

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF VICTORY
A Devotional Meditation from
2 Kings 6:15-17; 2 Chronicles 32:1-8; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 6:10-13
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History abounds with stories of human courage in the face of overwhelming adversity. Consider the heroic defense of the Bastogne, Belgium, in December 1944. Bastogne was at the center of a road network through the densely forested region where Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France come together. On December 15, the German army launched a massive offensive intended to break through the Allied lines and capture the port city of Antwerp. Adolf Hitler's goal was to divide the American and British armies, confuse and demoralize the Allies, and cause them to negotiate peace. This would enable him to concentrate his nation's remaining strength against the Russian forces advancing toward Germany's eastern borders.



The "Cobra King" crew - 1st Lt. Charles Boggess, Cpl. Milton Dickerman, and Pvts. James G. Murphy, Hubert S. Smith and Harold Hafner -- pose for a photo in vicinity of Bastogne, Belgium shortly after the tankers led the armor and infantry column that liberated the city on December 26, 1944. [US Army Photo via Wikimedia Commons](#).

The furious German assault took the Allies by surprise, coming in the dead of winter in the midst of bad weather that neutralized the Allied air forces. The impact of the German assault fell heavily on the untested, newly-arrived troops of the 106th Infantry Division. Virtually overnight, the 16,000 soldiers of the division found themselves cut off, surrounded, and without hope. Thousands surrendered or fled, and the 106th Division ceased to exist as a fighting force. The picture was much the same all along the line.

Allied commanders scrambled to stem the tide and buy time, calling on all available troops and resources. That included the exhausted paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division. They had just come off the line after the hard-fought battle to liberate Holland in Operation Market Garden. The situation was urgent, however, so the 101st was quickly moved from their rest camps in France to Bastogne, with orders to hold as long as possible.

The 101st was in Bastogne by the time the Germans arrived on December 19. The American soldiers found themselves short of everything – food, ammunition, medical supplies, and even winter clothing. Still, the German attacks could not dislodge them. On December 22, the Germans sent a message demanding that the Americans surrender. General Anthony McAuliffe, commanding the 101st Division's defenders, responded defiantly with a single word: "Nuts!"

Why would Gen. McAuliffe respond in such a way? His situation was desperate, his men tired and worn down, and there was no relief in sight. Yet his entire staff agreed with

the decision to continue fighting, and the soldiers in the trenches showed no signs of wanting to surrender. Were they mad? Were they foolish? What made them hold fast to the task at hand?

Perhaps it was the knowledge that, even if they eventually were defeated, they could hold out long enough for the Allies to bring up more resources to stop the German offensive. These veteran soldiers had fought shorthanded and outgunned at every turn since they parachuted into France on D-Day, seven months earlier. And yet they had spearheaded the liberation of France and the Netherlands. They had seen the vast array of Allied airpower, logistics, tanks, and ships, and they knew that ultimate victory was not in doubt. What, then, if that victory would cost their own lives and freedom? The cost to America and to the world would be far greater if they and their comrades gave up in the face of the Nazi menace. And so they held on, for ten long days, against all odds and even against hope.

But during those ten days, their defense of Bastogne placed a terminal disruption in the path of the German offensive. In the meantime, General George Patton's army was fighting to reach the besieged 101st Airborne. That attack in itself was an astounding achievement, and on December 26, Patton's tanks broke through the German lines and rolled into Bastogne. From that point on, the Allied counteroffensive gained momentum, finally erasing all the German gains by the end of January 1945.

The Battle of the Bulge began as a desperate defense against the last German offensive in the west in World War II. It ended with German forces so depleted and exhausted that they could not withstand the Allied assault on the German heartland. For all its fury, the attack was nothing more than the desperate gamble of a foe whose fate had already been sealed. All it took to achieve the final victory was the tenacity of ordinary men and women who refused to give up.

This is exactly what our God tells us to do. The enemy's attacks are frightful, but his success depends less on his actions than on our own fears and inaction. Consider what Elisha the prophet said when a powerful enemy sent an army to capture him:

Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was surrounding the city. So his attendant said to him, "Alas, my master! What are we going to do?"

"Fear not," he replied, "for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "*ADONAI*, please open his eyes that he may see." Then *ADONAI* opened the eyes of the young man and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

2 Kings 6:15-17 TLV

Some decades later, King Hezekiah of Judah encouraged his people in the same way:

After these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He encamped against the fortified cities, intending to break into them for himself. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to wage war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officers and warriors about blocking the waters of the springs outside the city, and they supported him. Many people assembled and blocked off all the springs and the raging wadi in the land saying,

“Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?” Then he took courage and rebuilt the entire wall that had been broken down, raised up the towers, added another outer wall, fortified the Millo in the city of David, and made plenty of weapons and shields. He also appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate, and encouraged them saying, “*Chazak!* Be courageous! Do not be afraid or dismayed by the king of Assyria and the whole horde that is with him—for we have more with us than he has with him! With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is *ADONAI Eloheinu* to help us and to fight our battles.” So the people were encouraged by the words of King Hezekiah of Judah.

2 Chronicles 32:1-8 TLV

This is not merely something for Old Testament times. How much more should we lift up our heads and soldier on in this era, when we have seen what our Messiah did to guarantee our ultimate victory? Paul said as much in his letter to the Romans:

Now we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say in view of these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? It is Messiah, who died, and moreover was raised, and is now at the right hand of God and who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Messiah? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.” But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Messiah *Yeshua* our Lord.

Romans 8:28-39 TLV

Our task, then, is to remain faithful and steadfast. The battle still rages, and it is fierce, but victory is certain. There will be hardship, and even casualties, but if we will not stand and fight, how much more difficult will the battle be for our comrades in arms, or for our children?