

The God of the Hills & Valleys

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. **Mary Ives** (Jake) - have led worship for our ladies & Square 1. She's from Harvest. The daughter of **Hanz Ives**, who's the worship leader for Greg Laurie.
- B. Explain waterline break (porta-potty's). **But**, the water is up & working.
- C. **Happy Flag Day** (Puerto Rico 51st State?). **And The US Army's birthday.**
- D. **Clear up something from last week** - I made the statement, *But taking your life isn't the answer to despair for 2 reasons: 1) it is selfish 2) it does not bring glory to the Lord.*
 - 1. I hurt a friend that sometimes struggles with this. **It is more complicated than this.** I shouldn't have reduced it to something so *simplistic*. (there are a lot of risk factors, **depression** for example is very complex & occurs for a variety of reasons) And for that I am deeply sorry. **It's such an emotional topic, that should never be dealt with in a few sentences...and I'm very sorry.**
- E. I would like to pray for baby **Grant** (Steve Wimberly's daughter **Leigh** had a few weeks ago).
 - 1. Has **Aortic Valve Stenosis**. Going to do a **cath/balloon/angioplasty** procedure in his heart **tomorrow**. **Again in several months**. Ultimately open heart surgery when he's strong enough. [**Graham/Leigh/Grant; Greer**]

II. Slide2 Intro: The God of the Hills & Valleys

- A. **Ahab** has gone down in history as *the wickedest king* Israel ever had.
 - 1. His heathen wife, **Jezebel**, ruled him from behind the scenes **and** saw to it that Baal worship was made the official religion of the land.
 - 2. In these last 3 chapters we see his **sins** **and** his **final judgment** from God.
- B. It seemed that in **the last chapter** the only thing that we were waiting for was Ahab & Israel's **judgment...but** remember...our patient God, is a God who **takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked**, **but** desires to grant **life** and **forgiveness**.
 - 1. **Slide3 As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so**

they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness (turn your life around, reverse your evil ways), *O people of Israel! Why should you die?* Ezek.33:11

2. *And so...see if you pick up on, in the story this evening...God's grace, mercy, loving kindness, wisdom given, His omnipotence, & His providence as we read through this.*

III. Slide4 **GOD OF THE HILLS (1-22)** AHAB DEFEATS SYRIANS PART#1

- A. Their national religion faded. God's Word lost its place. So *dry rot & decay* ate away the strength of the national heart.
- B. (4) Ahab was willing to compromise his family/wealth in the face of this military threat.
- C. Slide5 (11) I like the old Living Bible, *The king of Israel retorted, "Don't count your chickens before they hatch!"*
 1. A proverbial saying reminding Ben-hadad that victory cannot be assured until the battle is over.
 2. Slide6-8 Eg. **Laurent Mangel** got caught short in Feb.2011 in the *Tour of the Mediterranean*. At the end of the first stage he celebrated his victory from the 5-man breakaway, only to have *French champion Thomas Voeckler* nudge ahead of him on the line with **a bike throw**. *Voeckler landed up taking the stage and the overall leader's jersey.*
- D. (12) **Drunkenness** - as in the case of *Belshazzar*, so here, *drunkenness* was the predecessor of defeat.
- E. (13) **Grace**. *God's Loving Kindness follows us into the far country of undisciplined living.*
 1. Though Elijah wasn't going to speak to him anymore, an unknown prophet comes.
 - a) *If someone wont listen to the trumpet, maybe the flute?*
- F. (14) **The young leaders** - God often uses *the weakest & most unlikely tools*. *Maybe so no flesh will glory in His presence.*
- G. (22) Such practical counsel **Strengthen yourself** - Heb, *chazaq* conveys the sense of *do your best, gain power, or have courage.*

IV. Slide9 **GOD OF THE VALLEYS (23-30)** AHAB DEFEATS SYRIANS PART#2

- A. (23) In the polytheistic setting of *the ancient Near East*, gods were generally considered as having *defined territorial jurisdiction*, just as political leaders would have.
- B. Foot soldiers were no match for Ben-hadad's chariots and horses on flat ground, **whereas** the Israelites had an advantage on hills and rough terrain.
1. So, in the next *dry season* he returns to Samaria.
- C. (27) Despite the *size disparity* between Syria's massive army and the small force of Israel, Ahab defeats Ben-hadad with the help of an unnamed prophet.
- D. (30) 1993 classic *Let the Walls Fall Down*.
- E. **Slide10** He is the God of both Hills & Valleys [*systole* (contracts) *diastole* (heart muscle relax)]
Life's ups/downs [cardiac cycle]
- a) What is God to **you**? Is He only the God of **the Hills** (mnt tops)?
- b) We expect *religion to serve us* when we come to *the great summits of experience*.
- (1) These are times of rapture and vision where we stand with God on these holy mountains of our life. **But is that all?**
- c) **God is with us in the Valleys**.
- (1) **Slide11a** When we descend into **the valley of weeping**. Ps.84:6 *When they walk through the Valley of Weeping*(Baca), *it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings*.
- (2) **Or** when we descend into into **the valley of shadow of death**, **or** the valley of **obscurity and loneliness**, **or** the valley of **conflict**, we can say with the Psalmist, *Thou art with me*. Ps.23:4
- d) **Most of us, spend a large part of life** in the valleys, walking among **commonplace duties**. Let's make sure in these *shadowed days* that we are walking in *close companionship* with our **divine friend**.
- e) **And when our path does ascend**...w/the mountain breeze is in our face...& when our view widens, **may we stand** with God on our high places as with *hinds feet*.
- (1) **Slide11b** Hab.3:19 *The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills*.

F. So, the **1st victory** was to teach **Ahab** that the Lord was the true God. **The 2nd victory** was to show **the enemy** that the Lord was not *weak & limited*, like the heathen gods.

V. Slide12 **GOD OF MERCIFUL KINGS (31-34)**

A. Slide13/14 Look at *Lam.3:22-24*

B. Mercies - *God's wrath comes by measure. His mercy without measure.*

1. Why not enough Mercy for **a whole year** or for a **lifetime**...up front?
2. Rabbi Ben Jochai's parable: Once there was **a king** who had **a son** to whom he gave a **yearly allowance**, paying him the **entire sum** on the **fixed date**. It soon happened that the day on which the allowance was due was the only day of the year when the father ever saw his son. So the king changed his plan and gave his son **day by day that which was sufficient for the day**; and then the son visited his father **every morning**. How he needed his father's unbroken love, companionship, wisdom and giving! Thus God dealt with Israel. **And deals with us.**

C. Compassion's – unending, unending. *Never ending, never failing.*

1. Compassion, love in action.
2. **New every morning** - If God's compassion's are *new every morning* we have the right to claim them daily. *Let each day be the dawn of a new day.*
 - a) Isn't this the concept of not letting the sun go down on your wrath?
3. **Start over again!** No matter how many times you failed the day before.
4. **One day at a time.** A newspaperman who had written a book about the **Eskimos** and their **customs** and **beliefs**. He said the Eskimos believe that **when they go to sleep at night they die** -- that they are dead to the world. **Then**, when they **wake up in the morning**, they have been **resurrected** and are **living a new life**. **Therefore**, no Eskimo is more than **one day old**.
 - a) The psalmist says, *For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.* Ps.30:5

D. The Lord is my Portion (24) - This is the Climax!

- E. (31) **Ropes on our heads** - refers to a practice connected to *leading war captives away*, as depicted in many ancient Near Eastern reliefs.
- F. **We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings** - It is still the same today, *the rebel sinner* is encouraged by the thought of *the mercy of God*, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. :)
- G. (32) **My brother** - a diplomatic phrase used between parties of equal status.
- H. (33) **Watching closely to see** - took this as *a good omen*, *nachash*, implies the practice of divination.
- I. **Not claiming a complete Victory.**
1. **In which area of your life have you come only part of the way? Partial victory?**
 - a) When you think the battle is over, you may face your greatest danger and experience your greatest defeat.

VI. Slide13 **GOD OVER AHAB (35-43)**

- A. (35) In order to convey a message to King Ahab, *a prophet disguises himself as a soldier who irresponsibly allowed a prisoner to escape.*
- B. (40) **While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone** - be careful about *being busy with so many petty details*, we may end up missing *divinely given opportunities.*
- C. (40b) The king was *self-condemned* in his judgment of the prophet. Let's remember, in deciding the case of **others**, we are pronouncing sentences on **ourselves**.
1. *For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.* Mt.7:1
- D. (43) **Pouting** doesn't get you any where...**but** repentance would have.