In Whom Do You Trust?

"In whom do you trust now that you have rebelled against me?"
2 Kings 18:20

Here is an early instance of the use of propaganda in war. Sennacherib, King of Assyria, and his advisors were as aware of its importance as were present day governments two and a half thousand years later during the Iraq War! Both were equally skilful in their specious setting forth of the facts – or rather some of them – as well as in their manipulation and concealment of the truth.

In the recent conflict the purpose of both opposing sides was identical to that of Sennacherib. It was to undermine the morale of the civilian population so that victory would be theirs with less cost in lives and money than if they relied exclusively on military weapons.

According to the dictionary, "morale" is 'the moral condition – especially as regards discipline and confidence'. The urgent request of King Hezekiah's representatives, that the Field Commander should speak in Aramaic and not in Hebrew, was a tribute to the success of the media methods he used.

The Field Commander's exposé of Hezekiah's pitiful weakness (see v.23 & 24) by making a derisive offer to supply two thousand horses if the people of Judah could provide the riders was probably only a slight overstatement of the true facts of the case. It reminds one of an overwhelmingly powerful football team that offers the assistance of a few of their players to their opponents who would otherwise hardly give them any sort of a game!

The appeal to history in verses 33-35 was not easily counter-argued since it was perfectly true that Sennacherib's career of conquest had never yet been halted. Where the gods of Hamath and Arpad and the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah, had proved impotent to withstand the king, was it likely a small and weak nation like Judah could put up a more effective resistance?

But the facts were twisted. The Field Commander's suggestion that Hezekiah had been unfaithful to the God he professed to trust by the removal of the high places, was an obvious misunderstanding of the revival Hezekiah had initiated. And, of course, the Field Commander's claim that God had commissioned Sennacherib to attack Jerusalem was completely false. Still the general effect of the propaganda was so serious that the leaders rent their clothes (v. 37). Clearly there was a collapse of morale among the people.

In similar ways the enemy of our souls presents his challenge to us today in the Muslim World. He is a past master at the art of propaganda! Even the Scriptures on which we stand can be twisted to his purposes. Undeniable facts can be so skilfully mixed with plausible falsehoods that our defences are breached without the need for a frontal attack. Satan can point to many victories and nothing is to be gained by glossing over them. Triumphalism in Christian work in the Muslim World is misleading. As an Englishman it is salutary to be reminded by my American friends of their victories over us in the Revolutionary War.

John Bunyan wrote of the arguments Apollyon used to discourage and break the morale of Christian. Satan still uses these arguments against every worker, for we all have to go through the valley of humiliation. (Pilgrim's Progress Ch. 9)

Apollyon argues that many a worker has come to a "sticky" end, *"Because they go against me and my ways"*. He tells how many Christians have been given a shameful death and stresses the peace and comfort he offers to those who return and follow him! He argues, *"It is ordinary for those who have professed themselves His (God's) servants, after a while to give Him the slip and return again to me!"* Attrition statistics in the Muslim World are high!

Surely each one of us who seeks to live a life of utter consecration to the will of God can think of former co-workers and friends who seem to have listened to Apollyon. They seem to have lowered their 'battle flags' little by little. In 2 Kings 19:13 Sennacherib asks, ***"Where are the kings of ….?"*** We can ask, *'Where are those who once ran well, who pledged themselves to a Revolution of Love and who seemed so ardent in the cause of world mission?'*

It is easy for Satan to point out our weakness and our helplessness. It is obvious to us as well as to him! His statements about us are as true as they are cruel! Apollyon's statements about Christian are true of us:

"You've already been unfaithful in your service."

"You lost heart when you first set out."

"You tried wrong ways …."

"You sinfully fell asleep …. You were nearly persuaded to go back."

"When you talk of your journey, … you inwardly long to be praised for all you've said and done!"

So Satan tries to get us off guard and undermine our morale so our hearts are disturbed when they should be at rest. We also face the danger that our hearts may be at rest in regard to matters that ought to stir us to action! So the propaganda of the enemy discourages and demoralises us so that fear and panic can seize our hearts. We begin to doubt our perfect security in Jesus and His complete preparedness to meet any possible enemy or combination of enemies. We begin to doubt the absolute certainty we once had that no plots of the devil can take God unawares!

Let us look again at the Field Commander's scornful question, ***"In whom do you trust?"*** We need to ask ourselves in whom we are actually putting our confidence. Is it ever so little in ourselves? Is it in others – our leaders, our supporters or perhaps in people of importance with money or influence? As workers in the Muslim World, we need to pray constantly that our assertion of our dependency on God alone may really be true.

There is a striking contrast in Jer. 17:5-8 between the person who trusts in man (***"Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength…."***) and the person who trusts in the Lord (***"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him."***) Immediately following these verses we read, in v. 9, the solemn statement that, ***"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick."*** Let us take care not to deceive ourselves and others into imagining that our trust is in God when, in actual fact, our confidence is in man and man's methods.

The Field Commander wasn't mistaken when he hinted that at least some of the people were, ***"Depending on Egypt – that splintered reed of a staff that will pierce a man's hand and wound him if he leans on it."*** (v. 21) God's instruction to His people was, ***"In quietness and in trust will be your strength."*** (Is. 30:15) But they refused to obey! They said, ***"No! We will flee upon horses!"*** In other words*, 'We have a better plan than God's plan!"* But neither their horses nor the strength of Pharaoh helped them at all.

When Satan asks, *"In whom do you trust?"* Respond with, *"Thank you, Satan, for the reminder. I can tell you without any hesitation in whom I trust! I trust in the everlasting mercy of God!"*

Here are some Scriptures to use:

Ps. 20:7 ***"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will trust in the name of the Lord our God."***

Ps. 125:1 ***"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion that cannot be moved but abides for ever!"***

Ps. 40:4 ***"Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust!"***

Is. 50:10 ***"I may sometimes walk in darkness and have no light, but I trust in the name of the Lord and rely on my God."***

1 Tim. 6:10 ***"I trust in the Living God who gives me all things richly to enjoy."***

2 Tim. 1:12 ***"I know whom I have trusted and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."***

Mt. 16:23 ***"Get behind me, Satan"***

Ps. 84:12 ***"O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You. I will trust and not be afraid."***