

# A Victory for the Truth

by H.J. Vine

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of standing with the truth of God, which is centered in Christ, and the need for faith and obedience to God's will.*

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 13:15, Matthew 18:20, 1 Corinthians 1:20, Ephesians 1:10

**Topics:** "Unity In Christ", "Spiritual Authority"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the importance of unity in Christ, drawing parallels between the unity of Israel under King Abijah and Jeroboam and the unity of believers in Christ as the only appointed Centre by God. He emphasizes the need for believers to be subject to the directions of Christ, the Head of the assembly, as recorded in the Scriptures, to maintain the unity of the Spirit. Vine highlights the story of Abijah standing firm on God's truth against Jeroboam, the great division maker, as a lesson for believers to stand faithfully on the revealed truth of God, centered on Christ.

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## Transcript

"Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah . . . And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam . . . And Abijah said, Hear me than Jeroboam and all Israel . . . Ye think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves . . . But as for us the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the priests, which minister unto the Lord, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business . . . God Himself is with as for our captain . . . Then the men of Judah shouted . . . and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their Fathers" (2 Chronicles 13).

Unity for Israel centres in Christ; unity for us, for the assembly now, centres in Christ also. Unity for Israel centres in Him as the King, in resurrection, the Royal Seed of David's line, and as Priest after the order of Melchisedek. Unity for the assembly centres in Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God in the widest sense, in the fullness of times, all things in the heavens and upon the earth will find their centre in Him, for the joyful and glorious administration of that long-looked-for day (Eph. 1:10).

Men are extremely zealous for unity at the present time; but every effort in this direction must be tested as to how it stands in relation to the only Centre appointed by God. If claim be made to be in accord with that, then one further test becomes necessary. Are those who make the claim subject to the directions of the God-given Head of the assembly, directions finally recorded for us by the Holy Spirit in the sacred Scriptures? God tells us to avoid division makers; also to use diligence in the uniting bond of peace, in

love to all the saints, to keep that which embraces them all--the unity of the Spirit; but for this there must be the maintenance of the truth in its proper relations; there must be both objective and subjective adjustment. We must be held by the Centre, and obedient to the directions also.

In three Epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians) prayer for advance in the truth is made, with the reason given for so praying, that they were rightly adjusted, both as to the divine Centre, and also as to the circumference. There was faith in the Lord Jesus, and there was love to all the saints. It must be clear to all that any advance must be wrong where these do not obtain; for however much prosperity there might appear to be, every human, religious organization will eventually be engulfed in the Babylonish system of which Scripture speaks so much, and which is now rapidly developing. Before leaving this it is necessary to add a word as to loving all the saints. Simply to quote 1 John 5:2 will be sufficient: "Hereby know we that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments." This emphasizes clearly what we have said as to conforming to the directions.

### The Great Division Maker

Now Jeroboam stands out prominently in the Old Testament as the great division maker. Under him the great mass of God's people, ten of the twelve tribes, broke away from God's centre at that time. Like a death knell, these sad words with which the Spirit distinguishes this man, are repeated again and again, "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." In one chapter alone it is solemnly reiterated four times (2 Kings 15:9, 18, 24, 28). There is something appalling about it. The terribleness of this man's sin in God's sight is signalized in this special manner, and every true heart is struck with the sense of its awfulness. Personal sins are bad enough, but to turn away God's people from the centre which He has set up--what could be worse?

We are distinctly instructed by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament that Christ, the Son of God, the Firstborn from among the dead, is the Head of the assembly at the present time. He is the only Head which God has given to the church, or rather the assembly, which is His body. The one new man also is formed "in Himself." The spiritual structure, too, which is being built now, grows into a holy temple "in the Lord." In Him likewise is constructed the assembly, as the present habitation of God in the Spirit. These important facts must be firmly and faithfully held if we are to answer acceptably to the mind of God as to the unity which is according to Him--the unity of the Spirit, which finds its only centre in Christ; for there is that which retains the name "church," though it is practically away from the divine Centre, just as the ten tribes with Jeroboam retained the name "Israel," though they were away from the Lord as a whole.

The striking story which is recorded in 2 Chronicles 13 is perhaps one of the most helpful in the Bible for those who seek to abide in the truth today. For our learning it was written, not simply to engage us with history. Abijah is singled out as the man who took his stand on the truth as to God covenanted centre at that time. It was that which secured victory. Jeroboam, the division maker, who turned men from that centre, was his proud and ambitious opponent.

ABIJAH means "Jah is Father"; JEROBOAM means "whose people are many." These names are very instructive. Those who are embraced in the unity of the Spirit today are characterized by addressing God as Father. They are thus distinguished from those who knew God in Old Testament times simply as Creator, Almighty, or Jehovah. On the other hand, the Jeroboamites, now as then, are governed by numbers rather than by the truth of God. It may be said of them in a general way, "Whose people are many."

It is in the knowledge of the Father's Name through redemption that preservation is realized today; and that in response to the intercession of the Son with the Father, as He said, "Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name."

The followers of the great division maker are strong against this at all times. Jeroboam set twice as many on the field of battle as Abijah; acting, too, without faith, but with his usual worldly wisdom and strategy, victory seemed sure, and needed but a matter of moments to make it manifest; for, while Abijah protested the truth of God against error, Jeroboam was quick to hem him in before and behind, and was about to seize his prey. He had, however, no resource above; therefore the battle turned in favour of those who had. It is always the way of the worldly wise: they are governed by the look of things to the eye of nature. This may be right enough in purely natural matters; but when it is a matter of the truth, faith's keen vision looks up to the invisible God, as indeed it does at all times; and that makes victory sure, even when all looks adverse.

### The Man Who Stood True to God's Centre

Abijah, as we have already said, firmly took his stand upon the imperishable rock of truth; and he put his confidence in God, who had revealed that truth. He was not a very commendable man personally (1 Kings 15); but that only serves to make the surprising victory which followed all the more striking, showing clearly that it was a victory for the truth of God; and showing, too, the immense value which He sets upon faithfulness to His own established order. This does not palliate Abijah's bad personal behaviour in other connections. He suffered for that under God's righteous government. Here it is entirely a matter of the truth of God being vindicated. That must triumph. All the powers of earth and hell cannot stay it.

Abijah stood up on Mount Zemaraim, the mount of "two fleeces." There he boldly asserted the truth that the flock is one, and that under the one King of David's line God's people should be shepherded; also that the kingdom in His hand was "the kingdom of the Lord" (v. 8); and that being true, Jeroboam was a rebel therefore; and those who had strengthened him were children of Belial. The priesthood also which was with him was not of God, for it was not of Aaron's line; moreover they were idolatrous. Abijah laid this to their charge with incisive emphasis. He then proceeded to point out the positive position which he himself and those with him occupied, a position which had been divinely established. He had already reminded them of--

1. The covenant of salt with David's line; and now;
2. Jehovah was their God (v. 10);
3. The ordered priesthood served Him;
4. The Levites waited upon their work;
5. Burnt sacrifices and sweet incense ascended (v. 11);
6. The showbread was set on the pure table (v. 11);
7. The golden candlestick was attended to (v. 11).

Having proclaimed these things, Abijah exclaimed, "God Himself is with us for our Captain, and His priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of

your fathers, for ye shall not prosper" (v. 12). But when Judah looked back, behold the battle was before and behind, and they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets.

"Then the men of Judah gave a shout; and as the men of Judah shouted it came to pass that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah" (v. 15).

The great importance of all this for us at the present time is found in the fact that it vividly illustrates the way in which God owns and honours the faith which simply connects itself with His own revealed truth; and this door always stands open; as our Lord Jesus Christ said, even for "two or three" of those who belong to Him, who understand what it is to be connected with the assembly now (Matt. 18:15, 20). They may enter in at that door which no man can shut; and, taking their stand according to the truth, prove that God still honours the name of the One who is personally the Truth, the only Centre He has established, and the only Centre we are to acknowledge even now, amidst the departure of the mass. Not that we are to look for conquests of an outward sort necessarily; although there will be conquests, the conquests of faith; but the character of such today will altogether outstrip that of our interesting type; for they will be spiritual, securing results which will be found to praise, and honour, and glory after the present time has gone by, and the day of Christ's glory shines out in supreme splendour.

#### The Truth Revealed

It will be well for us therefore to challenge ourselves before God, as to the ground upon which our faith takes its stand. This can only be done by those who know that they have redemption in Christ, through His blood. Unless the soul is at rest as to redemption it is incapable of the exercise we now speak of. If we follow the order set forth above, as that which Abijah's faith embraced; only, in a few words, for the sake of space, to state what answers to the seven things now, we may be able to see where we are as to the order set up by God at the beginning. Do we, both in faith and practice, acknowledge that order?

1. Christ the only head and centre for us now;
2. His God and Father our God and Father;
3. Jesus the only High Priest now appointed;
4. Those of the "one body in Christ" only for service;
5. Worship in spirit and in truth to the Father;
6. We are "one loaf, one body," partakers of the Lord's table;
7. Our High Priest maintains the truth perfectly before God.

(The following Scriptures should be read: (1) Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:18; 2:10. (2) John 20:17; Eph. 1:3. (3) Heb. 3:1 etc. (4) Rom. 12:4-7. (5) John 4:23. (6) 1 Cor. 10:17. (7) Heb. 8:1-2; 9:1-2, 11).

The faith of God's elect, "the faith once delivered to the saints," is to be ours; not a faith manufactured in the twentieth century, but the faith revealed by God at the beginning. Nothing short of this is the truth. Looking carefully at the scriptures referred to, it will at once be seen that everything is ranged divinely in regard to our Lord Jesus Christ, as the centre of it all. Do we stand here?

The Jeroboamites' worldly wisdom and strategy may have its day, but it will fail utterly sooner or later. Faith sees its folly and its moral overthrow already, at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor. 1:20)? "Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified," said the Apostle, "To the nations foolishness, but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, CHRIST, GOD'S POWER AND GOD'S WISDOM."

It is by Him that the truth of God must and shall prevail. Great is the honour given to those whose faith enables them to stand with the truth today, strong in the Lord, although nothing, it may be, in themselves. One of old wrote and sang:

"Did we in our own strength confide,

Our striving would be losing;

Were not the right Man on our side,

The Man of God's own choosing.

Dost ask who that might be?

CHRIST JESUS, IT IS HE!"

Without Him we can do nothing. "Abide in Me" are His own precious words to us. And the Apostle to the Gentiles, writing to the assembly at Colosse, when speaking of "rejoicing and seeing your order, and the firmness of your faith in Christ," continued, "As therefore ye have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and assured in the faith, even as ye have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Col. 2:5-7).

God grant that both reader and writer may be thus firmly and faithfully found standing with the victorious truth of God, as fully and finally made known by the Spirit in the Scriptures of Truth, till the shout is heard, the shout which brings a greater victory than the shout of the men of Judah. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with an assembling shout, and call all His own, dead and living, out of the scene of Satan's power, to be with Him and like Him, in bodies of glory, for ever and ever.

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