the enemy in broad daylight, without cover, without fear. We are very familiar with Is. 54:17:**

**No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue *which* rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* from Me," Says the LORD.**

**You may be looking at your life right now and concluding that you have no hope because of the sins you have committed. But right here, right now, in the midst of your despair, God will show up and establish His position as your God - the One who imputes His own righteousness to you! You just have to receive it (Rom. 4:6,11).**

**1Kings 20:22 And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, "Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you."**

**The Lord prepares us and gives us the opportunity to strengthen ourselves for the life situations we all**

must face. He does this through His Word, which is available, easily accessible and understandable. And if we perchance we do have trouble figuring it out, He provides friends, mentors, small group leaders, teachers, pastors, evangelists, prophets and whomever else we may need to help us. We need our daily bread, our daily Bible workout, our daily strength and nourishment from His Word! His Word will prepare us for the next battle ahead.

1Kings 20:23 Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, "Their gods *are* gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they. <sup>24</sup> So do this thing: Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put captains in their places; <sup>25</sup> and you shall muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain; surely we will be stronger than they." And he listened to their voice and did so. <sup>26</sup> So it was, in the spring of the year, that Ben-hadad mustered the Syrians and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. <sup>27</sup> And the children of Israel were mustered and given provisions, and they went against them. Now the children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, while the Syrians filled the countryside.

(By now we should be familiar with this scenario.)

1Kings 20:28 Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, "Thus says the LORD: "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.' "

The Lord gave the same speech all over again. When He fights for us and delivers us, it to let us, (and everyone around us), know that He is God.

**29** And they encamped opposite each other for seven days. So it was that on the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers *of* the Syrians in one day. **30** But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men *who were* left. And Ben-hadad fled and went into the city, into an inner chamber.

**Ben-hadad's defeat was utter and complete! God had fought for his people and they had experienced an astounding victory.**

**1Kings 20:31** Then his servants said to him, "Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel *are* merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life." **32** So they wore sackcloth around their waists and *put* ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let me live.'" And he said, "*Is* he still alive? He *is* my brother."

**Surely we read that wrong! Surely the translators got mixed up, messed up, and added the ending from a completely different story! So, let's read that last verse again and get it right this time.**

**32** So they wore sackcloth around their waists and *put* ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let me live.'" And he said, "*Is* he still alive? He *is* my brother."

**Since it is still saying the same thing, we have got to realize that our story has just taken an incredible and dramatic turn for the worse!**

**1Kings 20:33** Now the men were watching closely to see whether *any sign of mercy would come* from him; and they quickly grasped *at this word* and said, "Your brother Ben-

hadad.” So he said, “Go, bring him.” Then Ben-hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot.

Now Ben-hadad has been given a place of honour, riding with the king in the king’s own chariot. This has gone from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Isn’t this the same man that said: “Your wives and your children are mine, and I am going to send my men to take away everything that you deem valuable? Isn’t this the man who was so arrogant that he was drinking himself drunk at lunchtime in total disrespect to the army of God’s people? After losing the first battle, isn’t this the man that strengthened himself and defied God a second time?

And now Ahab is calling him “Brother Ben-hadad”?

Sometimes a point is so clear, it seems foolish to actually state it, but please allow me to be foolish and make the statement: **THE DEVIL IS NOT YOUR BROTHER!!** He hates you, he hates your God, he hates your family, he hates your church. He hates your godly worship, he hates your prayer life, he hates your devotion, he hates your consecration, he hates your desire for God.

He hates love, he hates peace, he hates righteousness, he hates holiness, and he hates every fruit of the Spirit you bear. He hates every gift of the Spirit God has given you for the benefit of the body of Christ. (And he hates this message I am preaching to you right now)!

Satan’s only desire is to destroy you and take you to hell – the lake of fire – his eternal dwelling place. He even hates your stupidity if you actually call him

**your brother! The devil hates absolutely everything about you, me, God, and God’s creation. If he actually had the power, he would kill us all immediately and destroy our eternal souls.**

**However, he does NOT have the power to just step into our lives and destroy us, so here’s the deal he wants to make:**

**1Kings 20:34 So *Ben-hadad* said to him, “The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.” Then *Ahab said*, “I will send you away with this treaty.” So he made a treaty with him and sent him away.**

**Ahab made a “deal with the devil”!**

**Maybe you are saying: “Ahab should be commended for showing mercy. Isn’t it God’s way to show grace and mercy to those we have the ability and authority to judge and punish?” And you would be right if Ben-hadad had sincerely repented of his sins and turned to God. But he was nowhere close to a place of repentance. Ben-hadad was simply begging for his own life. When he sent his emissaries, they went with “ropes around their heads” (v. 32). As one commentator states, this phrase actually means they had ropes around their *necks*, signifying their current position before Ahab!<sup>2</sup> As king, Ahab was God’s judicial representative to mete out His judgment against Ben-hadad. But like Saul before him, he decided to go his own way, without even consulting the prophet who had been delivering God’s word to him.**

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<sup>2</sup> H. D. M. Spence, and Joseph S. Exell, eds. *The Pulpit Commentary*. Vol. 5, I & II Kings. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 489.

**Whenever we fight a battle and gain the victory over sin, we must crush and destroy it in our lives. If we allow it to live, it has a nasty way of coming right back to life, seemingly out of nowhere, to ensnare us in its destructive web.**

**1Kings 20:35** Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, "Strike me, please." And the man refused to strike him. <sup>36</sup> Then he said to him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you." And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him. <sup>37</sup> And he found another man, and said, "Strike me, please." So the man struck him, inflicting a wound. <sup>38</sup> Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. <sup>39</sup> Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' <sup>40</sup> While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." Then the king of Israel said to him, "So *shall* your judgment *be*; you yourself have decided *it*."

<sup>41</sup> And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. <sup>42</sup> Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let slip 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.' " <sup>43</sup> So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria.

**The conclusion of this story is very simple. We are in a spiritual battle for our eternal souls, which, without doubt, is a life or death struggle. God is on our side and He will give us victory over 'the world, the flesh and the devil'.**

**We must consolidate our victories and destroy our enemies! There is no way we can sanction “a little pride”, “a little lying”, “a little theft”, “a little pornography”, “a little back-biting”, “a little hatred”, “a little substance abuse”, “a little infidelity”, “a little cursing”, “a little idolatry”, “a little disobedience to the Word of God”!**

**All these things must be destroyed completely or they will rise up and destroy us. We have been delivered. Let us *stay* delivered and *destroy* all of our spiritual enemies!**

**You may be fighting a battle right now, doing it all on your own, and you already know it is impossible to win. God has sent His word to you today. You *will* be victorious, precisely because He will fight the battle for you.**

**Let us pray a prayer of thanksgiving for what the Lord has promised, and for what He is about to do for us. Then let us pray a prayer of commitment to Him that after receiving His deliverance, we will give the devil no further place in our lives. We will destroy our enemies!**