



2 Chronicles 28 & 32 A Tale of Two Battles

Summary: Gaining every day strategies for every day battles.

Good morning! My name is Matthew and I'm one of the pastors on staff. Today I am delighted to get to fill in the pulpit for Pastor Jeff as he is traveling and attending a conference out in California.

We'll pause our normal study in the book of Mark, which Pastor Jeff will continue next week, as today, we'll be examining two passages in 2 Chronicles. I've titled today's sermon "A Tale of Two Battles" as we'll be examining two different battles and what strategies each leader used to try to win and gain the advantage over his enemy.

Interestingly, the Bible is full of stories of various battles. One kingdom or person seeks to dominate and overthrow another, looking for greater control and access to desired resources; To have power and to hopefully ensure a longer and more prosperous life.

Though we could look at these passages and relate their truths to real physical battles, the majority of us are not in a place to put such things to practical use.

However, we see another battle that is referenced in the New Testament that each of us face on a regular basis. Paul says that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood but against spiritual forces, things which are not so easily seen.

So, when we talk about battles that we face in our lives today, I want to present three specific categories or spheres of battles that we do well to think about and keep in mind. These are battles that we all, in one way or another, face daily. My hope for each of us today is to increase our battle readiness. So that when you are under attack or become aware of an active battle in your life, you already have planned and prepared how to respond.

The first battle sphere is the battle inside of you. This has to do with your thoughts and your feelings. This is where aspects of fear, anxiety, worry, lust, anger, selfishness, hatred, judgementalism, and the like all begin to swarm and take you down paths that will lead to pain, suffering and hurt. This internal battle is one that

we all face regularly and need to have some solid strategies to deal with it if we want to win.

The second battle sphere is the one that is outside of you. Namely, with your relationships with others; This could be your spouse, your kids, your parents, co-workers, etc. This takes some of the complexities of the first “internal” battle that we just mentioned and compounds those complexities by bringing another human with their own will, ideas, and desires, into competition with yours. When conflict ensues, how do you navigate that battle?

The third and final battle sphere that I want to bring up is the “Spiritual battle”. Now, it is true that there could be a spiritual battle at play in either of the two previous kinds of battles that I just spoke of, these battles are not so neatly boxed up and easily distinguished. However, the benefit of considering the spiritual battle separately from the others is that we have to understand the goal of the enemy of our soul and the strategies he employs against us.

The uniqueness of the Spiritual battle field is seen most specifically when the genuineness of our faith is tried, or when our witness and testimony as a follower of Christ is put on the line, or where our active fellowship with God is put at risk.

Now, before we dig any more into any of these three types of battles, we’ll take a look at the two battles from 2 Chronicles and consider how we can apply what we learn from their battle strategies to help us as we face our own battles today.

For context, these chapters cover the lives of two of Judah’s kings right around the time of the fall and deportation of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Ahaz, the first king we’ll look at was a wicked king, but his son Hezekiah was a godly king. Each of them face battles that they cannot win in their own strength. We’ll start by looking at some of the highlights from Ahaz’s reign in 2 Chronicles 28

Battle #1

Read with me:

2 Chronicles 28:1-6, 16-25 *Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD, as his father David had done.* ² For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. ³ He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned

his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. ⁴ And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree. ⁵ Therefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria. They defeated him, and carried away a great multitude of them as captives, and brought *them* to Damascus. Then he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with a great slaughter. ⁶ For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed one hundred and twenty thousand in Judah in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.

¹⁶ At the same time King Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria to help him. ¹⁷ For again the Edomites had come, attacked Judah, and carried away captives. ¹⁸ The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland and of the South of Judah, and had taken Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Sochoh with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages; and they dwelt there. ¹⁹ For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the LORD. ²⁰ Also Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him and distressed him, and did not assist him. ²¹ For Ahaz took part of *the treasures* from the house of the LORD, from the house of the king, and from the leaders, and he gave *it* to the king of Assyria; but he did not help him. ²² Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the LORD. This *is that* King Ahaz. ²³ For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, “Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. ²⁴ So Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. ²⁵ And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

Now, let’s consider this man and the battles he faced, the resources he had, and the strategies that he employed and see what we can learn from them.

First off, as we consider his predicament, we can feel for the guy as he had multiple battlefronts and all his enemies seemed to be attacking him at the same time! This is what we could describe as “a perfect storm” of trials that came to rock his world. (Have you ever had that happen in your life, when feel like the attacks are coming at you from every which way?)

Taking a look at his enemies, he was attacked by Syria, whose capital was Damascus, than he was further diminished by Israel, the northern kingdom and finally the Edomites from the southeast and the Philistines from the west all had to jump in on the fun and add to Ahaz and Judah's pain.

But we could say that Ahaz wasn't without resources. In verse 6 we read that Ahaz had 120,000 valiant men of war, in fact, we could deduce that he had more than this amount, as these were only those who were killed in battle, and assumedly he still retained some form of an army even after this defeat.

We also read of great spoil being taken away, as well as his own use of the treasures of the house of the Lord to win allies to his support. But none of these things were of any benefit to him.

Strategy #1

As we consider Ahaz and his resources, **we learn our first battle strategy**. Which is "Do not rely on your own resources". Ahaz had an army and he had wealth, but neither of these were enough to help him gain the victory. Proverbs 3:5 puts it this way "lean not on your own understanding" – even our "understanding" is a resource we like to rely on, but God says, "Don't trust it! You don't see the whole picture! Instead, trust in me!"

We could also say that he was VERY religious. He sought fervently after various god's, offering sacrifices, and burning incense on the high places and under every green tree! He even sacrificed that which was most precious and dear to him by offering up his child as a sacrifice to gain the favor of the gods. But, clearly, none of this fervor helped him. In fact we can see that it only made matters worse.

Ahaz was keenly aware that he lacked the ability to defeat his enemies, but with all that he had at his disposal, an army of valiant warriors, treasures, and religious zeal, none of these things would help him one bit because he lacked one thing, a heart after God. The one defense that could truly make a difference was conspicuously lacking.

But, when we face battles, are we also not prone to utilize our own resources before we turn to the Lord? When you have looked danger in the face, do you not consider if you have the ability to overcome this by your own power? Whether you use your financial means, or surround yourself with the voices of many experts, or you make heartfelt & passionate promises to God that you'll do more, try harder, not miss church ever again if only He will _____.

Now, it's true that if we turn to the Lord in this, we can say we already have learned a lesson that Ahaz seemed to never grasp... that, "help" is only from the Lord. But, I fear that we, like Ahaz, can often confuse a holy pursuit with religious fervor. These two may at times resemble each other, but they could not be further from each other in motive or destination.

The motive of religious fervor is no different than to control God and manipulate your circumstances in your favor, and its end is utter disappointment and certain destruction. But, on the other hand, a holy pursuit has at the core of its motive the pleasure of God; To do whatever would please God. It is a pursuit motivated by God's holiness and His desire for our own holiness; And its end is one of peace, satisfaction and rest.

Strategy #2

This is our second battle strategy. "Don't confuse a holy pursuit with religious fervor." Be sure to check the orientation of your heart and the motivation of your actions. Are you oriented towards the Lord and seeking His pleasure, or are you just looking for a "get out of jail free" card?

So, just because they share similarities in practice along the way, don't be fooled to thinking that they are the same thing. A careful examination of your actions will only go so far, you have to look deeper into the heart of what is motivating and moving you.

So, let's do a quick recap of what we learn from our first battle analysis. First, resources may be important, but they do not provide the solution. And secondly, The orientation of our heart towards God and our utter dependance upon Him is the only basis and foundation for victory.

BUT what happens when you have oriented yourself towards the Lord and still face battles, and what if you lose a battle! Just because we are surrendered to the Lord does that guarantee that we will succeed in everything and lose no more battles?

No, that is not the case. A short survey of New Testament doctrine quickly shows us that we will face battles, and that at times, we will fall and fail, but that in spite of our failures we find forgiveness in the Lord when we respond to His call of repentance.

Battle #2

As we turn to our second battle and consider Hezekiah's life and response to the opposition he faced, we'll see that there is much wisdom that we can learn and apply as we build on the foundation of complete dependence on God.

Before we jump into chapter 32 it is important to get some background and context for what happened after Ahaz died, and how Hezekiah began to make some massive changes in the Kingdom of Judah when he took the throne.

When Hezekiah became king, the Northern Kingdom of Israel would only last for six more years before falling to Assyria. So, the same army that Hezekiah's dad had tried to buy help from has now just come and conquered his nearest neighbor, the same country that had also wiped out a massive part of his dad's army. In other words, this was a real and present danger!

But, in spite of this threat, Hezekiah reverses course from the direction his father was going and reinstates the true worship of God. In the first month of his reign he opens the temple back up and begins repairs. He and the people renew a covenant to the Lord, seeking to serve God as He had commanded. All worship services are reinstated and He even brings back the Passover celebration and invites anyone from the Northern Kingdom to come and celebrate with them.

Beyond starting all of these good and godly initiatives, He also went on a rampage to remove all that defiled the land. All the pagan altars and places his father burned incense were destroyed. They didn't just do this in Jerusalem, but many people traveled to various cities and tore down the altars to these false gods.

We read a beautiful summary statement of Hezekiah in chapter 31 verses 20-21: *Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. ²¹ And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.*

After three chapters of glowing reports from Hezekiah's reign, the reforms he instituted, the reformation of the spiritual life of Judah and the campaign against those things which had formerly brought them into such a horrible state of moral decline, we come to the story of Hezekiah's first battle with the enemy.

Read with me:

32:1-8 After these deeds of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself. ² And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that his purpose was to make war against Jerusalem, ³ he consulted with his leaders and commanders to stop the water from the springs which *were* outside the city; and they helped him. ⁴ Thus many people gathered together who stopped all the springs and the brook that ran through the land, saying, “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?” ⁵ And he strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken, raised *it* up to the towers, and *built* another wall outside; also he repaired the Millo *in* the City of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance. ⁶ Then he set military captains over the people, gathered them together to him in the open square of the city gate, and gave them encouragement, saying, ⁷ “Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that *is* with him; for *there are* more with us than with him. ⁸ With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

As we consider these 8 verses before the battle even begins, there is much to consider and glean. First and foremost note how it starts... “**After these deeds of faithfulness...**” the enemy came to attack. Sometimes we think that our faithfulness should make us immune to attack or give us greater protection. But sometimes it is in the midst of our obedience that Satan strategizes to bring up his greatest tests. Another view on this might suggest that it is when we are in a state of ready obedience to the Lord that we are most ready to face opposition!

But, regardless of the coincidental timing, we can all relate to the fact that ‘no time’ is ideal for an attack to come. These times are never looked for nor enjoyed. However, God, in His sovereignty, uses them to teach us and grow us, and without these tests we would be in a much worse state. Perhaps choosing only to do what is easy, or convenient for ourselves.

As Hezekiah saw this impending attack, he took steps to prepare himself and his people for what was coming. We’ll break down Hezekiah’s preparations into 5 more battle strategies and consider their modern day counterparts that we can implement today.

Strategy #3

In verse 3 we read that “[he consulted with his leaders and commanders.](#)” These were Hezekiah’s mighty men, his men of valor. Those that he could trust and who would get the job done. In this we see that Hezekiah did not suffer from delusions of grandeur, thinking that he was so great that he could face this enemy all by himself. He knew that he needed the help and aid of others, and had already a system in place that he could turn to in times of trouble.

When you face a battle that seems overwhelming and where the enemy seems to have the upper hand, who are the equivalent of your “leaders and commanders”? I’m not suggesting so much the importance of the authority component of these relationships but of the “faithfulness” of these relationships. First, their own faithfulness to the Lord, and secondly, that they also have your best interest in mind. These are people who have significant influence in your life and have already made an impact on you.

These same leaders and commanders had served with Hezekiah during the spiritual reforms just a few chapters ago. They had helped to eradicate the pagan influence in the land and to restore peace and order. They were faithful and dependable and able to get the job done. But these leaders and commanders didn’t come out of nowhere. Remember that under Hezekiah’s father’s reign, his own leaders and commanders were of no help to him. They had, like Ahaz, abandoned God and were slain in battle or scattered by the enemy. When Hezekiah came to power, he had to identify and invest in these people and demonstrate what he needed from them.

Likewise, it may take some time for you to identify and cultivate these kind of people in your own life. They are not a guarantee granted to you, but the product of your own intentional prayer and thoughtful consideration and cultivation. If you know who these people are in your life, consider how you can encourage them and seek their help. If you don’t know who these people are yet. Don’t despair, but begin to pray and ask God for help in identifying who they might be, and how you can begin to cultivate those relationships over time. It will take time, but there’s no better time than the present to begin.

Strategy #4

The second thing we see Hezekiah do to prepare for the enemy is “[to stop the water from the springs which were outside the city... ‘Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?’](#)”. This was a clever thought by Hezekiah. Normally, water would be seen as a valuable resource to a people living in the

land, but the same thing that helps them and makes their life better can also become a resource in the hands of their enemy.

As we consider it, water is a neutral thing, a tool that can be used for good or ill. Good when it is used for our benefit, but ill if it is being used by my enemy. For us, as we consider our lives, we must give thought to what tools we have put to use in our lives that do indeed bring benefit to us, but when coopted by our enemy, can do you much damage. The tool is neutral, but how it is wielded (and by whom and for what end) can be change things dramatically.

Let's take something like social media as an example. Social media can be used as a tool to accomplish good things. It can serve as a way for people to connect more easily, to stay connected over simple things even though time and distance may separate you physically. It can provide a place for news, information, and broadcasting important things to others, such as the gospel!

However, we can also see how social media can be used as a tool that can bring much harm. It can tease out your anger, play with your lusts, distract you from productivity, play upon your insecurities and undermine you from accomplishing your goals and objectives. It has led to an increase in teen suicide and is an easy way for misinformation to spread and destroy lives.

So, why would we use something that is so dangerous, something that can and does do so much harm? Well, when we are not under attack, and we have control of the resource and can use the tool for good, we feel safe. But we must remain vigilant and recognize where our vulnerabilities and weaknesses are and take precautions from falling prey to any of the negative effects of tools like these.

By stopping up the wells, Hezekiah took extra measures to make sure the enemy couldn't coopt a resource he would use and use it to his own advantage. Sometimes when we are waging war in certain areas of our life, we must go to more extreme measures to not give any foothold any leeway to our enemy. Cut off the water supply! Don't allow room for things in your life that can 'feed the enemy'.

Strategy #5

The third thing that we see Hezekiah do is "[he strengthened himself](#)". This is a simple but often overlooked principle to apply. When we consider "strengthening ourselves" we are wise to consider the phrase used of David when he had just suffered a defeat in battle during his 3 ½ year backslide. We read in 1 Samuel 30:6 "[But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.](#)"

Where we choose to “strengthen ourselves” makes a difference. We can choose to strengthen ourselves in the gym, and that’s not a bad idea, much self-discipline can be worked out in such a setting. But when we remember that our battles are not against flesh and blood, not so much on the physical plane as they are on the spiritual plane, we do much better to strengthen ourselves in the Lord.

The most obvious way that we can do this is by spending time in prayer and in God’s Word. These are obviously good habits that we want to regularly be in. But we consider the parallel that David or Hezekiah were experiencing, we might say that this is where a good solid relationship with God pays off, not where you want to discover that you don’t have one and wish you had started one earlier.

When one strengthens themselves in the Lord, what they are doing is recalling to their mind and heart the truths that God’s Word declares and choosing to believe those truths. It’s almost like you are digging your spiritual heels in as you stand on the truth and defiantly say, “As God has said, So I believe!” As we cling to the truths and promises of God’s Word, we draw spiritual strength in Him to face the difficulties that lie ahead.

Strategy #6

The fourth thing that Hezekiah did was to undergo a series of building fortifications. He had rightly put his priority on getting the House of the Lord up and running first, but now, the deferred maintenance of the city wall and other fortifying structures were needing his attention. After he strengthened himself the rest of verse 5 says he, “**built up all the wall that was broken, raised it up to the towers, and built another wall outside; also he repaired the Millo in the City of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance.**”

Here we see Hezekiah taking action on every area where defenses could be made. Not only did he repair the current wall, but he built another wall outside the first. The reference to repairing the millo, an earth-work terrace near the palace wall, shows that he went to great lengths and tackled projects that were difficult.

The question for us to consider is “what is the status of your defenses?” Are there areas of your life that are broken down? Are there places of vulnerability? When you consider the various times that you find temptation has bested you, are you identifying those weak spots and taking fortifying action to not be bested twice in the same way?

Perhaps the difference between us in our battles and Hezekiah and his is that he sees his enemy for what he truly is and rightly identifies that the actions he takes could be the difference between life and death for himself and those he is sworn to protect.

When we face off with our sin and whatever temptations come at us, we are more likely to downplay the seriousness of what we are facing. We are masters of justifying our thinking and maintaining a convenient state of self-deception, that is until we are in too deep, till we are caught, till we are enslaved. But it would be better for us to learn from Hezekiah and to fortify our wall, build a second wall, take on the hard building projects to ensure that we are ready for the attack when it comes.

Note also that Hezekiah added to his weaponry and shields. In the same way we can take the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith. Memorizing or writing down specific verses to combat specific enemies, you can find amazing victory by recalling these truths to your mind. Be more like Hezekiah and add more weapons to your spiritual arsenal!

Strategy #7

The last thing we see Hezekiah do; “[he set military captains over the people, gathered them together to him in the open square of the city gate, and gave them encouragement.](#)” After he had already strengthened himself in the Lord, he now turns that to others. He seeks to help others to be ready for the battle as well.

Sometimes the best way that we can face and fight the battles that we find so hard is by teaming up with others and seeking to help them. Take your focus from being just on yourself and instead put it on others. When we put forth real effort to help others in these areas, we are less likely to fall prey to them ourselves. Remember, we are not meant to fight alone, but rather in community.

Notice what words Hezekiah used to encourage the people, “[Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that *is* with him; for *there are* more with us than with him. ⁸ With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.](#)”

Not only are these words Scripture to us, but they are words that are often repeated in a variety of places throughout the Word. God likes to repeat Himself to us, since He knows our propensity to forget. And our need for reminders like these.

What a delight it is to know that God is with us, and that He helps us and fights our battles with us! But, we must still be strong and courageous. As a wise person once said “fear is the path to the dark side,” oh wait, maybe that was from Yoda... well, the Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the path to life (Prov 19:23). But if we fall prey to fearing the enemy, and we lose the fear of the Lord, then our path will be one of darkness and suffering. Things which God would spare us from if we would learn to walk in His ways and turn to Him.

In the end, when Assyria came out and surrounded Hezekiah and Jerusalem, God sent His angel through the camp and slew 180,000 men in one night, every mighty man, leader, and captain were slain and Sennacherib left shamefaced to his own land (32:21) and was soon thereafter slain by his own sons.

When you look at how God brought victory to Hezekiah, you might think that all the efforts that he did were of no use. They didn't seem to “help” as God just did a miraculous deliverance. And there may be some truth to this, but I can't help but think about the work of faith that was happening in Hezekiah and the people of Judah. They did all that they could but then ultimately it was still not enough, they still had to rely on God for victory over their enemies, but God too wants His people to walk in wisdom and not to put their God to the test or to be presumptuous.

So too, as we consider the various battlefields that we face, the inner battles of the mind and heart, the outer battles when we have conflict with others, and spiritual battles where our faith is tried, our testimony is put on the line, and our fellowship with God is at risk, we must do what God has shown us to do. To employ those strategies that His Word gives us, but in all our effort we must not think that we are going to win by our strength alone. As Paul warns us, “He who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). So in the end, after we have labored, we trust God and leave Him to fight and win the victory.

Saints, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, be strong, be brave. He who is in you is greater than He who is in the world. Those who are with us are more than those who are with our enemies. They have an arm of flesh, but we have a God, mighty in battle, who fights for us and has already won the victory. You are more than conquerors. Don't give room to the enemy. Don't go it alone. Walk in the Spirit and follow after Jesus in everything.

Let's pray.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

2 Chronicles 32 A Tale of Two Battles

Summary: Gaining every day strategies for every day battles.

1. Of the three battle spheres (inner, outer, spiritual) where do you find that you most often feel the pressure of battle? Is there one battle that you face often and would like to see victory in?
2. Like Ahaz, do you turn to your own resources when you face a battle before turning to the Lord? What resources are you most likely to use to insulate yourself from harm? (What can help you learn to turn to God first?)
3. Do you every find that you substitute religious fervor for an authentic “holy pursuit” of God? How would you distinguish between these two (outwardly) similarly looking behaviors?
4. Who are your “leaders and commanders”? (ie. Those that you can call out to help you prepare for the battles you are facing)
5. What resources in your life are available to “feed your enemy”? (i.e. are there any wells or springs that you can stop up when war time comes?)
6. How do you “strengthen yourself”? (How do you “strengthen yourself in the Lord”?) (Note: When I am fighting a cold or illness, I often will take extra steps to give my body the best chance of fighting possible – do you do this too? Is there a “spiritual parallel”?)
7. What is the status of your defenses? Are there areas of your life that are broken down? Are there places of vulnerability? Do you need to add extra layers of protection?
8. How can you be an encouragement to others who are fighting the good fight? How can you come alongside of them?