

Preparing for War

"These are the nations that the LORD left so that He might test by them all the Israelites who had not known any of the wars of Canaan, so that succeeding generations of Israelites might be made to experience war..." Judges 3:1-2

God left Israel's enemies in the land to "teach them war." God could have destroyed the heathen and given Israel peace. But then there would have been no testing or proving of Israel. There is no love and commitment in a relationship in which a person's desires are completely satisfied. We "learn obedience by the things which we suffer."¹ God's people are compelled to fight perpetual opposition. If a man does not know how to fight, either he will be destroyed temporally, or God will grant him peace and prosperity and he will be destroyed eternally.

In a profound way, peace and prosperity is a more severe test than war. When at war you sense your need and plead for God's gracious help. In prosperity you tend to feel content and self-sufficient, not sensing your need for God. I may be wrong regarding this, but I suspect that more people lose their souls in prosperity than in war.

People love peace and prosperity and hate war and pain. Yet Israel had little of the former and a great deal of the latter. We think of war and pain as a terrible waste, and it is. But a greater loss is peace and prosperity when it results in straying from God. For you, is a relationship with God of greater value than temporal peace and prosperity, or the opposite?

¹ Hebrews 5:8