

One Surefire Way to Lose in Spiritual Warfare

God made the Israelites a promise to bring them into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites and the Jebusites—all the “-ites,” as some say—into the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 13:5). Fulfilling this **prophetic** promise, then, meant engaging in a battle to dispossess all the so-called “-ites” from the land in which they lived. It meant going to war with the enemies.

Unfortunately, some of the Israelites moved in **presumption** against the Amorites and felt more than the sting of defeat—they felt the sting of death in the wake of disobedience. As you read this article, remember this: Presumption can be deadly.

In fact, while the King James Version of the **Bible** only mentions the words *presume*, *presumed*, *presumptuous* and *presumptuously* 11 times, it almost always leads to death. So it stands to reason that wisdom cries out against entering into spiritual battle presumptuously. It's not likely that you'll die, but you could get smacked around by the enemy of your soul. So let's learn this lesson from the Israelites and learn it well.

Losing the Battle Begins With Unbelief

The seeds of Israel's defeat took root after Moses sent men to Canaan to spy out the land God promised to give them (Num. 13:1-2). When they returned, they saw that it was just as Moses prophesied—a land flowing with milk and honey. What's more, the Israelites brought back grapes, pomegranates and figs. It must have been a welcome sight after so much manna and quail!

But even in the face of God's prophesied provision, Israel's

leaders brought back a bad report. It all started with one negative word: *nevertheless*. “Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan” (vv. 28-29).

As the story goes, only Caleb and Joshua believed God and declared, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it” (v. 30). The Israelites believed the negative naysayers rather than the Spirit-inspired dynamic duo of faith. They cried. They wept. They complained against Moses and Aaron. They wished to return to Egypt. They even started talking about electing a leader to go back to bondage! Moses and Aaron went into immediate **intercession**, but God pronounced a death sentence on the unbelievers.

Presumption in the Face of God

The men who brought the evil report about the land died in a plague, but others would soon die in their presumption. After mourning the loss of their tribal leaders, the people decided they’d better obey the Lord and take the land. The only problem was they were moving in presumption. God did not tell them to go up against the enemies at that time. Timing is everything in a battle plan.

Moses tried to warn them: “Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed. Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord is not among you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you” (Num. 14:41-43).

And then: “They presumed to go up to the mountaintop.

Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed from the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah” (vv. 44-45).

As I’ve said before, there’s one question every believer should ask before engaging in spiritual warfare: “Shall I go up?” In other words, we need to be led by the **Holy Spirit** into battle if we want God to lead us into triumph. If we lose a battle, it could very well be that the **Holy Spirit** didn’t lead us into the spiritual skirmish in the first place.

Before you run to the battle line, ask the **Holy Spirit**, “Shall I go up?” Then obey what He tells you. It could be He’s assigned someone else to go up and defeat the enemy. It could be that God is taking the battle into His own hands. Or it could be that you aren’t yet skilled enough in battle to take on the enemy that’s rising up. The reason doesn’t matter. What matters is being in the will of God, even in our spiritual warfare. Amen.

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