

Exposition of
2 Chronicles 20

Sermon Series:
Spiritual Lessons from OT Kings

Sermon Title:
When Trust is Tested.
Lesson from King Jehoshaphat

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INTRODUCTION

Last week we learned a spiritual lesson from the life of king Ahab regarding the dangers of covetousness. Today we are going to look at a more positive lesson from the life of Jehoshaphat who exhibits tremendous faith and trust in his covenant keeping God at a time of great conflict and testing.

Whereas Ahab ruled in the Northern kingdom known as Israel, this king (Jehoshaphat) ruled in the Southern kingdom known as Judah. Ahab, we learned from the witness of Scripture was among the wickedest of all the Northern kings, and in stark contrast today we see a king that the Bible says “2Ch 17:3 The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; 4 But sought to the [LORD] God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.”

His father Asa began a great reformation in Judah, clearing out idols and idolatrous worship, running out of the land the sin of sodomy and those who practiced it and his son, who we are introduced to today continued his father’s righteous reforms to such an extent in fact that we could go as far as saying the kingdom had not been in greater spiritual order since the time of king David.

The previous chapter sets the stage for our message today in so much that it gives us a keen insight to this man who loved the LORD and knew what to do when his trust and faith in God was tested. 19:5 Tells us that the king set up ‘judges’ throughout all the cities in Judah and in vv.6-11 **he gave them these principals to rule by: v.6 Accountability to God v.7 Integrity and honesty v.9 Loyalty to God v.10 Concerned for righteousness v.11 Courage**

These are the essentials of spiritual leadership which this king Jehoshaphat practiced and encouraged in the lives of those

around him. This serves as the backdrop to our understanding of his actions which we read about in our text today that paints in our minds a person who had previously (up to this point of testing) fostered and practiced a life of consecration unto his LORD which tremendously aided him when this particular test came upon him.

This then, serves as our first observation for today, that spiritual preparation and spiritual disciplines in our lives are vitally important if we hope to stand as courageously as this man of God did when our faith is tested.

There are hundreds if not thousands of tests which we face every week as the people of God, battles of discouragement, temptation, illness, financial stresses, etc., and only when we admit this to be true, will we then understand just how precious and relevant this example of God's servant, king Jehoshaphat is.

BODY

vv.1-2 THE TEST

- In verses 1-4 the threat Jehoshaphat faced is described as a confederation of Moabites, Ammonites and other nations not mentioned who had the intentions of dethroning him. This is his test. Although the source of his information is not mentioned, the severity and alarm of the report are clearly communicated, in fact they had already traveled as far as En-gedi which is just south of Jerusalem near the Dead Sea, fast approaching the city.

v.2 “...*There cometh a great multitude against thee...*”

this implies that the size of this force was significant and caused great alarm. We must keep in mind that at this point in the kingdom, Jehoshaphat had considerably built up their military and were no small force to be reckoned with having at his service up to 1million men of war. (2Cro.17:14-19)

APPLICATION: Despite our imagined securities, our insurance policies for this particular coverage and that coverage, despite all our risk management, despite all these layers of protection and shelters we put in place to guard us from the fallen world that surrounds us and our families...there may someday come against us our own ‘great multitude’ our ‘test of trust’.

vv.3-4 A COMMENDABLE RESPONSE

v.3 *“And Jehoshaphat feared...”*

We see here in the context of receiving such dreadful news that a massive army was coming to destroy him and the kingdom that Jehoshaphat felt overwhelmed and it’s at this point that his trust in God was put to the test.

v.3 *“...set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.”*

Here we learn of the appropriate reaction to trials and tests that may arise in our life...take it to the LORD in a conscious and meaningful way. Jehoshaphat immediately concluded that the only answer to this calamity was to be sought in God, who had proven Himself faithful in the past to those who call upon His name with a sincere and committed heart to His Lordship.

So serious was this threat that Jehoshaphat calls upon the whole nation to fast and we can conclude from v.13 that this even included the little children. I am concerned that too often we unintentionally expect far too little from children regarding spiritual things. There is a great need to have a sober assessment of how we as the Church, during the corporate gathering of God’s people engage the youth who are in our midst. Does their instruction and the methods we employ convey to them the seriousness of the matters of their souls, do they convey the

reverence and sober meditation which God their Maker demands in His worship? Or have we succumb to a philosophy that they need to be engaged “on their level” by a dude who knows all the latest video game tricks and Star Wars lingo and who most of the time doesn’t even have any children himself? Don’t get me wrong, I think it’s important for the youth of the church to have a good time and fellowship with one another...but today’s norm is very concerning...the kids we are reading about here weren’t called to have a whipped cream pie throwing contest, they weren’t called to wear their P-Jays for an all-night church slumber party...they were called to Fast!

Fasting is a an act by which God’s people of all ages, give up something (most cases food) to solely focus and consecrate their thoughts and lives upon mediation and prayer about a particular test in their life and in verse four we witness a wonderful account of a sense of genuine community that was brought about because of this trial:

“Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD...”

APPLICATION: Their response teaches us how important and how special it is to unite with one another in prayer and seek the LORD during the times of trials we face. This is only one benefit of local church membership.

vv.5-13 JEHOSHAPHAT’S PRAYER

v.5 “Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation...”

In Jehoshaphat's steadfast devotion to seek the Lord, he went to the place of worship, before the "new/newly decorated court" of the Temple, because this was a place of prayer and intercession and he proceeded to pray "in the congregation" (v. 5).

Of course we understand this to mean that he led the nation in its appeal to the Lord. This does not mean that he usurped the position of the priest. He was not interceding as a priestly representative: however, he was the divinely appointed king of the nation and as such turned to the Lord for help in the midst of an extreme crisis.

• Jehoshaphat's prayer naturally divides itself into three parts for our study of it: **#1. God's Sovereignty & Power (v.6), #2. God's Provisions (vv.7-9), #3. God's Protection (vv.10-13)**

#1. God's Sovereignty & Power (v.6)

• The emphasis of this opening section of Jehoshaphat's prayer is that the Lord is sovereign and powerful over all the earth.

First, "*O LORD God of our fathers*" by this he is acknowledging what God had done for the nation in the past, it was in essence a witness and testimony to God's faithful provisions over them as a nation and thus emphasizing God's covenant fidelity.

It is this acknowledgement which provides the foundation for the rest of Jehoshaphat's appeal.

Second, "*art not thou God in heaven*" by this he is declaring God's ultimate sovereignty over all creation. He is elevating the True and Living God above all the other little pagan gods.

Thirdly, "*rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen?*" By this Jehoshaphat is recognizing God's providential rule over all creation including the "*kingdoms of the heathen.*" These pagan kingdoms were based on pagan deities, false gods and they competed for power and dominion which they believed

demonstrated the superiority of whatever particular god they worshipped.

Thus far, with the initial words of this prayer we can conclude that although Jehoshaphat was responding to a political and military crisis which he was facing, he also recognized, however, that this was much more than a mere political situation...it was also an affront to the authority and sovereignty of God - through an attack upon His covenant people!

APPLICATION: Likewise in our own day, those who wish to bring persecution upon God's covenant people had better think twice, because in doing so, they actually are attacking God Himself !

Fourthly, “*in thine hand is there not power and might*” again he is emphasizing not only God's sovereignty but also God's mighty power and abilities.

Therefore, in this first section of Jehoshaphat's prayer we have a man who is not trusting in the strength of his army, nor a man who is confident and trusting in his own military genius, but rather a man proclaiming that the same God who had been with his fathers, who possessed all divine authority and the sovereignty to establish that authority, and the power to exercise such authority it was this God and Him alone who was to be trusted in this great hour of need!

#2. God's Provisions (vv.7-9)

- After the initial emphasis upon God's sovereignty and power Jehoshaphat now concentrates the focus of this prayer upon the provisions God had previously given them according to His

covenant promises made to their fathers, the various Patriarchs beginning with Abraham.

- v.7 “*gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend forever...*” in this phrase is captured an expression of particular and special favor which God expressed to Abraham and his physical seed – the nation of Israel by giving them a land which he “*didst drive out the inhabitants...*” . God’s provision, God’s gift, God’s physical covenant blessing was at stake here! ¹

- vv.8-9 builds upon this theme of God’s being their provider with special remembrance that if trouble should ever come upon them, they were to come and stand before the Lord at the sanctuary. (1 Kings 8:33,34).

- v.9 This all climaxes with this powerful two-fold idea ‘cry unto thee in our affliction’ ‘thou wilt hear and help.’

Jehoshaphat was expressing his TRUST in God's provision for answering the prayers of the people. Based on his TURST in God's promise, Jehoshaphat moved toward his request for the nation.

Before moving forward let’s pause at this point in the prayer and make two quick observations:

First Observation:

Notice how that initially (v.6), Jehoshaphat was careful to praise God and His divine ability. He recognized that God alone is able to overcome any threat.

¹ Such particular love, such a peculiar affection shown to a people who in and of themselves were nothing special and had not accomplished anything special to deserve such kindness from God, of course reminds us of the special grace God bestows upon all His elect.

Second Observation:

(v.7-9) Jehoshaphat acknowledged God's provision for answering prayer. He knew that by bringing his needs to the Lord he was doing exactly what the Lord desired him to do and then trusted (not presumed) that the Lord would answer his prayer.

Like Jehoshaphat, we too must first praise the Lord in our prayers and then trust in His sovereign ability to answer our prayers.

It is with this assurance we offer up our petitions before His throne of grace in the name of Jesus – our Covenant Head.

#3. God's Protection (vv.10-13)

In this final portion of Jehoshaphat's prayer (vv.10-13), he gets specific with the great need of the kingdom.

- v.10 He names the enemies, the nations of Ammon, Moab, (descendants of Lot) and those of the region of Mount Seir. In vv.10-11 Jehoshaphat described how these nations were threatening to drive Judah from the land God had given them.

- v.12 begins to reveal the three elements of their specific need for help that we can observe:

First, he confessed that the nation had "*no might*" to face the enemy (again indicating the massive size of this enemy confederation). Might here is the same Hebrew word used earlier for "power" in verse 6. It emphasized available resources...Jehoshaphat was confessing that they had none which could match this sizable enemy.

Second, Jehoshaphat confessed that they didn't have the ingenuity nor a plan to overcome the enemy (keep in mind the surprised nature of the attack).

Thirdly, and our last observation, Jehoshaphat confessed that they were totally helpless and dependent on the Lord: "*Our eyes are upon thee;*" Essentially, what Jehoshaphat is saying was this - that he did not have any hope in the world, **and perhaps this is the most important part of his prayer, because God is at his most merciful when his people are most helpless. HE IS TO BE TRUSTED.**

Oh church! How desperately today is the great need to make this kind of confession regarding the 'spiritual help' of our own churches and nation!

Although many promises are given us in Scripture, it is only by the power of the Spirit that makes us able to trust and hold fast to such promises. It is God's power, not man's, it is God's power, not government's, It is God's power, not special interest groups or cleverly wrapped church programs that will ever bring about the type of spiritual revival we so long for in this hour...that is why we cry out with the prophet Habakkuk "O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." (Habk.3:2).

v.13 ~ Prior to moving to the God's response let's note the vital lesson for us as Christians today. The verse reveals that the families of Judah stood before the Lord.

They were not petitioning the Lord just as individuals but also as families. Together, there before the sanctuary you had whole families praying, listening, watching together. **Church this serves to high-light the need to unite the family together in corporate worship, not divide it. These people were not divided up according to special interest or age groups...they are together before the LORD.**

VV.14-15 GOD’S RESPONSE – IT’S HIS BATTLE

• v.15 He encouraged the king and the nation, "*Be not afraid nor dismayed.*" *Afraid* is a form of the same word translated “feared” in verse 3 to describe Jehoshaphat's initial condition, and so we learn here that God was directly acknowledging the condition of their hearts. *Dismayed* comes from the concept of a broken spirit that has lost all confidence.

They were to stop feeling overwhelmed and defeated! The Spirit of the LORD, through Jahaziel declares “*the battle is not your’s but Mine!*” This means every part of the battle. The strategy that will be needed, the defense maneuvers, the responsibility to acquire the resources, the leadership, and all other aspects of the battle!

The main and most important aspect of this statement from the LORD is this: He was the one who actually was going to do the physical fighting of the battle. The LORD Himself was going to be the one facing and fighting their enemy! HE IS TO BE TRUSTED!

VV.16,17 GOD’S DIRECTION FOR BATTLE

• v.16 “Ziz” this was not a very great distance from Jerusalem, the enemy was at hand!

• v.17 Set yourselves (get in position) and stand still. “*Stand ye still*” **is significant, because again it points to the fact there was nothing they could contribute to bring about the victory...God was the One who was going to do it all...God was the One who would receive all the Glory! GOD IS THE ONE TO BE TRUSTED!**

• Modern applications of this text suggest that just as the people were passive in this battle, so are we to be passive in our battles of sanctification and spiritual growth, giving the idea that

we abandon the notion of ‘spiritual warfare’ all together, by just ‘letting go’ and ‘letting God’ do everything...get out of the way...stop striving for holiness, because only by ‘letting go’ will the victory be secured.

However, that would be a grave and wrong application of vv.15-17. They are facing an external threat, this is not regarding sins of the heart, additionally our faith in Christ is an active faith through which we called in Scripture to ‘overcome the world’ (1Jhn.5:4-5), and ‘work out our salvation with fear and trembling’ (Phil.2:12), ‘put on the full armor of God so that we can take our stand against the devil’s schemes’ (Eph.6:11) to ‘offer ourselves to God, all our bodies to Him as instruments of righteousness’ (Rom.6:13). There is no endorsement to become inactive or on auto-pilot regarding sanctification in these verses.

VV.18,19 HE IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP

• Notice that the immediate response of Jehoshaphat and the nation was humility, humble recognition that yes...God has spoken. The king in particular does not question or resist the answer delivered by the man of God, he only bows his head with gratitude and submission.

What an example of servant-leadership before the people a man who understands and accepts that he is under the authority of One much greater than himself – The True and Living God!

vv.20-24 DESCRIPTION of the VICTORY

v.26-30 PRAISING GOD for the VICTORY

CLOSING

In today's text Jehoshaphat relied and trust on the divine omnipotence and favor of the Lord. But there are some other accounts where he struggled with such complete trust and sought out his own answers and strength. Perhaps someone here today is struggling with the thought of waiting on and trusting the Lord to help you with a particular situation or concern that you have.

I pray that this lesson from king Jehoshaphat's life will encourage you to trust in the Lord at all times, pour out the concerns of your heart to Him.

Isa 26:4 Trust ye in the LORD forever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH [is] everlasting strength:

If you will but wait quietly upon Him, He will hear and help you and then like Jehoshaphat and Judah you too will bow down and worship the Lord with a heart of gratitude for all His answered prayers.