

TAKING THE CITY

(By: Emerson Blythe)

TEXT: Pr 16:32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

HE'S TALKING ABOUT "TAKING A CITY." BACK IN THIS DAY IN TIME, AND THIS PART OF THE WORLD, THE WAY YOU INVADED AND POSSESSED A LAND WAS BY TAKING THE CITIES, ONE CITY AT A TIME.

WHEN THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL CONQUERED THEIR TERRITORY, THIS IS THE WAY THEY DID IT: Deut 3:4 "And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan."

THESE CITIES WERE WELL FORTIFIED. THEY HAD MASSIVE STONE WALLS. AT THE TOP OF THE WALLS, THEY HAD MANNED WATCHTOWERS FOR SURVEILLANCE.

ANYONE ATTEMPTING TO BREACH OR SCALE THE WALLS WAS EASILY TAKEN OUT WITH ARROWS... OR MERELY BY STONES THROWN FROM THE TOP ON THE INSIDE.

TAKING A CITY, OR CONQUERING A CITY, REQUIRED A MASSIVE AMOUNT OF SKILL, STRENGTH, INGENUITY AND FORTITUDE.

(REMEMBER THE STORY OF JOSHUA AND HIS MEN TRYING TO TAKE THE CITY OF JERICHO? Josh. 6:1 says: "Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in." TEN OF THE TWELVE SPIES THOUGHT TAKING IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE. JOSHUA AND CALEB THOUGHT THEY COULD DO IT... WITH THE HELP OF GOD. AND WE KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY... HOW THAT, WITH MARCHING, SHOUTING AND BLOWING THE TRUMPET FOR A WEEK, GOD MADE THE WALLS FALL FLAT.)

SO... AS PROVERBS 16:32 SUGGESTS, TAKING A CITY WAS A VERY GREAT ACHIEVEMENT.

BUT NOW LOOK WHAT HE SAYS: "**He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.**"

HE THAT RULES HIS OWN SPIRIT IS BETTER THAN HE THAT TAKETH A CITY.

THE ANALOGY IS VERY BEFITTING. IT TOOK MUCH SELF-DISCIPLINE, INGENUITY AND STRENGTH TO CAPTURE A CITY. AND IT TAKES MUCH DISCIPLINE AND DETERMINATION TO WIN A CITY IN THE LIFE TO COME!

TALKING ABOUT ABRAHAM, Heb 11:10: "For he looked for a **city** which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Heb 11:16: "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not

ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Heb 13:14: "For here have we no continuing city, ***but we seek one to come.***"

Re 21:2: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

Re 21:23: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Re 22:14: "***Blessed are they that do his commandments,*** that they may have right to the tree of life, ***and may enter in through the gates into the city.***"

SO... HE THAT RULES HIS OWN SPIRIT IS BETTER THAN HE THAT TAKETH A CITY. (FOR THIS HEAVENLY CITY IS GREATER THAN ANY CITY WE HAVE EVER SEEN! -And we have to rule our spirit to go there!)

AND WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO WIN THIS CITY? --IT TAKES CONTROLLING YOUR TEMPER AND MASTERING YOUR CONDUCT!

Heb 12:14: "***Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:*** 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

* * * Heb 12:22: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the ***city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,*** and to an innumerable company of angels..."

We know the story of Esau... how that when he was returning from a hunting trip he was very hungry, and when he observed his brother cooking pottage, in this moment of weakness he "traded his birthright for a mess of pottage," and after having made the deal, couldn't get around it. BY THE SAME TOKEN, IN OUR MOMENTS OF WEAKNESS, WE ARE APT TO DO AND SAY THINGS THAT WILL FORFEIT OUR INHERITANCE IN THE HEAVENLY CITY!!! -AND AFTER WE COME TO THE END OF LIFE, IT WILL BE TOO LATE TO CHANGE!

RULING YOUR SPIRIT... CAN YOU DO IT? -It sounds easy, but it turns out to be so hard. We try turning over new leaves, counting to three, making new year's resolutions, biting our tongues, adopting positive mental attitudes, going to seminars... and then going back into the same old

ruts!

RULING YOUR SPIRIT... BRIDLING YOUR TONGUE... CONTROLLING YOUR TEMPER... AS THE APOSTLE PAUL PUT IT: Rom 7:18: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; **but how to perform that which is good I find not.** 19 **For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.**" * * * Exclaiming in verse 24: "**O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**"

EVEN THOUGH OUR TEXT IS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT, THE IDEA IS VERY PROLIFERENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE COMMON NEW TESTAMENT WORD "TEMPERATE" OR "TEMPERANCE" CARRIES WITH IT THE MEANING OF "SELF-CONTROL."

1Cor 9:24: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is **temperate in all things.** Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

ESV (English Standard Version): "24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises **self-control** in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. 27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."

- Ac 24:25 Paul reasoned with Felix of righteousness, **temperance**, and judgment to come.
- Gal. 5:23 lists "**Temperance**" as one of the fruits of the Spirit.
- Tit. 2:2, An overseer must be **temperate**.
- 2 Pet 1:5, **Temperance** is one of the "Christian Graces."

WHAT MAKES US PRONE TO LOSE OUR TEMPER AND YIELD TO THE LUSTS OF THE FLESH?

--**THE SAME FORCE THAT CAUSED EVE TO EAT OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT... THE SERPENT, THE TEMPTER.** 1Th 3:5: "For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means **the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.**"

2Cor. 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

2Cor. 2:11 "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

Jas 1:3: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is

drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth ***sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.***"

LuKE 22:3 says "Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot," and that's when he set out to betray Jesus."

Jesus told Peter: Luk 22:31 "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

SECTION TWO: HOW DO WE CONTROL OUR SELVES, RULE OUR SPIRITS AND TAKE THE CITY?

NUMBER ONE: REALIZE WHAT IS AT STAKE.

WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM EATING RAT POISIN? IT LOOKS GOOD. IT SMELLS GOOD. IT PROBABLY WOULD TASTE GOOD. WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM EATING IT? --**YOU KNOW YOUR LIFE WOULD BE AT STAKE!**

Mat 16:26: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Heb 10:26: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

JACOB COULD HAVE BETTER RESISTED THE TEMPTATION TO SELL HIS BIRTHRIGHT IF HE HAD MORE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED THE CONSEQUENCES.

Mr 9:43: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, ***than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.***" So... we must remind ourselves, it's just not worth it!

NUMBER TWO: REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS SAID ABOUT IT

Psa 119:11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

WHEN, AS A YOUNG MAN ON A BACK ROAD, THAT SCHOOL CHUM PULLS BESIDE YOU, HONKING AND REVING THAT RAGGED OUT HOT ROD, DARING YOU FOR A DRAG RACE, WHAT IS THE FIRST DETERRENT? --IS IT NOT THE FACT THAT YOUR DAD HAS SAID, "DON'T BE RACING; THAT'S A FOOL'S GAME"?

THEN WHEN YOU ARE TEMPTED, REMEMBER THAT YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN SAID, "THOU SHALT NOT TAKE GOD'S NAME IN VAIN; HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; THOU SHALT NOT KILL, THOU SHALT NOT STEAL, THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY AND THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS."

Ps 37:31 SAYS, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. "

NUMBER THREE: TAKE THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

IN EPHESIANS 6, PAUS SAYS, "having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

AND THEN FOURTHLY: PRAY... ASK GOD'S HELP.

As Paul ended the discourse about the armour of God, he said, "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: ***Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...***"

SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO JUST REALIZE THAT WE CAN'T HANDLE IT ALL BY OURSELVES, AND CALL FOR REINFORCEMENTS! --AND GOD HAS PROMISED TO PROVIDE!

1Co 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: ***but God is faithful, who will not suffer (permit) you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.***"

EVEN JESUS CALLED FOR REINFORCEMENT! Mr 1:13: "And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; ***and the angels ministered unto him.***"

IN THE BEGINNING, JESUS TAUGHT US TO PRAY: "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Mat 6:13 ***And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:*** For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

2Pe. 2:9: "***The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations,*** and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

HE TOLD THE DISCIPLES: Mt 26:41 "***Watch and pray,*** that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

THE APOSTLE PAUL SAID, 2Tim 4:17 "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me..."

HE SAID, 2Ti 4:18 "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

THIS IS A RESOURCE THAT WE ALL TOO OFTEN FORGET! In Ephesians 3, the Apostle Paul said he "bowed his knees" unto God... that is, he PRAYED for the Ephesians, (verse 16) "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might ***by his Spirit in the inner man...***"

He said in Eph 6:10 "Finally, my brethren, be ***strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.***"

Jobe said, Job 23:6 "Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me."

SO... **He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.**

ARE WE GOING TO TAKE THE CITY, OR, ARE WE GOING TO LET THE DEVIL CHEAT US OUT OF IT? JESUS SAYS, Re 3:11 "Behold, I come quickly: ***hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*** 12 Him that ***overcometh*** will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the ***name of the city of my God,*** which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

ARE YOU IN CHRIST? ARE YOU KEEPING UNDER YOUR BODY AND BRINGING IT INTO SUBJECTION?