

# Born to Win

## Stay Safe

by Ronald L. Dart

Sometimes I wonder about Big Media in this country. People do a lot of groaning and complaining about “Big Oil” and “Big Pharmaceuticals”; but then I pick up a copy of *U.S. News [and World Report]* and on the cover is a picture of John Negroponte, National Intelligence Director, with this headline: “Can This Man Keep America Safe?” Biggest word in the headline? “Safe”.

Now, I’m going to answer the question for you in no uncertain terms: No. No, John Negroponte—in fact, no man...there is no combination: Secretary of Defense, National Security Agency, CIA, FBI, Secretary of State, Vice President or President (much less Congress), all working together, all working *perfectly*, cannot keep America safe. Now, you don’t have to be religious to realize that to place that kind of responsibility on *any man*, or any combination of men, is to imply God-like qualities—qualities that no human being possesses and that even the *best* organization of men cannot produce.

Now, what really *bothers* me about the idea is that so many people take that kind of talk seriously. I have to think they do, or people wouldn’t keep using it like they do. It’s unfortunate because, in fact, the *U.S. News* cover article on national intelligence was a good overview of what the intelligence community is doing and trying to do. It is, in many ways, reassuring. The men who are working hard on this project are intelligent, they’re dedicated, and they have the best interests of our country at heart. We are all going to have to start training ourselves to read subtitles and ignore all the hype, because there is information there and it’s encouraging. In this case, the subtitle was: “National Intelligence Director, John Negroponte is trying to make U.S. Spy Agencies More Effective. Is it Working?”

Now, *there* is something worth knowing. Forget about “Can he make America safe?” In fact, the article was a pretty good rundown on the projects, problems, struggles, to defeat a *determined* enemy. And I think those guys who are doing their best...they all deserve credit for what they’re doing and we need to get off their back.

I don’t think anyone in this country thinks that we are *not* going to get another serious blow from *terrorism* in this country. It may be two years, may be five years, it may be ten years; but *everyone* knows it’s coming. The idea, though, of being safe (or safer) has embedded itself *so deeply* in our national consciousness that it dominates even *media* thinking. I guess because that’s the way they think *we* all think. What’s wrong with it is that it’s unrealistic, and anyone who is paying attention *knows* that. It’s the politicians, from the president down through Congress, that have made us super-conscious of being “safe”, or “safer”. 9/11 scared the daylights out of us; and so, consequently, “safe” and “safer” become the dominate words coming from the political chattering class.

Now, I’m learning to *despise* those who use words like “safe” and “safer” to *political* ends. And those who pretend to neutrality are the most dangerous of the lot. And if you’re wondering if I’m talking about the news media, you are very perceptive. Ronald Reagan said something quite profound about this. He said:

You and I are told we must choose between a left or right, [...]

*Ronald Reagan - A Time for Choosing - October 27, 1964*

And it's interesting that I came across this particular quotation this morning, because that's what we *all* were asked to do in the recent election: choose between Left or Right. Reagan continued to say:

[...] but I suggest there is no such thing as a left or right. There is only an up or down. Up to man's age-old dream — the maximum of individual freedom consistent with order — or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism. Regardless of their sincerity, their humanitarian motives, those who would sacrifice freedom for security have embarked on this downward path.

*Ronald Reagan - A Time for Choosing - October 27, 1964*

The path? To totalitarian ant heap. So if *U.S. News* had entitled their article “Can This Man Help Keep Us Free?”, well, they would have opened a question well worth pursuing. Freedom, you know, is a *powerful* biblical idea. So is safety, but not the safety that any human being can provide.

I have two important things to say about safety. The first is where safety comes from. There was a day when God was beginning to sew all this stuff up for Israel, and he's talking about their future—when they get to the Jordan and are ready to cross over into the Promised Land. (And you'll find this in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy. He says this:

#### **Deuteronomy 12**

*AKJV*

<sup>10</sup> But when you go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety;

Now, think about what he said here: “...when *God* gives you rest from all your enemies so you can dwell in safety.” Safety comes from God. But even the safety that comes from God doesn't mean you won't have to fight. It means that when you *do* fight, God will fight *on your side*. What's that worth? Then there is this from Psalm 4:

#### **Psalm 4**

*NKJV*

<sup>6</sup> *There are* many who say,  
“Who will show us *any* good?”

LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.

<sup>7</sup> You have put gladness in my heart,  
More than in the season that their grain and wine increased.

<sup>8</sup> I will both lie down in peace, and sleep;  
For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

What a way of putting it. “I will lie down in peace and sleep, because *you alone* make me dwell in safety.” Now, I have no guarantee of safety in this world—chapter 21 of the Book of Proverbs:

## Proverbs 21

AKJV

<sup>30</sup> There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

<sup>31</sup> The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.

So there is a time to fight. That's what all this getting horses and stuff ready for is about; because horses and chariots were the armored cavalry of that day. They were the tanks. There *is* a time to fight, but *not* under the illusion that we are providing safety for ourselves. If God is out of the picture, war is nothing but death and destruction. Horses and chariots could do the job if God was with you. And when I see our young men preparing for battle, when I see them kneel and pray, I am touched and I am encouraged *profoundly*. We may be rapidly becoming a godless country, but not to these young men. *They* know the battle belongs to the Lord and they go to him before they go into combat. And they are *far* better soldiers than the people they fight. And they *know* that the promise of safety does not mean they won't get hurt. They must fight with courage in the full realization the enemy may take their life, he may take their limbs, he may take their minds; but they want to fight with God *on their side*.

This is the first thing I have to say about being safe: Safety comes *only* from God and a nation that forgets God—a nation that crowds God out of public life—*will lose everything* you'd call safe.

Then there is the second thing I have to say about being safe. Paul writes of it: First Thessalonians, the 5th chapter. He says:

## 1 Thessalonians 5

AKJV

<sup>2</sup> For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

<sup>3</sup> For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes on them, as travail on a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

The preoccupation with being “safe” or “safer” is the road to destruction.

Everyone loves King David, especially when he was a shepherd boy. His encounter with the giant Goliath is classic. He is a boy, he believes *absolutely* in God, and so he goes up to see his brothers; and when he sees everybody all in a *stew* over Goliath—who is a champion of the Philistines, challenging all the armies of Israel—he looks at that and says, “What's everybody worried about? God's on our side. Why isn't anybody fighting him?” Well, somebody heard that and finally they took him in to see King Saul. And in First Samuel 17, David said to Saul:

## 1 Samuel 17

AKJV

<sup>32</sup> [...] Let no man's heart fail because of him [*Goliath*]; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

<sup>33</sup> And Saul said to David, You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for you are but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

<sup>34</sup> And David said to Saul, Your servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

<sup>35</sup> And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

He killed a lion (or a bear—I'm not sure which is which) in *hand-to-hand combat*. I'm impressed. So, anyway, he goes on to say, “I can do this”...

**1 Samuel 17**

AKJV

<sup>36</sup> Your servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, [...]

Why did David feel so confident?

**1 Samuel 17**

AKJV

<sup>36</sup> [...] seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.

That's why.

**1 Samuel 17**

AKJV

<sup>37</sup> David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. [...]

He wasn't even *worried* about the thing. At least, he doesn't *seem* to be. Now, I'm not going to be prepared to say that David was absolutely *fearless*. What I *am* going to say is: He had his fear under control and it was *dominated* by his faith in God.

**1 Samuel 17**

AKJV

<sup>37</sup> [...] And Saul said to David, Go, and the LORD be with you.

He armed David with this armor, but David tried to move in the things and he could hardly move in them. They were too big for him. He put them off and said, "No way." He actually bypassed all the defensive measures that Saul thought would be a good idea to protect him from getting himself killed. David laid it aside.

**1 Samuel 17**

KJ2000

<sup>40</sup> And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a pouch; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

<sup>41</sup> And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bore the shield went before him.

There were *two* of them, mind you; and one of them was bearing the shield that was supposed to protect Goliath from this boy.

**1 Samuel 17**

KJ2000

<sup>41</sup> And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bore the shield went before him.

<sup>42</sup> And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he despised him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

<sup>43</sup> And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

<sup>44</sup> And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give your flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

And then here comes a statement from David that should go down in history:

**1 Samuel 17**

AKJV

<sup>45</sup> You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

<sup>46</sup> This day will the LORD deliver you into my hand; and I will smite you, and take your head from you; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day to the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

And, you know, that last statement is what it's all about.

Now, I have no doubt, coming forward to the present day, that George Bush is a man of faith. He's a praying man; and I have no doubt he called upon God before making the decision to go into Iraq, and he informed himself about the theory of Just War before joining battle. I am quite certain about that. They way Tommy Franks' boys cut through the Iraqi forces suggest to me that they also called on God. I saw little film clips here and there—not often, not a lot—but of bands of men who were either kneeling or standing with their heads bowed, *praying* before they went into battle. One can only wonder if part of the reason the fight, after taking Iraq, has been so long and so bloody and so hard, is that there are just too many of us who don't believe—who rely only on themselves and who are preoccupied with keeping our own skin safe.

The news media has told the whole world that the United States is afraid of casualties, and that if they inflict enough pain on us we will cut and run. Why would they think that? Because we have, and the news media have told them the story again and again. If we lose the fight for Iraq, we will have lost it here at home; we will not have lost it on the battlefield. The men and women that we have on the ground there are not going to lose this war for us. In that sense, Iraq could end up as another Vietnam with *far worse* consequences. But, back to David. He says [He's still speaking to the Philistine.]:

**1 Samuel 17**

AKJV

<sup>47</sup> And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands.

Boy, write that down: “The battle is the LORD's”...as long as you're on his side, as long as you're fighting *with* him, as long as you're fighting *for* him, the battle is the Lord's. When you decide you are *your own* safety—when you decide, “Oh, I can take care of this by myself”—you may be dead.

**1 Samuel 17**

AKJV

<sup>48</sup> And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew near to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

He wasn't afraid. He just *charged* right out there.

**1 Samuel 17**

AKJV

<sup>49</sup> And David put his hand in his bag, and took there a stone, and slang it, and smote the

Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell on his face to the earth.

<sup>50</sup> So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

<sup>51</sup> Therefore David ran, and stood on the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

Now, there's an interesting thing about David after he became king: Time after time, before joining the battle, he consulted with God *before going*. And not many people realize this, but David was the first head of state to disarm Iraq. Yes, absolutely. The problem, you see, in the Middle East at that time is not that different from what it is today. There were armed bands going around. It was not safe to travel. There were fights going on between small, petty kingdoms and other petty kingdoms; and it was just becoming more than anyone should have to bear. In Second Samuel 8, the story is told:

## 2 Samuel 8

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> And after this it came to pass that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

<sup>2</sup> And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive[....]

He killed two-thirds of the fighting men of Moab to put *an end* to the endless battles that were going on, on the other side of Jordan.

## 2 Samuel 8

AKJV

<sup>3</sup> David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.

Now, these names don't amount to much, but the word "Euphrates" does. That's in Iraq. David took from those people...

## 2 Samuel 8

AKJV

<sup>4</sup> [...] a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David hamstrung all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots.

Why'd he do all that? To *disarm* them; because *all* these horses, *all* these chariots, *all* these soldiers were the source of nothing but trouble, fighting, and death. Feel sorry for the horses? But he didn't kill them; he just made it impossible for them to do anything except graze (and maybe make more horses).

Well, David took all these away; and when the Syrians of Damascus decided, "Well, we'd better get over there and help these Iraqis out."

## 2 Samuel 8

AKJV

<sup>5</sup> [...] David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

<sup>6</sup> Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David wherever he went.

Now, this is what this man was doing. And, as I said, he was *continually* saying to the Lord, “Shall I go up and fight?” And the Lord said, “Yep, go up and fight.” He actually built something of an empire, but it had far more to do with creating a regional peace than merely the development of power. But, in the process of it all, David made one big mistake.

On his way to empire, David made one big mistake. Exactly what happened isn’t entirely clear. We know that what he did was wrong and we have to kind of read between the lines to figure out what happened. The story is in Second Samuel, chapter 24. It says:

## 2 Samuel 24

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, [...]

Now, there’s nothing particularly new about that. It seems like the Israelites chose up sides to see who got to make God angry this week, because they *really* had a hard time keeping their act together. In any case, it says in the story...

## 2 Samuel 24

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> [...] and he [God] moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

Now, I think what he is saying is that God’s anger was such that he took his hand away and allowed David to take a *defensive* step...which was not David. Normally David thought offense. But then, again, he was normally consulting God about everything. David wanted to know how many people he had to fight with; so he said, “Let’s take a census.”

## 2 Samuel 24

AKJV

<sup>3</sup> And Joab said to the king, Now the LORD your God add to the people, how many soever they be, an hundred times, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?

Joab knew that this was *entirely* unlike David and really wasn’t right.

## 2 Samuel 24

AKJV

<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding the king’s word prevailed against Joab [Which you would expect.], and against the captains of the host. [...]

It’s interesting that the chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued against this, as well. Normally, that would have been enough to slow David down; but, normally, God would have been with him. Well...

## 2 Samuel 24

AKJV

<sup>4</sup> [...] And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.  
[...]

<sup>8</sup> So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

<sup>9</sup> And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people to the king: and there were in Israel

eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

Let me tell you what this means: David now knew that he could field an army of *one million, three hundred thousand* men. Now, maybe you can see how David was able to create an Israelite peace throughout the Middle East. And he didn't have Europe and the United States holding him back and saying, "You can't do that." He could just do it. And, you know, I think when he saw those numbers... I don't think he had any idea until he saw those numbers how much *power* there was in his hand. And I think it almost frightened him. Because it says:

## 2 Samuel 24

AKJV

<sup>10</sup> And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said to the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech you, O LORD, take away the iniquity of your servant; for I have done very foolishly.

<sup>11</sup> For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,

<sup>12</sup> Go and say to David, [...]

Now, an interesting thing, just in passing: David appears never to have heard directly from God. God didn't talk to him. He always used an intermediary. Now, at this point in time, Gad was his prophet.

## 2 Samuel 24

AKJV

<sup>12</sup> Go and say to David, Thus said the LORD, I offer you three things; choose you one of them, that I may do it to you.

<sup>13</sup> So Gad came to David, and told him, and said to him, Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? or will you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? or that there be three days' pestilence in your land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.

Now, that must have *chilled* David to the bone.

## 2 Samuel 24

AKJV

<sup>14</sup> And David said to Gad, I am in a great strait [*I'm in a narrow place.*]: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

<sup>15</sup> So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

<sup>16</sup> And when the angel stretched out his hand on Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil [*He felt sorry for them.*], and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now your hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing place of Araunah the Jebusite.

And right there, on that spot, is where the deaths stopped. And a moment of history arrived, because this would be the place where Solomon would finally build the temple.

Now, you should know that Jesus never promised his disciples safety. On the contrary, in John 16 he began by saying:

**John 16**

NKJV

- <sup>1</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.
- <sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.

Being a Christian is no bed of roses. Jesus *told* us this, so we have no excuse. We are going to see a lot of things in our time that are going to make us afraid. The question will be whether we have the strength of character and the will to go forward in spite of that. And Jesus had more words for his disciples about being safe. In Matthew 16, he said:

**Matthew 16**

AKJV

- <sup>24</sup> [...] If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- <sup>25</sup> For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
- <sup>26</sup> For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Jesus told us if we go about thinking about safety and looking out for saving our miserable hides, we're going to lose what we're trying to save.

You know, it's really good when we can learn lessons from people who paid a very high price themselves to learn that lesson. Take Helen Keller. Born blind, deaf, she said:

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. Security does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than exposure.

Until next time...

*Christian Educational Ministries*

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*Stay Safe*  
DATE: 11/9/06  
ID: 06SS