

## Setting the stage for a successful summer

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**Bible Text:** 1 Kings 20:1-4  
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You know, you may not realize this when you woke up this morning but today on the calendar, this is the weekend of, this is the celebration of what we know as Pentecost. Almost 2,000 years ago, about this time of year, the Lord poured out his Holy Spirit on what we know as the church, the people of God, and what that did for us is it enabled us to live the life we always wanted to live but never could; it empowered us and blazed us to be the people we always wanted to be but never could, and today as we open the word of God, we're going to be challenged, we're going to be convicted but know this, that this challenge and conviction does not have to be met in your flesh, in your abilities, in your education, in your experience, but in yielding to the Holy Spirit moving and operating in your life, you can be everything the Lord is about to challenge you to be.

Let's pray.

*Lord, as we come to this time, as we prepare to open your word, Lord, this holy moment in our week where we as a family of faith are challenged corporately together, Lord, I pray that all competing voices would be silenced and that we would yield to the movement of your Holy Spirit in our lives. O God, move in us, work through us for the sake of fulfilling your word. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

This morning, I want to challenge you to open your Bibles to two what are going to appear very obscure passages in the Old Testament, the book of 1 Kings 20 and the book of 1 Chronicles 20, and as you open those passage of Scripture, they're going to seem obscure, it's going to seem a little bit strange but just hang in there with me. I promise I'll bring it around full circle.

You know, this is a special day in the life of our family of faith, not just because we had the sixth grade promotion with all the parents praying over their children up there, that was a fabulous event, but it's a special day because beginning next week according to our calendars and according to our schedules, the summer begins. Starting next week, school is out, schedules change, vacations commence, mission trips are taken. I mean, everything is a little bit different for the next few months and so today I want to address a subject matter on how we can prepare or set the stage to have a successful summer. I don't mean having a great family vacation or mission trip or a successful travel ball season, whatever that may mean for you, what I mean is spiritually. How do we set the

stage to have a successful spiritual summer so that when we "get back into the groove of life" early next fall, it's not like, "Oh, I've let it slip or I've let it slide a little bit," but that we actually find ourselves stronger spiritually at the end of the summer than even now at the beginning.

So 1 Kings 20. As I mentioned, it's a little bit of an obscure passage but work with me because as we're going to see in a moment, this story takes place about this time of the year in this individual's life. Verse 1 says,

1 And Benhadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. 2 And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Benhadad, 3 Your silver and thy gold is mine; your wives also and your children, even the best things, are mine. 4 And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to your saying, I am yours, and all that I have.

Now this story found in 1 Kings 20, it's a picture, it's an illustration of for what we're going to speak of this week on having a successful summer coming from a spiritual perspective, but I want to kind of set the stage as far as the atmosphere is concerned. Why is it that this battle took place at this time? Why is it that this conversation occurred at this juncture of this man's life?

Flip a few pages to the right to the book of 1 Chronicles 20 and let me share with you something, what I find intriguing about the atmosphere or the time frame or the way in which things are taking place in 1 Kings 20, because once we understand what the king of Israel is dealing with, we can draw the parallel to our own lives. 1 Chronicles 20:1, it says,

1 And it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out to battle, Joab led forth the power of the army

Now we've just read two very obscure passages and some of you may be thinking and go, "How does that all tie into my life today?" It says there that when the year had expired. Now, for those of you that are guests and visitors, just kind of hang with me for a minute. Those that know me well, I'm fixing to nerd out for just a few. Is that okay? Alright, here we go. All the way back in the book of Exodus 12 when the Israelites are coming out of Egypt, they celebrate the Passover and there is to be bread without leaven, they are supposed to keep their shoes on their feet, the Lord says, "Whenever I give the call, you've got to be ready to go." And the Lord says, "From this moment on, this will be the first month of the year to you." When you get to the book of Leviticus 23, we get more details of what we know as the Passover celebration, that on that first month of the year on the tenth day of the month, the Passover lamb was to be acquired, on the fifteenth day of the month, it was to be sacrificed. It was a picture, it was a foreshadowing, it was a

prophetic moment for whom we know as Jesus Christ and his sacrifice at the Passion Week.

As you continue to read that chapter, you discover that that first month of the year is what you and I would call the month of April. Now you're thinking, "Why is that important?" Well, back in 1 Kings 20, it says that at the times that kings went out to war, here we discover that when the year ends, that's when they do it. So when Benhadad gathered 32 allies with him and he comes to the king of Israel, he had to go through Syria first. The battles that have taken place would have been in the month of April and what we know as the passage in 1 Kings 20 would have been happening about this time of year, and the reason that that is important is because it was during this season of life that their calendars were challenged as well. When men went out to war, there was absenteeism in the home that they were not used to; their schedules were different; the battles would come, the battles would go.

But what I want you to see more about the atmosphere than just the calendar and how it all parallels ours, is notice the rest of verse 1 in 1 Chronicles 20, "Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried at Jerusalem." Now the account in 1 Chronicles is not the same battle as 1 Kings 20. This parallels what we know as 2 Samuel 11 where King David it says that when the days in which kings went out to war, he tarried or he stayed in Jerusalem. Now allow me to quote the late great theologian Babe Ruth who said that idles hands are the devil's playground. When we approach the summer season, our schedules change and how many of us would confess that for the next few months we want it to be the summer of us. We want to do what we want to do. We want to schedule our lives here and there and what we find out is when left to our own devices, it never goes well, does it? David stayed at Jerusalem and the rest of that story is a woman by the name of Bathsheba was bathing in the moonlight. He noticed her, desired to be with her, ended up having a child with her, messing up her marriage, killing her husband. It all went awry. Why? Because he was not where he was supposed to be at the time he was supposed to be there.

When we look at the atmosphere of 1 Kings 20, when we study what does this mean for you and I in our lives, one of the challenges that I want to lay forth in these days and these months ahead as our schedules get a little bit crazier and time is a little bit differently organized is make sure that you're in the right place at the right time and when left to your own idle hands, heed the warning of David. It rarely goes as we would desire.

Back to 1 Kings 20. Not only do we see this time that the kings go out to war, kind of a strategic time in our calendar and a warning for us today, I want you to see the attitude that is not only required of but given forth. Benhadad comes and he says, "Alright, let me lay down the rules here. Your silver and your gold is mine. Your wives are mine. Your children are mine." And notice what he says, "All that I have is yours." Over the course of the next few months, you're going to hear more about this next week but over 1,000 of our people here at First Baptist are going to make their way all over the world to 35

different countries on what we know as short and midterm length mission endeavors and mission trips.

That's an exciting wonderful thing but I want to share with you one such story from a few years ago. An acquaintance of mine, he made his way to a part of the world that is, shall we just say not very friendly to Christians. Their walls that they have in place, the structures that are there, it's just not real accommodating, shall we say. But there was new leadership, there were new laws made, and it was made to where we in the West and those that profess Jesus Christ could actually go into these territories and actually do Gospel work. That being said, this acquaintance of mine took some members of his church and he was a pastor and they went over there and they began to help this congregation. They didn't have a physical building because they were not allowed to in that part of the world at that time, so they brought building materials, they brought laborers and they began to build a physical structure to house their family of faith.

About two or three days into the mission trip, the two pastors were talking and the American pastor asked him, he said, "What do you think about the American church? What do you think about the American believers that you've met? How do they compare to your believers?" And the pastor said, "Well, friend, one thing I can tell you is that the American Christians are the most committed Christians that I've ever met." Well, that pastor did exactly what I would have done on that trip, man, he got a few inches taller. He's like, "Yeah. That's right. That's us. We're God's A Team. I mean, we are the most committed. I mean, you could compare everybody else but, man, we are the superlative. Most committed." The pastor realized by his countenance that he misunderstood and he said, "Sir, I did not mean that as a compliment." He said, "Well, what do you mean?" To which this pastor from an area of which Christianity is depressed at best said, "I don't know when it happened and I don't know why it happened but at some point in your history, American Christians replaced the word 'surrender' with 'commitment.'"

Now I want you to think about the definitions of those two words. When you commit to somebody or when you commit to something or when you commit to an entity, you say, "I'm invested as long as it goes the way I want it to. It's on my terms. It's on my means, my ways." But when you surrender to somebody or surrender to something, you place absolute total control in their hands. We're committed to things as long as it fits our schedule. We're committed to things as long as it didn't cost too much. We're committed to things as long as I'm feeling it, if you know what I mean. But when you surrender much like the king of Israel did in this passage, you say, "I'm giving up all control. It's in your hands."

You know, sadly the most graphic, the most vivid illustration we've got of this difference of commitment and surrender is the band that many people wear on the third finger of their left hand. It's the wedding band. And how many times have you heard the story, maybe it's been in your own family or maybe it's been those that you've walked through the journey of life with and they said they just couldn't go any further. They said it was just too much. They said, "That's not what I signed up for." Can I ask a very hard question today? When you stand before God and others and say, "For better or for

worse," what part of that did you not sign up for? In other words, how many times do we say, "Well, that's not what I want. That's not what I desire." You know Ephesians 5, it's the passage in Scripture we read it almost every wedding ceremony. It talks about the role of the husband, the role of the wife, but in verse 21 here's what it says, "submit yourself to each other in the fear of the Lord." In other words, we are to care more about their desires and their needs and what they need versus ourselves. As soon as we enter into a relationship, "Well, I this and I that, but what about me or my or mine," the next thing you know, we've just entered commitment and not surrender. You see, commitment says, "My schedule. My terms. My way." Surrender says, "Your schedule. Your terms. Your way."

Notice what happens here. When Benhadad comes to him and he says, "Alright, here's the deal. The silver and the gold, the wives, the children," he says, "all that I have is yours." Now I want you to see the actions there. How does this all flush out, how does this all work out because the things that are asked for, the surrender that is required is a wonderful parallel as you and I walk into this summer season and not just with our relationships horizontally but with our vertical relationship with the Lord.

If we are going to be believers that are surrendered and not committed, this is a good guideline here that we have in 1 Kings 20:3, he says, "your silver and your gold, your wives and your children." Let me just unpack that for just a moment. Probably the greatest single struggle that we Western Christians have when it comes to commitment versus surrender is this thing right here called a wallet. You say, "Well, no it's not. We give more money..." Work with me for just a moment. You know, a couple of years ago we did a survey and on that survey we asked people who were born-again, Bible-believing, love Jesus, go to church all the time people, how many of you give regularly? How many of you tithe? How many of you say, "Okay, God, it's yours"? Did you know that over 90% of us said, "I do that." Then we started digging and found out that only 8% did. In other words, we know what we should be surrendered but in reality we're committed. "It wasn't on my schedule. Something came up. You don't realize what broke, fill in the blank." I get it. What does he say? "All that I have is yours."

Do you know what Jesus said in Matthew 6? Jesus made this statement, "Where your treasure is, your heart will be also." We flip that in our culture. I don't know why we flip the words of Jesus. We've said where our heart is, that's where our treasure will be. That's not true because my heart's in a lot of places that I don't have the money to fund, but where I put my stuff, that's where my heart is.

Can I tell you why my kids have my heart? I spend so much money trying to feed those three boys, it's crazy. I mean, every time, y'all know how to spell dad? ATM. That's how you spell dad. All of my treasure is in the refrigerator so my heart is naturally in those that are consuming at an unbelievable rate and pace.

That's a trite example but I think we all get that when our stuff is in the hands of the Lord, he has our heart and maybe today you're wondering, "Why is it that I'm committed? Why

am I not surrendered?" Maybe you need to evaluate yourself based on this standard: have you given him your stuff first and let all the rest flush out?

Second he says, "You can have my wife." Now guys, don't amen that one please. He said, some of guys are going, "That's right. She's yours, God, all summer long. Have a successful summer. She's yours." No. What the passage is saying in order to be surrendered not only our stuff but our relationships. Yes, that does include our marriages. That includes our families. That includes our friends. How many of us are guilty of having a relationship with somebody that we'll go somewhere with but not somebody else based on where we're going? Or maybe we compartmentalize and say, "Well, I don't go there with them or I don't do that with them." In other words, our relationships no matter who, no matter where, no matter what, ought to be all wholly dedicated to the Lord, meaning that whomever we're with, whatever we're doing, wherever it is, it is surrendered to the things of God and not just committed, "Well, God, you don't understand. When I'm with this person based on our history, this is what we do." That's commitment, not surrender.

Then thirdly he says, "You can have the kids." Now every stay-home mom just got Pentecostal all of a sudden and you're like, "That's right! Summertime, God, they're yours!" No, here's what he was saying: first it's the stuff, then it's the relationships, and he says, "You can have my future. You can have my future. You can have my tomorrow. You can have my next week. You can have my next month. You can have my next year."

Do we not all struggle with that? You see, let me tell you what commitment is, commitment is saying, "But God that wasn't on my plan. That wasn't a part of my spreadsheet." Surrender says, "God, it's all yours anyway. It doesn't matter."

You know, as we talk about 1,000+ individuals going on a mission trip this summer, let me share with you the conversation that I've had with hundreds if not thousands of parents and grandparents and well-meaning people who get concerned about, "Well, what if my child goes on that trip and they want to move there? What if my child goes overseas and decides they'd rather stay there for the Gospel than come back home because I have plans. They're going to go to this school. They're going to play that sport and they're going to live in that house." I am yours and all that I have. By the way, for those of you that struggle with the last two minutes, I am a dad who has to say the same thing to myself that I've just said to you. When he says the children, that's our future. How many of us struggle with giving God tomorrow because today is not working out the way we hoped?

I want you to notice the last statement in verse 3 of what the king of Israel says. He says, "All that I am is yours." As we go into the next few months of what we know as the summer, we have a decision to make. Will our faith be one of our terms, our faith will be when it's convenient for me or when something else doesn't come up? Will our focus on the things of the Lord only be when it's convenient or will it be surrender? "Lord, you can have every day. You can have every relationship. You can have every tomorrow and every next week and every next month." You see, the challenge is set before us

strategically on this day looking at the months ahead and are you willing to say, "Okay, God, I'm yours and all that I have. Do with it as you wish."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, as we talk about surrender versus commitment, when we talk about the stuff and we talk about relationships and we talk about the future, you know, maybe there is one of you here today whether in this room or the other side of the camera that said, "You know, you can talk about next week, you can talk about next month, but I'm really concerned about eternity. What happens after this life passes and where do I go and what does that mean?" I've got some great news for you this morning. You can know beyond a shadow of a doubt. 1 John 5:12, it says, "He that has the Son hath life." Verse 13, "I have written these things that you might know that whoever believes on the name of the Son of God can have eternal life." It's not a hope for, a wish, or a could be, it's a guarantee and maybe you're that person today that said, "I need to get eternity settled." Let me just encourage you to have a conversation with the Lord. You don't have to have this conversation out loud. In fact, you don't even have to say the same words that I might say but maybe your conversation would go a little something like this. "God, I just want to confess what you already know about me, Lord, I'm the problem. I'm the one who's messed up. I'm the one that's gone places I should have never gone. I'm the one that said things I should have never said. And I'm the one that's thought things I should have never thought and I realize the Bible says the wages or the result of that is death. God, today I believe, God, I believe you've created an alternate plan not just for eternity but for this life. Lord, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to pay the price for my sin on the cross and three days later raise from the dead so I could be forgiven and I could be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the world's problems but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today who had that conversation with the Lord. Let me just encourage you in a moment just to step out and step forward as we have our time of worship. We'd love to have a conversation with you. We'd love to engage and to hear what the Lord is doing in your life. But maybe you're that believer, maybe you're already that child of God who's struggling. Are you going to do this relationship on your terms or his? Maybe today is not about having a conversation with one of us, maybe today is about walking out of this place in a few moments with the mentality of surrender versus commitment.

*Lord, as we come to this time in our service, thank you. Thank you, God, that you're the God of second chances. Thank you that you're a God of mercy and a God of grace and a God of love and a God of provision. So Lord, we just pray that whatever it is that we need to do, wherever we need to be, whatever needs to be in our life right now to be in conformity with yours, O God, help us through the power of your Holy Spirit to be right where you want us to be. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as our team leads us. Whatever decision, I'll be right down here at the front.