

Righteousness in Battle

2 Kings 9:1-37, 10:15-36

Jehu, king of Israel, was righteous while acting as the commander of his army. For the Lord commanded him. We can take this idea further by examining the role of the commander of an army during war. How might you answer the following questions?

1. Is war ever pleasant?
2. Is war ever necessary?
3. Is war ever good?

During a war many people lose their lives. Often, land, homes, cities, industries, and other means of living are also destroyed. Wars happen for many reasons. Some of these reasons are good, and some are bad. Look at the causes below and circle those you think might be good.

1. Protection of freedom.
2. Increasing a country's (or a leader's) wealth.
3. Increasing a country's (or a leader's) power.
4. Protection of human rights.
5. Increasing a country's (or a leader's) land.
6. Bringing a new religion to a group of people.
7. Wiping out a group of people who believe or act differently.
8. Protecting a country's wealth, land, and power.
9. Serving the Lord and His Word.

You might have found it difficult to decide whether to circle some of these because some could be good or bad, depending on the specific circumstances. For example, people have started wars for reasons that appear to be good, but hatred and intolerance of others' faiths was behind their thinking.

During any war, army commanders are asked to do things that are normally considered bad, but that may be necessary or even good in wartime. The Writings for the New Church teach that if the commander of an army looks to the Lord, shuns evils as sins, acts honestly, justly, and faithfully in the duties of his command, he is acting usefully and charitably. And if he is constantly thinking about applying himself to this use and acting on them, then he becomes a charity himself:

If a commander loves peace rather than war, and continues to love peace during war, and only goes to war for the protection of his country, he is not an aggressor but a defender. In battle he is brave and active; after battle, he is mild and merciful. In battle he would be a lion, but after battle, a lamb. Inwardly in himself he does not exult in the slaughter of the enemy and the honor of victory, but in the deliverance of his country and his own people from hostile invasion and the resulting ruin and destruction. He acts prudently; he faithfully looks after his army as the father of a family looks after his children and servants; he loves each one of them according as he does his work honestly and actively. (see *Doctrine of Charity* 164)

Read the two paragraphs on the previous page, and underline any of the qualities King Jehu seemed to show. The following quotation gives us reason to think that though Jehu was a righteous leader in war, he might not have been a righteous leader throughout his life.

But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all of his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin. (2 Kings 10:31)