

***“Be Strong and Courageous!”***

**2 Chronicles 32:7-8**

**Memorial Day, 2020**

Author Gary Inrig tells a story of two soldiers fighting in France during WWI. They were best friends—they had enlisted together, trained together, shipped to France together, and fought side by side in the trenches together. One of the friends was wounded on the battlefield, and because of heavy machinegun fire, he couldn’t crawl back to the trench. His friend was going to help him when his sergeant pulled him back into the trench. The sergeant yelled that his friend was probably dead, and that he would probably get killed trying to rescue his wounded friend.

When the sergeant walked away, the friend climbed out the trench and ran to his friend. A few minutes later, the soldier staggered back mortally wounded with his friend, who had just died, cradled in his arms. The sergeant, angry and moved, yelled, “What a waste. He’s dead and you’re dying. It just wasn’t worth it!” With his dying breath, the soldier said, “Oh, yes, it was, Sarge. When I got to him, the last thing he said was, “I knew you would come, Jim.”

On this Memorial Day weekend, we thank God for the men and women who have died for our country. We are grateful for their ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. These men and women were courageous in serving our country, and facing our enemies.

King Hezekiah, a godly king and leader of Judah (southern Israel), turned his people back to God, to worship Him in the Temple. The writer of 2 Chronicles said about Hezekiah: *“He did what was good and upright and true before the Lord his God. He was diligent in every deed that he began in the service of God’s temple, in the instruction and the commands, in order to seek his God, and he prospered”* (31:20-21). During Hezekiah’s reign, the king of Assyria, Sennacherib, came to destroy Jerusalem, and to take thousands of Israelites back to Assyria to be slaves. He mocked Hezekiah and the God of Israel, saying there was no god or army that could deliver Judah from his hands.

Hezekiah ramped up military fortifications around Jerusalem, and he went to the Temple to seek God’s help. On this Memorial Day weekend, what can we learn from this passage of scripture?

1. Don’t panic, pray (32:8, 20)

*“...We have Yahweh [the LORD] our God to help us and to fight our battles.’ So the people relied on the words of King Hezekiah of Judah.”*

*“King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah...prayed about this and cried out to heaven...”*

- Hezekiah turned to God in prayer, along with the prophet Isaiah. Prayer strengthened and sustained these two leaders. Hezekiah did not fall apart, but he did fall on his knees. He trusted in the promises

of God's faithfulness to him and his people. He encouraged the people by his example of prayer and faith in God. We know that many brave men and women who died for our country turned to God in prayer when they were overwhelmed by the battle in which they died.

- *The Message* says verse 8 this way: "He only has a bunch of mere men; we have our God to help us and fight for us! Morale surged. Hezekiah's words put steel in their spines." The king strengthened his people by putting the situation in perspective: they had God on their side, and the king of Assyria had mere men.
  - When you find yourself in crisis, don't panic. God is not honored by panic or fear. Turn to Him in prayer, asking for His help. Pray for His timely intervention. The psalmist said, "I called to the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me..." (Psalm 118:5).
2. Don't be scared, be strong (32:7)

*"Be strong and courageous! Don't be afraid or discouraged before the king of Assyria or before the large army that is with him, for there are more with us than with him."*

- Hezekiah did not run scared nor did he lose hope. He told his people to "be strong and courageous." He told them not to be afraid or to get discouraged by this large, intimidating enemy army. He pointed out that there were more with Judah than with

Assyria. As it has been said by many others: "God and you make a majority." Paul said, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31b).

- Our strength comes from trusting in God, especially in times of crisis. The psalmist said: "O Israel, trust in the Lord! He is your helper; He is your shield. All you who fear the Lord, trust the Lord! He is your helper; He is your shield" (Psalm 115:9, 11). I know that many of the brave men and women who gave their lives for our country trusted in the Lord, and are enjoying His presence.
- Hezekiah and his people were strong in the Lord, or as *The Message* said: "Hezekiah's words put steel in their spines" (v. 8). They were strong not because of their army or military preparations. They were strong because their confidence was in the Lord God of Israel, El Shaddai—God Almighty. You will find inner strength in times of crisis when you are trusting in God, finding courage in His Son, Jesus Christ. Take strength in Jesus' words: "Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid" (Mark 6:50b).

Are you in a crisis? Are you overwhelmed? Are you surrounded? Remember the words of Hezekiah: "Be strong and courageous! Don't be afraid or discouraged..." (v. 7). God is with you—trust in Him.