

## 1 Samuel 4:1-3 - Thursday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013

(1) And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines, and encamped beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek. (2) Then the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field.

- We're off to a terrible start right out of the shoot, with Israel suffering a devastating defeat at the hands of their archenemies, the Philistines.
- I don't suppose this should have come as a big surprise given that the Philistines were much more sophisticated militarily than Israel was.
- This because, they would smelt iron, and as such they possessed the most advanced weaponry with which to defeat their enemies handily.

- Actually, it may be that the military superiority of the Philistines is what led them to provoke the Israelites so that they would go out to battle.
- Also, it may have been Israel's vulnerability, and inferiority, militarily, that led the Philistines to put themselves in battle array against Israel.
- The reason I mention this is because it speaks to how our enemy will put himself in battle array against us when we're the most vulnerable.

- In other words, the Devil will wait for that opportune time to attack us, so as to defeat us, and it's usually when we're the most vulnerable.
- We're usually most vulnerable when we're tired and weak, or alone and isolated, or even right before and right after a great spiritual victory.
- And, to make matters worse, the enemy patiently watches us, and stocks us, as he waits for the optimum time to attack us and devour us.

1 Peter 5:8 NIV Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

- We see an example of this in the Luke's gospel, where after the Devil finished tempting Jesus, he leaves him until a more opportune time.

Luke 4:1-13 NIV Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, (2) where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. (3) The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." (4) Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'" (5) The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. (6) And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. (7) So if you worship me, it will all be yours." (8) Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" (9) The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. (10) For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; (11) they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" (12) Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (13) When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

- I believe that Jesus resisted the Devil so he would flee, because of His strength spiritually, though He was weak and vulnerable physically,

Ephesians 6:10-18 NIV Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (11) Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (13) Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (14) Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, (15) and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. (16) In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (17) Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (18) And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

- Perhaps we need look no further than Ephesians to see why Israel fell prey to this defeat at the hands of their archenemy the Philistines.
- The reason I say that is because the Word of God was rare in those days, such that Israel did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.
- I would suggest it was not Israel's inferiority militarily that wrought their defeat, it was Israel's inferiority spiritually that wrought their defeat.

- I'll take it a step further and suggest Israel's downfall was due to their pitiful spiritual condition as evidenced by their response, or lack of.
- By that I mean, you would think that the Israelites would respond with the godly sorrow that leads to a genuine and authentic repentance.
- The problem is, as we're about to see in the next verses, instead of turning to God in repentance, they look to other things for deliverance.

(3) And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies."

- I find it rather interesting how the elders of Israel are so bewildered that they would ask why the Lord defeated them before the Philistines?
- The reason I find this interesting is that they are blaming their defeat on God by asking the question of, "why has the Lord done this to us?"
- Lest we be too hard on them, we'd do well to realize that we're just as prone to blame God for that which we have only ourselves to blame.

- Also, not only is their blame towards God, instead of their repenting before God, they're turning to the Ark of God, instead of turning to God.
- This is usually how it is, in that, like with the Israelites, we too will not turn to the Lord, by virtue of how that we're guilty of blaming the Lord.
- The truth of the matter is, we'll call everyone else instead of calling upon the Lord, and turn to everything else instead of turning to the Lord.

One commentator summed it up best this way; "There are plenty of Christians, like these elders, who, when they find themselves beaten by the world and the devil, puzzle their brains to invent all sorts of reasons for God's smiting, except the true one, - their own departure from Him."