

Russell Kelfer

How to Walk in the Midst of the Conflict

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Series: Living Legends - Part 3

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

How to Walk in the Midst of the Conflict

Seminars are good. They teach you how to order your life with Christian principles. Sunday School classes are good. They teach you how the Scriptures deal with the real world. Discipleship is good. One on one, one by one, someone takes you by the hand and teaches you the basics of the faith. These things are all good.

But, beloved, at some point in time, all that you've learned in those seminars and classes, and all that you've learned while you were being discipled must be put to the test. At some point in time, the classroom takes a recess, and in some form or fashion, you must be thrust out into the real world where it all happens. And then, beloved, it either works or it doesn't. The guy who taught the seminar will be back in Saskatchewan by then. He'll be no help. The teacher who taught you will probably have gone on to other subjects; and, in all likelihood, the one who discipled you will have gone on to minister to yet others. And suddenly, you realize the sky is falling. Suddenly, you become aware that your world is in the process of crumbling. Suddenly, your life begins to feel the impact of living on planet earth where Satan has so much power and so much access to the Christian.

And it's at that time, and only at that time, you will know if all the seminars, and all the classes, and all the discipling has worked. Only then, when the furnace has been heated up to broil, can you tell if you're going to come out of the fire nice and tender and usable; or if you're going to be toasted to a crisp. Only then, as you walk in the midst of the conflict, will you know if this thing of being a disciple really works.

I suspect Jehoshaphat probably attended every "Convention on Spiritual Leadership" held in the Jerusalem area. I imagine he sat at the feet of the greatest teachers of his day. He may well have learned one-on-one from his dad, Asa, and from others,

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just what to do when the enemy begins to descend from the hills to surround and overpower you, and you are earmarked for death. I'm sure he'd heard it all.

But now it's time for Jehoshaphat to put away the syllabus. Now it's time for him to turn off his audio recorder, put down his books, lay aside his "Four Steps to Victory" pamphlet, and see if, indeed, our God is a help in time of trouble. To see, indeed, if *we need not fear though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea* (Psalm 46:2). Now it is time for Jehoshaphat to find out.

We've been walking with him these days as he passes through the somewhat turbulent pages of II Chronicles, chapter twenty. And what we've seen is a "Blueprint for Battle" laid out by the Holy Spirit, using none other than this Living Legend, Jehoshaphat as a pattern to follow when life's air-raid sirens begin to blow, and the word gets out that the enemy is just around the corner.

In the first few verses of this chapter, we learned "what to do when bad news comes." We saw surface from the life of this man, Jehoshaphat, a clear-cut picture of a godly response when the doorbell rings, and it's bad news; or the telephone rings, and it's bad news. At first, we saw him react. He was afraid. Then, we saw him *respond. He turned his attention immediately to seek the Lord.* He called the whole nation to fast and pray, and he gathered men, women, and children alike, in the court of the temple in Jerusalem to find out just what it was God had in mind. And then, you will remember, He fell on his face and worshiped. THEN HE BEGAN TO PRAY.

And, as we watched this Living Legend pursue his pilgrimage to victory, we listened to that prayer, and we learned a little about "how to pray when hope is gone." We heard him worship God for who He is. We heard him worship God for what He had done.

Then he quietly told God the problem. Oh, God already knew the problem. But Jehoshaphat had to tell God about it, so he and the people could praise Him when He did something about it. Then Jehoshaphat took God's promise and holding it up, he prayed this anthem of confidence:

"O, our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we are

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powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on Thee.”
(II Chronicles 20:12 NASB)

With that song of surrender ringing in our ears, we looked around as we concluded our last lesson, and we saw all of Judah standing before the Lord, with their infants, their wives, and their children. Now, listen carefully. Do you hear it? You can begin to hear the thunder of the enemy’s footsteps as they charge across the desert toward Jerusalem. Look! There they are in the distance. The dust is flying; the ground is shaking; the sky is filled with the sound of the enemy’s trumpets as they literally descend upon us.

You say, “Wait a minute. Didn’t we respond properly?” Yes. “Didn’t our leader pray perfectly?” Yes. “You mean we still have to go through the battle?” Yes. God’s not going to take us out of the battle, now that we’re ready for it. That’s why he got us ready!

Instead, He’s going to teach us how to walk in the midst of the battle. Incidentally, “How to Walk in the Midst of the Conflict” is the title for this lesson. Our outline takes this form:

I- The Principle (II Chronicles 20:15)

A- The Command

B- The Cause

C- The Cure

II- The Plan (verses 16-18)

III- The Process (verses 19-24)

We will take up reading where we left off. We probably should just read the Scripture and stop, but I’m not man enough to do that, but that would be the best thing to do because the Scripture says it all! So, listen and read with me as we take up in II Chronicles 20:13.

And all Judah was standing before the Lord, with their infants, their wives, and their children.

Then in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, the Levite of the sons of Asaph;

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and he said, “Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the Lord to you, ‘Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.

“Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the valley in front of the wilderness of Jeruel.

You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow, go out to face them, for the Lord is with you.”

And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshipping the Lord.

And the Levites, from the sons of the Kohathites and of the sons of the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

And they rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord your God, and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed.”

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the Lord and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, “Give thanks to the Lord, for His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

And when they began singing and praising, the Lord set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed.

For the sons of Ammon and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir destroying them completely, and when they had finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

When Judah came to the lookout of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and behold, they were corpses lying on the ground, and no one had escaped.

(II Chronicles 20:13-24 NASB)

I- THE PRINCIPLE

It's hard to read this passage and not weep for joy. No place in Scripture, except perhaps at the resurrection, does God paint a more vivid picture of the kind of victory that is ours when we set Him free to be Himself. Do you realize the enemy has no chance against God? None! Satan will shoot himself in the foot every time, when he is confronted with God, Himself. That's why he'll use every tactic possible to get us to go into battle in our own power and wisdom. What he wants to do is to trick us into thinking that it's our battle. So, in this passage, God outlines a principle for spiritual warfare that is so essential that *there is no hope of victory without it*. It is a three-fold principle, and in this passage, it takes the form of a command, a cause, and a cure.

A- The Command

It begins with two specific statements from the lips of God through his prophet, Jahaziel. They are absolutes. Do this, do only this. Those statements were: *Do not fear. Do not be dismayed.*

Now imagine yourself in their sandals. Here they were, about to be overtaken by an army so strong and so well equipped that defeat was a certainty. They had just acknowledged their helplessness before God. They had a humbling ceremony of prayer before God, and He comes back and says, "Hey, gang... don't be afraid."

I think it's important that we understand what He meant so we won't be turned off by this phrase, or consider it trite when someone uses it with us. Maybe you've been there. You get a phone call in the middle of the night that someone is deathly ill. You rush to the hospital. And here coming down the hall is your good friend, Patsy Platitude. Patsy runs up and says, "Don't be afraid, Jesus loves you!" And you want to say to her, "Bug off, lady. This is a real world. I have nowhere to go, no one to turn to. I'm dying inside and you tell me, 'Don't be afraid. Jesus loves me.'" I know how you feel. But there is one difference. This is God speaking. And, beloved, God has the right to tell you not to be afraid. And you have the responsibility not to be afraid when God tells you. Fear is a choice. And we have been instructed by God not to fear, because the degree to which we fear is the

degree to which we cannot exercise faith.

The word “fear” has to do with that initial feeling of panic that comes over us as a reaction to the bombs and bullets Satan throws our way. It isn’t unnatural to feel fear at a time like that. But it is unnatural to entertain that fear and accept it as natural, because God is, rather, demanding us that we choose to acknowledge that which is supernatural and put away fear.

It’s the second part of that two-pronged commandment that is usually hardest to understand. God says, “I have a second order. You must not be dismayed.” When God gives an order like that, it literally means if you choose to be, or persist in being dismayed, it is sin. To me, those two words seem so close that I have always struggled with their meaning, and yet, God over and over in Scripture uses them as a dual symphony to bring peace to the heart of His children. In fact, you seldom hear God command one without the other. So, we know there is a vital difference in their meanings. Again, and again, He punctuates His attempts to calm His people with those same two phrases. And again, and again when His people panic, those same two phrases are used. Look at I Samuel 17:11. The people are standing in the shadow of this giant, Goliath, listening to him boast.

When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

(I Samuel 17:11 NASB)

God speaks peace to our hearts with words like these from Jeremiah 30:10a,

‘And fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ declares the LORD,
‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel;’

(Jeremiah 30:10a NASB)

I Chronicles 22:13b is an echo that flows through the canyons of Scripture and repeats itself again and again.

Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed.

(I Chronicles 22:13b NASB)

The pattern is indisputable. Over and over in Scripture, when God tells us not to be afraid, He tells us not to be dismayed. What’s the difference? There are several things about these two words that are important. They are like two perfectly molded

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pieces of armor that, when put together, form a blockade against the attacks of the enemy, but each needs the other.

Fear is a reaction; dismay is a response. Fear is initial; dismay is ongoing. Fear is present tense; dismay is future tense. Fear is a feeling; dismay is a choice. To be fearful is to be terrified. It is to be gripped with a kind of panic that sees no way out. You've experienced it. It usually results in a faster heartbeat, sweaty palms, knocking knees, trembling hands.

To be dismayed, on the other hand, literally means over a period of time, you are crushed or shattered or broken. It's a kind of ongoing discouragement that settles in your spirit when the flood keeps coming and the bullets keep flying and the heavens appear to be silent, and you're just not sure you can go on one more day. God is saying, "Deal with your attitude of fear. Calm your panic-stricken hearts for I AM is here." And, beloved, don't let yourself choose to give in to discouragement as the war drags on and on. Both are sin. And both will blind you to the grace of God that is surrounding you as the battle encompasses you. So, the commandment is, don't you dare to be panic-stricken; and don't you dare entertain thoughts of hopelessness and despair. Your God IS; therefore, you are forbidding Him to reveal Himself to the degree you give in to either fear or dismay.

B- The Cause

Now God examines the cause of their fear and dismay. He says, "I don't want you to be afraid, and I don't want you to be discouraged or crushed because of this great multitude." Let's look at that phrase.

Because of means here's the reason you've been afraid. Here's the reason you've gotten discouraged.

This means this present attack of the enemy.

Great means it's obviously an overpowering attack, and God knows that.

Multitude means it's more than a singular, simple attack.

In other words, beloved, don't let this present, apparently insoluble series of catastrophes be your undoing. God admits that the enemy is not playing games; this is not an "uncalled-for" call for help. He acknowledges that this is one of those

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circumstances, which, apart from His grace, leaves us without hope. He knows why we are afraid, and He understands why we are discouraged. He understands. And He isn't even implying the problems aren't real or the problems aren't big. He's simply saying *the problems aren't ours*.

C- The Cure

Now He gives the cure, the reason we don't have to be afraid, and the reason we must not be discouraged. He says,

‘...for the battle is not yours but God’s.’

(II Chronicles 20:15 NASB)

There is the secret! That's why we are not afraid. That's why we are not discouraged. That's why we are not crushed or shattered beneath the barrage of blows that life is handing us. It's because *we aren't responsible for the outcome*. We are responsible to do certain things; but we aren't responsible for how it turns out, and none of us by being anxious can add one cubit to our stature; or change the outcome one iota. We're not any more responsible for the big picture than a private in the trenches is for the next move the troops make. The commander makes those decisions and, in doing so, assumes the responsibility for the outcome. Our job is to do what we're told. His job is to tell us what to do. Therefore, the battle is not ours; it's His.

II- THE PLAN

So, God's people have been told what not to do when the enemy is descending down the hills to take them captive. They are told not to be afraid. That's an order. They are told not to be crushed or broken or discouraged. That's an order. And, at least, for me, the second is much more difficult to heed than the first. Now, God is going to tell them what they are to do when the rumble of the enemy footsteps gets closer and closer and closer. They are to do three things they are supposed to do.

“Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the valley in front of the wilderness of Jeruel.

‘You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not fear or be dismayed;

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tomorrow, go out to face them, for the LORD is with you.”

And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

(II Chronicles 20:16-18 NASB)

What a battle plan! One basic principle, followed by three basic commandments. And, beloved, if Satan is harassing and bombarding you with circumstances that overwhelm you, I would remind you that *this battle plan still works*. It was a literal plan for Israel, but it was written for our admonition, that we might understand how God deals with the enemy in the midst of the battle.

The principle is simple. Don't run. If Satan is attempting to defeat you in the area of your marriage, whatever you do, don't run. If he is blasting you in the area of your job, whatever you do, don't turn and run. That's the one thing he wants you to do. Flee. That way, he can pursue you and defeat you, and God will never be able to show Himself strong on your behalf. *Tomorrow go down against them* (verse 16). *Judah, go out to face them, for the Lord is with you* (verse 17). Don't run. The reason God has allowed this conflict is to reveal His power to you. Instead of fleeing, He has outlined three things for you do to so you can witness who He is in the midst of the conflict.

1- Station Yourself. The first is to man your battle post. The King James Version uses the words, “set yourself.” The New American Standard version says, “station yourself.” It has to do with finding your place on the battlefield and refusing to budge. You don't run ahead of God and assault the enemy. But you don't want to run from God either, and flee the battle. You find your place. It is usually right where you were when the echo of cannon fire began to shake the hillside. If you were in the process of fleeing, the first thing you do is return to your battle post, immediately. You say, “But that's dangerous! I'll get shot.” Beloved, there is only one dangerous place to be in the midst of the conflict, and that is, *out of the will of God*. Station yourself. Find your battle post, and don't move.

2- Stand. Once there, God says, “The next thing I want you to do is stand.” Paul explained that posture in Ephesians 6. When the enemy attacks,

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Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand, therefore... (Ephesians 6:13,14 NKJV)

And he goes on to describe the rest of God's armor.

Standing, then, is not an act of frozen fright or cowardice. It is the bold, confident posture of the one being attacked saying, "Come on, Satan, have at it. My God will defend me." It is putting on the armor and looking the enemy straight in the eye without budging, or fearing, or being crushed or shattered.

3- See the Salvation of the Lord on your behalf. The final thing the believer is to do prior to the conflict, is to "see." Station, stand, and see. "To see" means to peer expectantly, as with heavenly binoculars, with a spirit of expectancy, to see what my God is going to do. We may not know what it is, but we do know it's going to be fantastic, because our God is fantastic! It means that instead of fearing or being dismayed at the sound of the enemy trumpets, the first thing we do, is man our battle posts, put on the armor of God and take a bold, positive stance that indicates confidence in God. Then we're to take our eternal binoculars and gaze with expectancy onto the battlefield, not to see *if*, but to see *how* God is going to defeat the enemy. Station, stand, and see the salvation of the Lord.

III- THE PROCESS

But all that is preparatory. All that is to get us to where we can maintain our place, our posture, and our perception, so that when the Master moves onto the battlefield, we are ready to watch. Now comes the key to it all—how to walk in the midst of the conflict. It is the key both during and after the battle, so we will look at it in more detail in the next lesson. But let's at least examine the principle right now. It is found in I Chronicles 20, verses 18-22. It is called the principle of "WPT" or worship, praise, and thanksgiving. Look at verse 18. Once they saw what God was about to do, they fell down at His feet. They never stopped worshipping. And neither must we. Even when the ground was shaking with the thunder of the enemy's hoofbeats, it says *Jehoshaphat stopped, bowed his head with his face to the ground, and the whole nation fell down before the Lord and worshiped.*

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You say, “How do you fight Satan?” You worship. Having taken their rightful place on their faces before God, look what they did! They appointed singers to “praise the Lord.” Not battalions of sharpshooters to defeat the enemy; God was going to defeat the enemy. Singers. Singers? According to verse 20, it says *they rose early*—not a bad thing to do when you’re in the midst of an attack—they rose early, and once he had talked to the people about what they were going to do so they understood, he appointed *those who sang to the Lord*, and sent them out ahead, in front of the troops, directly to the place where the enemy was congregating.

And when they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed.
(II Chronicles 20:22 NASB)

In the next lesson, we will talk more about how they were routed, and about the extent of their defeat. But, in closing, let’s just concentrate on that one basic rule of warfare that defies understanding. When Satan is assaulting you, and overpowering you, and the circumstances have brought you to a state of despair, here’s what you do. You man your battle station. You stop running. You clothe yourself in the armor of God, and refuse to budge. You peer expectantly into the heavenlies because God is about to act on your behalf. And then, start singing. If you sing like I do, sing to yourself. But start singing. Fall on your face and worship. Start singing and thanking God for the victory He has already won. You can’t see it from where you are, beloved, but in heaven, the battle is over. The apparent time lag between God’s eternal victory and our experiencing that victory seems like a long time, but it’s really only the twinkling of an eye. It’s whatever time it takes for us to get ready to handle the victory. God’s already ready. He’s waiting on us. And when we begin to sing and to praise and to thank Him in advance for the victory, He will move into our lives with power. Just as one day He will do when He comes again. The heavens will rock with the thunder of God’s might, the skies above us will part, and the King of kings, and Lord of lords, will descend and fight for us. Not with us. For us. The battle is not ours. And when God enters the fray, beloved, Satan scurries for cover like the coward he really is.

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How about you? Could you perhaps, be in the midst of one of those battles right now? Does the sound of enemy gunfire have you petrified with fright? Has the constant barrage of blows from his hands brought you to a state of being shattered or crushed or in despair? Are you too tired to go on? Beloved, start singing. Start making melody in your heart. Get up from your bed, man your battle station, start looking for God to intervene on your behalf, and start singing. *Oh Lord, my God, How Great Thou Art* or *It Took a Miracle* or *We're Marching to Zion* or *I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today...He Lives, He Lives*. And begin praising Him that the battle has already been won. It was never ours; it was always His. So, thank Him in advance for whatever it is He's about to do.

You may not immediately see the enemy stumble and fall. But, beloved, immediately in the heavens, something will begin to happen. Your God will begin fighting for you, and you will be entering into the most exciting experience of the Christian faith. You will be walking in victory in the midst of the conflict, singing, praising, and giving thanks that in heaven, the battle's already been won.

To Him, the Victor, our Rock and our Shield, our Stronghold in the day of trouble...to Him, and to Him alone...be praise, and honor, and glory, forever.

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For Further Study and Application

1- On a piece of paper, describe the times in your life when you know you have been walking in the midst of great spiritual warfare. Now go back and analyze your responses and compare them to those of Jehoshaphat. At what time in your battle, did God seem to move in with great power? Why do we so often forget?

2- Take a concordance and do a study of how God used the dual phrase, “Do not be afraid; and do not be dismayed” to calm the hearts of His people in the midst of their conflicts.

3- Memorize II Chronicles 15,17,18,21, and 22 (or the whole passage). Ask God to bring it to your remembrance when the battles in your life begin raging.

4- Lay on your heart the words to “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” that God can use in your life when Satan is harassing you. Learn to immediately begin singing and praising God whenever the enemy fills you with either fear or discouragement. And don’t stop singing till the battle has turned.

5- Keep a “Praise or Thanksgiving” list in your pocket or purse. When the enemy approaches, begin thanking God for all He’s done, and that this time “the battle’s already won” as well.

6- Decide what steps you can take to

A- More quickly recognize spiritual warfare when it appears in your life.

B- More easily respond by

1- Manning your battle post, (or returning to it),

2- Putting on God’s armor to take a stand,

3- Expectantly looking for God to intervene

4- Immediately remembering to worship, and praise, and give thanks, freeing God to defeat the enemy on your behalf.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778
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