

## I. Introduction

- A. There's a powerful scene in The Lord of the Rings, when the armies of Saruman fire up the forges to hammer out swords and spears. They're building a hideous army of orcs to come against the unsuspecting citizens of Middle Earth.
- B. Imagine the surprise of waking up, walking out of your tent, looking across the landscape, and seeing tens of thousands of cannibalistic sub-human orcs, armed to the hilt, ready to devour you, your home, your homeland, and your children.
- C. In one way or another, for most of us, a different type of monster appeared on the horizon just a few days ago.
- D. Fire.
- E. Nothing could stop it.
  - 1. Not the most dedicated firefighters.
  - 2. Not rain from the heavens.
  - 3. Not even prayer.
- F. The minute the Carr Fire got out of control, the decks were stacked against us and there was nothing we could do.
- G. It turns out there are a lot of monsters who get out of control. Some here have been fighting them for longer than the Carr Fire has been around.
  - 1. The monster, not of burning trees, but of cancer cells.
  - 2. The monster of worries about jobs and finances.
  - 3. The monster of heartbreak over a child gone wrong.
  - 4. Of marriage in trouble.
  - 5. Or simply the everyday pains of a bossy mother in law, an irrational ex-...
    - a) Sometimes the troubles roll in like waves on the sea shore that just won't stop.
- H. Does God have anything to say when the decks are stacked against us?
  - 1. Does God have anything to say to underdogs?
  - 2. Does God have anything to say when troubles strikes?
- I. It turns out that he does.
  - 1. *For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones. (Isaiah 57:15)*
- J. God is for the underdog. God has a soft spot in his heart for the hurting. And we are hurting. .
  - 1. An old time evangelist said:
    - a) "All you have got to do is prove that you are a sinner, and I will prove that you have a Savior." (D.L. Moody)
  - 2. Today I want to say that...
    - a) "All you've got to do is prove you've got troubles, and the Bible will prove that you have a comforter... you have a deliverer... you have a friend."
- K. Whether the monster on the horizon is a fire or an army of creditors, or doctors, or critics, or orcs... Even if it's your own failures, or your own dumb mistakes, and your own willful disobedience brandishing their weapons in your face...
  - 1. There is healing and hope for you today.
  - 2. There's a beautiful story in the Bible with so many parallels for our situation today.

## II. The Attack of Judah and Jerusalem

- A. In 2 Chronicles 20, the armies of many nations gather together to attack the Jews. They want to drive the Jews into the sea and destroy their nation. The Bible calls it a "great multitude."
- B. That means too many to count.
- C. God's people are underdogs. They are outnumbered. Humanly speaking, they are doomed.
- D. So the king gathers the nation together. His name is Jehoshaphat. He leads his people to seek the Lord. Together, they pray, and they declare the greatness of God... and here is the meat of the prayer:
  - 1. *"O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You." (2 Chronicles 20:12)*
- E. Have you ever been in a position where you didn't know what to do
  - 1. More questions than answers...
  - 2. And the answers don't work...
- F. Welcome to life in Redding.
- G. I really resonate with those words... "for we have no power against this great multitude coming against us."
  - 1. We have no power.
  - 2. Nor do we know what to do...
- H. There is a great secret tucked into this verse, and like so many of the Bible's great secrets, it is introduced by the word "but."
  - 1. "Nor do we know what to do, BUT our eyes are upon You."
- I. Our eyes are on you, God. Our eyes are on you.
- J. When there's an army of monsters over there, but your eyes are on God, what are you NOT looking at?
  - 1. The army of monsters.
  - 2. Your mind is dwelling somewhere else.
  - 3. Your conversations are focused somewhere else.
    - a) When the King said, *our eyes are on you*, he meant their minds and emotions were thinking about God and what he is like in the Bible.
- K. The Character of God
  - 1. There's a verse I memorized when I was in my twenties, and it sticks with me today. I'll say it the way I memorized it, in the old King James Bible.
    - a) *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon thee because he trusted in thee. (Isaiah 26:3, KJV)*
  - 2. Your mind is stayed on God.
  - 3. You can't trust a God you don't know. You won't find the peace you seek in a God you just don't know.
  - 4. The most important thing about a person is what comes into your mind when you think about God. Because, when troubles come, you know where to look.
  - 5. When King Jehoshaphat said Our eyes are on you, he was not looking at some kind of indefinable force of nature or some vague, nebulous idea of a big guy upstairs.
  - 6. He was focusing on a person.

- a) A person with a name.
- b) A person with definable characteristics and attributes.

### III. Where to Look in Trouble

#### A. Our eyes are on his CHARACTER.

1. So, what are those definable attributes of God? When I was young, I learned ten attributes of God. I have taught them to you over the years for such a time as this.
2. God is... sovereignty, holiness, righteousness, love, eternal life, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, and truth.
3. It is second nature for me now to pray...
  - a) God, I do not know what to do, but I know you know.
  - b) God...
    - (1) You are SOVEREIGNTY, so you are the caring and powerful ruler of my life and my world, so anything the devil means for bad, you can convert to a good so good I can't wrap my mind around it.
    - (2) You are HOLINESS, so you are pure and good and separate from evil. You didn't cause it, but you're great than it, and through Christ's great Cross, you have defeated it once for all.
    - (3) You are RIGHTEOUSNESS, so you are perfectly just and fair. You don't play games with me, and you don't mess with my emotions. I can trust you.
    - (4) You are LOVE, so you always will my best, and pay the price to open doors to a grace more beautiful than words can tell. Today, Lord, I rest in your love.
    - (5) You are ETERNAL LIFE, so the struggles of this moment did not sneak up and surprise you — and the needs you saw yesterday are abundantly provided for day by day everyday and forever.
    - (6) You are OMNIPOTENCE, so whether it's a burned down house or burned down dreams, there is enough power in your little finger to deliver blessing and care beyond any wall the devil can build.
    - (7) God, you are OMNIPRESENCE, and all of you is with all me right here, right now. And when that monstrous fire loomed on the horizon, God didn't go away.
      - (a) *You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.* (Acts 2:28)
    - (8) You are OMNISCIENCE, so you know all the knowable, and that means you know my need, and you know my heart. You know my emotions. You know my fears. You know my worries. You know my tears. In your omniscience, you see it all, and you don't just see, you supply.
    - (9) Lord, you are IMMUTABILITY... the same yesterday, today, and forever. You are as faithful to me as you are to Jesus, because I am one with him. God, you didn't bring me this far to let me down now, and I will count on you.
    - (10) And God, you are TRUTH... where can I turn for reality but to you and your Word? This fire reminds me that the things of this world are passing away. Everything. I am a pilgrim. I live in a world of shadows, and one day soon, I will open my eyes in a glory more real, and unshakable than anything on this earth. I believe you, God, no matter how many lies the devil parades before my eyes.
      - (a) *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee, because he trusteth in thee.* (Isaiah 26:3)
      - i) To know him is to trust him.
      - (b) *The people who know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.* (Daniel 11:32)
- c) I am thankful for the many hands so ready to help in our time of trouble. Samaritan's Purse. The Red Cross. Convoy of Hope. FEMA is here, the leaders of our city, county, and state agencies. It's been really beautiful to see the genuine outpouring of sympathy and help. These outlets for assistance and help are essential and wonderful and huge. And there are a lot of them, and we are thankful.
- d) At the same time, there is one and only one outlet for the grace and power and love of God, and that is the Word of God and the church that proclaims it.
  - (1) We need food and shelter, AND a fresh glimpse of God.
  - (2) We need burned down homes cleaned up, AND a renewed sense of Calvary's love.
  - (3) We need money and repairs, AND hope that only comes from the God of all comforts and the Father of mercies.
- e) And so we say, in ourselves, apart from you, we do not have power against this force that has come against us. Nor do we know what to do. BUT our eyes are on you. And we have a great God.
- f) Our eyes are on his character.
- g) And...

#### B. Our eyes are on his transcendence.

1. Transcendence means that God exists on a level far above this normal earthly plane.
  - a) We inhabit time, he inhabits eternity.
  - b) We live on planet earth, he exists in heaven, greater than the cosmos and beyond.
  - c) We see from the top of an anthill.
  - d) He sees from the heights of the heavens.
  - e) We say that this good thing happened and that bad thing happened and we respond to the troubles and triumphs of the moment.
2. But God is looking deeper and God is looking higher.
3. If the most important thing about you is what comes to your mind when you hear the word God, the second most important thing is what comes out your mouth when you need to show faith.
4. God loves faith more than we do, more than you realize, and he has set it up so that heaven rewards faith more than anything else on planet earth.
5. It's time to apply one of those deep truths I've taught you before:
  - a) In the spiritual realm, victory isn't the victory; faith is the victory.
6. Fire sweeps through a neighborhood. Two houses stand side by side. Both homeowners pray, Lord spare our house.
7. One house is destroyed, the other left standing.
8. We say, oh, the one that's standing, they won the victory. Not from heaven's perspective.
9. The victory goes to the one who has faith... because of another principle I hope you remember:
  - a) Your job is faith; God's job is outcomes.
10. Whether the house stands or falls, isn't the true reward. The true reward is riches and powers and privileges in heaven that nobody else has because you mixed your troubles with faith.
  - a) I'm not saying it's a perfect faith, it doesn't need to be.

- b) I'm not saying you have no moments of doubt — we all have our doubts, and our fears, and our questions of God.
- c) We have moments of anger too.
- d) If you can get through troubles and keep faith with God, you've won the victory that matters forever.
  - (1) It's prayer when prayer makes no sense.
  - (2) It's praise when praise makes no sense.
  - (3) It's giving thanks when giving thanks makes no sense.
  - (4) It's faith when faith makes no sense that brings about a victory in heaven NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS ON EARTH.
- e) And that victory comes with powers in heaven that will make you say one day it was worth it all.
- f) I think the formula goes something like this:
  - (1) One molecule of faith on earth equals 20,000 square feet added to the mansion of your dreams in heaven.
  - (2) That's the victory.
    - (a) *And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. (1 John 5:4)*
      - i) Victory isn't the victory. Faith is the victory.
      - ii) And there are people in our church today, homeless in our estimation, but champions in the eyes of God.
        - (1) Because God loves faith more than you'll ever know.
- 11. And when we say, "O Lord, we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you," we are saying that no matter what outcomes we have on earth, one day, in that transcendent realm of heaven, God will reward every tear we mingle with faith with treasures to boggle the mind.
- 12. So there is the army sent to kill and destroy.
- 13. And there are the powerless people with their eyes on God's character and transcendence.
- C. And what happens?
- D. God speaks.
  - 1. *And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem! Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.'"* (2 Chronicles 20:15-17, NKJV).
  - a) I wear three hats: a pastor, a husband, and a father.
    - (1) All three hats seem purposely designed to humble me. To make me feel clueless, like I don't know what I'm doing.
  - 2. And if it weren't for promises from God like this one, I would have given up long long ago.
  - 3. I told you last week about some scripts that run through my mind. Scripts I inherited from my past: I don't want you, you're stupid... and on and on.
    - a) How about some new scripts:
      - (1) Do not be afraid.
      - (2) Do not be dismayed.
      - (3) The battle is not yours but God's.
      - (4) Position yourself, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.
      - (5) Do not fear or be dismayed.
      - (6) The Lord is with you.
    - b) Because the simple math goes like this:
      - (1) One underdog plus One Great God equals certain victory, guaranteed...
    - c) And even if that victory doesn't come in this life, but in the next, it's okay, because faith wins the applause of heaven, puts to flight the armies of darkness, and lights up a beacon of hope in a very messed up, very depressing, and very dark world.
- E. One underdog plus one God equals victory.
- F. So God told them to go out and stand before their enemy. Right. Stand there. Oh, and guys, bring your kids too.
- G. Are you kidding me? No way!
- H. So Jehoshaphat gets everybody organized. He sends the massive choir first. The worship leader looks back and says, What do you want us to sing?
- I. The king says, "Sing the national anthem."
- J. Do you know ancient Israel had a national anthem? The words are simple:
  - 1. Praise the Lord, for his mercy endures forever.
- K. I can't stop myself from pointing out that that little word "mercy" is one of the most important words in the Hebrew part of our Bible. It's the word hesed and it means "grace."
- L. That national anthem of ancient Israel made one single statement about God: his grace is unto eternity.
- M. That exact phrase is repeated about 50 times in the Bible... his grace endures forever.
- N. Even though troubles.
- O. Even through a trials.
- P. Even through a "frenado."
  - 1. Nothing can stop his grace.
    - a) Why?
      - b) Because his grace is as strong as the Cross.
        - (1) Jesus left the comforts of heaven. A perfect place with perfect happiness and pleasure and joy.
        - (2) He came to a world that didn't want him.
        - (3) He accepted poverty, and weakness, and homelessness, and deprivation.
        - (4) He taught people who argued against him.
        - (5) He forgave people who sinned against him.
        - (6) He loved people who betrayed him and hated him.
        - (7) Jesus was hungry, thirsty, worn out, and tired.
        - (8) He endured mocking, rejection, slander, misrepresentation, mischaracterization, false trials, judgment, beatings, torture, nakedness, humiliation, scourging, mockings, laughter, nails driven through his hands and feet.
        - (9) He felt the full weight of his broken body hanging on those nails through his hands and feet, and the excruciating pain of lifting himself up to breath by pressing on those nail pierced feet, and fighting hard not to suffocate.

- (10) And as if that were not enough, he embraced into his own being the vast weight of the world's sin... yours and mine, our hatred, our lust, our selfishness, our lies, our hypocrisies, our critical spirit, our self-justifying phoniness...
- (11) And with our sins, Jesus felt the unfettered wrath of God... the divine judgment, the infinite condemnation... he received the full penalty of all our sins on that Cross.
- (12) All that he endured, all that he suffered, all that he felt, and all accepted into his life...
- (13) He did because of love.
- (14) And he did it because of grace. The heart of Scripture is Christ, the heart of Christ is grace, and the heart of grace is the cross.
- (15) The Cross of Christ proves that God cares more than we'll ever know, and that when every door seems shut, he can still make a way.
- (16) And the resurrection proves there's a better day coming.

Q. If God is for us, who can be against us?

1. *Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another. So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped. (2 Chronicles 20:22-24)*

R. Sometimes you gotta praise God before he does the thing you're praising him for.

1. Not to manipulate him... It's praise just for who he is... a God whose mercy (hesed) endures forever.
2. Did you ever have a problem that took care of itself before you arrived?
3. The battle was over before God's people even showed up. There's a lot here, but just one more thing:
4. God destroyed the enemies... did the people help him? No. God did all the work, God delivered a blessing, and he did all the work.

S. We have a word for this.

1. Grace.
2. Then what happened?
  - a) *When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on the dead bodies, and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil because there was so much. (2 Chronicles 20:25)*
3. God used the very armies that the devil intended for evil as a source of riches and blessings for his people.
4. Three days gathering the spoil.
5. We have a word for this too, do you know what it is?
  - a) Amazing Grace... how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

IV. God is for the underdog

A. God is...

1. *A father to the fatherless (Ps 68:5)*
2. *A defender of widows (Ps 68:5)*
3. *And a friend of sinners (Luke 7:34)*
4. *He lifts up the lowly (Luke 1:52)*
5. *Gives grace to the humble (Pr 3:24)*
6. *And supplies power to the weak (Isa 40:29)*
7. *If you're last he'll make you first (Matt 20:16)*
8. *If you're least he'll make you great (Luke 9:48)*
9. *And if you're lost, he'll seek you till he finds you (Matt 28:12)*
10. *If you're blind, you'll see (Luke 7:22)*
11. *If you're deaf, you'll hear (Lu 7:22)*
12. *If you're lame, you'll walk (Lu 7:22)*
13. *If you're dead, you'll rise again (Lu 15:24)*
14. *God heals the broken hearted (Luke 4:28; Ps 34:18)*
15. *He sets the captives free (Lu 4:18)*
16. *He cares for the homeless (1 For4:11)*
17. *He redeems the bankrupt (Isa 55:1-3)*
18. *He forgives the guilty (Dan 9:9)*
19. *And he brings victory from the ashes of defeat (Ps 98:1; 1 Cor 15:57)*
20. God can do all things.
21. Because he made all things. And owns all things.
22. He sees the end from the beginning. And works all things after the counsel of his will.
23. And even if you don't deserve it, he'll reach his hand of compassion toward you, and say "Take my hand."
24. "I will make a way.
25. And I will see you through."
  - a) My Lord knows the way through the wilderness... all I have to do is follow.
26. Do you know him?
27. Will you learn of him?
28. Will you trust him?
29. Will you follow him?

B. I don't know what or where or when or how God will do what God will do with me, and you, and Redding, and Shasta, and Neighborhood.

1. But this I believe with all my heart.
2. God will make away.
3. Because no matter how big our troubles are, they are never a match for God.