

# Jehoshaphat - 'Faith Cometh by Hearing'

by Major Ian Thomas

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, hearing, and appropriation in the Christian life, and how radical change of principle is essential for spiritual growth and maturity.*

**Duration:** 1:07:18

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 22:41-43, 2 Chronicles 18:3, 2 Chronicles 19:7, 2 Chronicles 20:12, 2 Chronicles 20:15, 2 Chronicles 20:17, Romans 10:17, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Hebrews 4:1

**Topics:** "Jehoshaphat", "Faith in Action", "Dependence On God"

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## Description

Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the importance of faith that comes from hearing the Word of God, using the story of King Jehoshaphat to illustrate how faith must be mixed with action to be effective. He explains that while the Word of God generates faith, it is only through the active appropriation of that faith that believers can experience the fullness of God's promises. Jehoshaphat's reliance on God during a crisis exemplifies the shift from self-reliance to total dependence on God's power, culminating in a victorious outcome when he and his people praised God in faith. Thomas urges listeners to not only know the truth but to act upon it, thereby allowing God to work through them. The sermon concludes with a call to abandon unholy alliances and to trust fully in God's sovereignty.

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## Transcript

Great joy to welcome you once more tonight. Good to see you again. And may I say once more how earnestly I trust that God will lay this missionary program of the Campaigners for Christ upon your hearts, and that some of you who have never yet felt an obligation in this direction may learn to give impossibly and see God do the miracle.

I'm looking forward to meeting you again tomorrow evening. It's been such a joy to meet you here evening by evening and in the Curzon Theatre at lunch hour by lunch hour as we have explored together through the Word of God and as the Holy Spirit has graciously ministered to us the things that are Christ's. And as we come now to the conclusion of this happy series of meetings, the all-important matter is that what we have learned should be translated into the experience of our lives.

That's so important. And only the Holy Spirit can make it possible. But the Holy Spirit can only make it possible as we exercise that quality of faith that releases his action.

There's what one might almost describe as a paradox found in the two statements, first in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and the other in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But it illustrates what I have in mind. In the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and the 17th verse, a verse that will be very familiar to you, so then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Faith coming by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. In other words, it's the Word of God itself that generates faith. If it were the desire of my heart that there might be created within you a strong confidence, a deep conviction about the truth, then I would seek to expose you to the overwhelming evidence of the Word of God, in the expectation that the Word of God would produce faith in the truth that the Word of God conveys.

Now that's the first thing. The Word of God produces faith in the truth that the Word of God conveys. The Holy Spirit witnesses to the truth as we expose men and women to the Word of God.

The office of the preacher is to declare the Word of God, truth in general. The office of the Holy Spirit is to make the truth in general the truth for you. That's a principle.

And if I'm sitting in a meeting and another man is ministering the Word of God, the same process will apply. He will convey the truth of God to me in general, but the Holy Spirit will make it the truth of God to me in particular. And the latter office is the office alone of God the Holy Spirit.

Only he can accomplish that. That's why it isn't a question of technique or oratory or logic or persuasiveness or personality. It's truth to which the Holy Spirit witnesses.

In other words, the only valuable content of anything that I may say to you is truth. That's all that any sermon's ever worth. It's truth content.

It may be very clever, it may be very pretty, it may be very funny, it may be very logical, it may be very homiletic, it may be very moving, but its only ultimate worth, its sole ultimate worth, is its truth content, the truth in general, to which alone the Holy Spirit will bear witness, making it the truth in particular. But that isn't enough. Even when the Holy Spirit has made the truth in general, the truth in particular for you until you're completely convinced of it, absolutely convinced with a deep conviction that it is the truth, even that in itself may leave you precisely where it finds you.

That's inadequate. In the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews you see the other side, the complementary side, which at first looks as though it might be contradictory, almost paradoxical, but in point of fact it's complementary. Hebrews chapter four, verse one, let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest any of you should seem to come short of it.

I'll not dwell upon this, but you probably recognize at once that the rest he has spoken of refers to that enjoyment of the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus Christ, his gracious monopoly, as he wholly occupies and dominates our human personality. The historical reference of course is to the land of Canaan, as you discover from the third chapter of the same epistle, and the apostle says that we now as Christians, and he's writing to Christians, holy brethren he describes them in the beginning of the third chapter, he says, holy brethren, we are to be partakers of Christ now as they should have been partakers of Canaan then. They missed this rest, they got out of Egypt but they got dumped in the desert, and they didn't enjoy the rest of Canaan, they were out but they were not in.

Now he says beware lest the same thing befall you, holy brethren, that you're redeemed, that you get out but you don't enjoy experientially Christ in the present tense, the constant I am, the one who's always saying to you for every step you take and for every situation into which that step takes you, it is I. Be not afraid. He says, let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest any of you seem to come short, for unto us was the good news preached, the gospel, as well as unto them. But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

The word preached did not profit them. But we read in Romans chapter 10 that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, that it is the preached word that produces faith in the truth that the word of God conveys. And yet here in this passage it says that the word preached that produces faith in the truth that the word conveys didn't profit them, because it wasn't mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Now what does this mean? Well we have to add something to the first statement that I have given you. The first statement was this, that the word of faith, that the word preached, the word of God produces faith in the truth that the word of God conveys. Now we've got to go on and add something to that, and it's this.

The truth will profit you that the word of God conveys only if you use the faith that the word of God produces. That's the complementary side. The word of God produces faith in the truth that the word of God conveys, but the truth will only profit you if you use the faith that the word of God produces.

Let me illustrate that. I think it'll make it clear to you, because this is vital, because you may have become completely convinced of certain truths, but they will still not profit you unless you appropriate, unless you apply, unless you use actively by moral choice the faith that has been engendered by the word of God in the truth that the word of God has conveyed to you. Supposing, I may have used this illustration before, I can't remember, but it serves the purpose.

Supposing I'm traveling by car and visiting a city that I do not know, as is often the case. Well, I may arrive, and all I have is a piece of paper, and on that piece of paper is the name and the address of the family that I'm hoping to visit. Now, I don't have any idea when I arrive in that city as to in which location that address may be found.

The obvious thing to do would be to ask somebody, and if your experience is anything like mine, the first person you ask is always a stranger, like yourself. So eventually, I go to a petrol station, and I say, excuse me, I wonder if you could help me, I'm a stranger in the city and I'm trying to find this address, and I hand the paper to the garage attendant. And the moment he looks at the piece of paper, his face lights up with recognition.

Well, now that's a good sign. And immediately, he begins to talk, and he says, yes, I can tell you how to get there. As a matter of fact, I only live about, oh, five minutes walk, about three streets away.

That's an added comfort and encouragement. He then proceeds immediately to give me detailed instructions in a manner so confident that every word he says adds to the conviction within me that what he's saying is true. He says, you go down here, you go past the second and the third traffic light, remember, second and third, and then you turn right.

As you turn right there, you'll notice a big store with a canopy. It's a fur shop. And then you go down there, and the fourth turning on the left, you go up there almost as far as you can go until you come to a T-junction, then you turn right.

And the second on the right, he really knows what he's talking about. And he goes over it all again until I've got it exactly right. And by every word that he said, he has conveyed to me truth.

But not only that, the word has produced in me complete confidence in the truth that his word has conveyed. But does that get me to my destination? Of course not. If at that stage I like to take out a flask of coffee and put my feet on the steering wheel, I'd still be in the petrol station, for all the truth of which I have now become convinced.

Now I have to use the faith that his word has produced in me concerning the truth that his word has conveyed to me. I've got to act. I've got to appropriate that truth.

Now that is always the spiritual key. You see, it's all too easy to be an intellectual evangelical, simply to give mental consent to certain fundamentals of the faith, but never dream of acting on the assumption that they're true. We can become authorities in every kind of school of holiness, every kind of technique of doing things, and yet never act on the assumption that truth that God has conveyed through his word, in point of fact, is to be experiential.

We would hardly credit ourselves with such stupidity, and yet alas, all too often such is the case. And these are some of the things that we have been discovering this week. There are many who will say, yes, Jesus Christ lives within my heart.

And it's so easy to say. So easy to say that you hardly recognize the fact that what you're saying is that the Creator God, the creative deity, who through all the universes into space, has literally come to take up residence within my humanity, and in me, vested in my person by the presence of Christ, through the Holy Ghost, there's all the fullness of the Godhead body. All that is involved when I say Jesus Christ lives in me.

When I say Jesus Christ lives in me, I'm saying there is somebody living within my humanity, clothed with this my body, who occupies these hands, my mind, my heart, looks through my eyes, there's somebody living within me who does not and cannot sin. He is sinless. Who? Jesus Christ.

You can't have Jesus Christ living within you if you don't have somebody living within you who neither can nor does sin. Now, that isn't you, that's Jesus Christ. But unless the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives in you by his gracious Holy Spirit, is a different Jesus Christ from the one who lived 1,900 years ago, then the one who lives in you now can no more sin than the one who lived then.

And yet you can go out having said it and immediately lose your temper, or be ratty with somebody, or be biting unkind about somebody else. Because although I claim to say that it's true and believe that it's true and be totally convinced of the fact, for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of his, I have an uncanny capacity for being convinced of the truth and never acting on it. Strange, isn't it? I have an uncanny capacity for saying that there is no situation for which the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives in me, is not glorious, overwhelmingly adequate, and the next moment going out and carrying the burden myself and wilting under the weight of my own problems.

But all that, of course, is a complete diametrical contradiction in itself. The one thing that God longs for more than anything else is folk who not only know truth, but behave as though it were true. That's all.

God asks no more than that. In other words, it is appropriation, ultimately, that is going to add any real spiritual worth or content to these meetings. If I've simply furnished your mind with a few additional facts, then I've added to your evangelical museum, that's all.

What I'm concerned about is that each one of us, and I've learned plenty this week, I'm thankful to God, I've stumbled upon things that I'd never stumbled upon before, and my concern is that we may go all out, and all go out, to act literally upon the truth of the truths that God's revealed to us, and let him then make them experiential. Appropriation. Of what profit shall it be to a man if I convince him wholly that Christ died for his sins and rose again for his justification until he's completely and absolutely overwhelmingly convinced of the facts as I have presented them, if he doesn't himself confess himself a sinner and appropriate Christ's death for his redemption? It profits him nothing.

Nothing at all. He simply goes as a well-Christianized, instructed sinner to hell. And it's equally true of the believer.

Having been redeemed through the death of Christ, we may be thoroughly indoctrinated with all that is necessary, with all that Peter would say pertains to life and godliness, and then live in hopeless spiritual poverty. Well, nothing could be more tragic. Nothing could more frustrate the grace of God.

Nothing could more quench and grieve the Spirit. Nothing could be more saddening to the heart of Jesus Christ. Now, in order that we may understand still further the principles of appropriation, I've chosen tonight, after this little introduction, I often find I have to cancel the address at the close of the introduction, to take another illustration from the Old Testament for two good reasons.

One, because of the illustration that it gives, and two, that we may have yet another taste of the wonderful picture book that God has given us in the Old Testament of these essential spiritual principles that are enunciated in the New Testament. It concerns a man who learned a change of principle, and that, we have seen again and again, is what is involved in the Christian life. A radical change of principle.

For those of you who have been in the lunch hour meetings, instead of Ahasuerus, identified with the wickedness of Haman, the same Ahasuerus identified with the righteousness of Mordecai. The same Ahasuerus, the same human personality, but simply operating under a new government, dominated by a new principle of action, that radically changes behavior. This is what is involved in spiritual regeneration.

We've seen the demonstration of the perfect principle in the perfect man, Jesus Christ, who, born without any other candidate, born without any other competitor, by the miraculous conception of the Holy Spirit, presented his whole humanity--body, soul, spirit, mind, emotion, and will--to the complete domination of the Father through the Spirit. He gave us the complete, absolute of human righteousness and human behavior, as God intended man to behave. And we've seen that he was what he was in order to do what he did.

Satisfy the righteousness of God in redemption, that would enable a holy God to restore to man what man through sin had forfeited--the divine presence. His soul having been invaded by the satanic presence, that by the re-entry of the Holy Spirit into the human spirit, the human personality, the heart or soul, might be transferred in its total allegiance to the new principle, and removed from the sphere of influence of the old principle, no longer walking after the flesh, but now walking after the Spirit, so that the new creature is not somebody who has simply adjusted past behavior patterns without any change of basic principle, but one whose whole personality has come to be reorientated around a completely new center. This is radical.

Now, this is demonstrated for us in the person of a man whose story will be found in the second book of Chronicles. The second book of Chronicles, it'll be in the 18th, 19th, and 20th chapters. Now, we're not going to read all those, nor examine them in full, but if you like to find the place, the 19th chapter of the

second book of Chronicles, I'd like you at the same time to flip back a few pages to the last chapter of the first book of Kings, and we'll just read four verses about this man Jehoshaphat.

1 Kings, the last chapter, chapter 22, and verse 41. It's the story of a man into whose life there came about a complete and radical change of principle. Verse 41 of the last chapter of 1 Kings, Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab, king of Israel.

Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azuba, the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in all the ways of Asa, his father.

He turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away, for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places. And this is the relevant verse.

And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. This was on the debit side of the balance. Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

And this involved for him very severe penalties. It nearly cost him his life. It was an unholy alliance.

The king of Israel, as we see in that passage, in the first or second verse, was Ahab. And Jehoshaphat entered into an unholy alliance. He identified himself with Ahab's behavior.

In order to understand why it is that God punished Jehoshaphat for this unholy alliance, we need of course to know a little bit about Ahab and why it was that he himself had earned God's displeasure. What was the principle involved? Always try to find the principle involved when you turn to the word of God. There is always a principle involved.

It says in the 19th chapter of 2 Chronicles that after a certain battle that we may refer to, recorded in the preceding chapter, Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem, barely having escaped with his life. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, shouldst thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. The rebuke of God's servant to King Jehoshaphat king of Judah was this, you have helped one whom God hates, the ungodly.

You've allied yourself with somebody whom God repudiates and your behavior has been identified with his behavior. You have been acting under an entirely false principle. Now why did God hate Ahab? What was the principle that Ahab himself had violated? We need only glance very quickly at this because in a sense this is only the background of our particular study.

Turn back to the first book of Kings and chapter 20. And I commend you to this chapter, the 20th of the first book of Kings, for we are immediately introduced in the first verse to a certain gentleman, if he was such, by the name of Ben Hadad, who was king of Syria. And Ben Hadad, king of Syria, is a picture throughout that 20th chapter, which we're not going to examine in detail, but it's a most vivid picture of this old sin principle within us.

This egoistic, self-sufficient, boastful attitude that sticks its chest out and under favorable circumstances is pig-headedly extrovert and possessive and adequate. This is his boast as he threatens Ahab, thy silver and thy gold is mine, thy wives also and thy children even the goodliest are mine. And cowed under his

threat, this miserable king Ahab of Israel answered and said, my lord, oh king, according to thy saying, I am thine and all that I have.

The poor, servile, miserable individual, he subjected himself to the boastfulness of Ben Hadad. And the messengers came again and said, thus speaketh Ben Hadad saying, although I have sent unto thee saying, thou shalt deliver me thy silver and thy gold and my wives and my children, yet I will send my servants unto thee tomorrow about this time and they shall search thine house and the houses of thy servants and it shall be that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall take it in their hand and take it away. Everything's mine.

Now this is characteristic of the flesh. Given favorable circumstances, it'll boast until it's nauseated. But God intervened and gave to Ahab his solemn promise that in that this, his boast was not just against Israel, but against Israel's God.

He would deliver Ben Hadad and the Assyrians into his hand, but he was to be totally liquidated. And God gave them victory on two occasions. And on the second occasion, in verse 29, latter part of that verse, the children of Israel slew of the Syrians and hundred thousand footmen in one day.

But the rest fled to Aphek into the city and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the that were left. And Ben Hadad fled and came into the city into an inner chamber. Now the circumstances for Ben Hadad were anything but favorable.

But there he was, the little sneak, hidden away in the inner chamber. And the characteristic of Ben Hadad is horribly similar to the characteristic of Haman, at one time murderous and blasphemous and violent, and the next moment cringing and servile. His servants said unto him, Behold, now we have heard that the kings of the houses of Israel are merciful kings.

Let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins and ropes upon our heads and go out to the king of Israel. Pray revenge, he will save thy life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins and they put ropes on their heads and they came to the king of Israel and they said, Thy servant, Ben Hadad.

There's a change of tune. Thy servant, Ben Hadad, the one who would have grabbed everything. Saith I pray thee, let me live.

That's what the flesh always says. And it'll crawl, it'll do anything if only it can survive. And King Ahab said, Is he yet alive? He is my brother.

Now the men did diligently observe whether anything would come from him and did hastily catch it and they said, Yes, thy brother, Ben Hadad. Weren't they nice? Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben Hadad came forth to him and he caused him to come up into the chariot and Ben Hadad said unto him, The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus as my father made in Samaria.

Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him and sent him away. And King Ahab made a covenant with Ben Hadad whom God had totally condemned.

It's the old, old story. It's the same principle. It's King Saul all over again, presuming to find something good in what God condemns.

Human nature is incurable. All of us, we're always prepared to salvage something from what God hates. This is why judgment came upon King Ahab.

Turn over the page to verse 20. Read the whole chapter for yourself. You'll find it most illuminating.

But to the 42nd verse of chapter 20, the prophet came with the word of God. He said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased.

Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction. Because in defiance of my verdict upon Ben Hadad, you made a covenant with him. I repudiate you.

That was King Ahab. And God sentenced Ahab to death. And there came a time when Jehoshaphat went down to visit King Ahab.

And King Ahab suggested to King Jehoshaphat that they should join forces. If you turn to the 18th chapter of the second book of Chronicles. 2 Chronicles chapter 18 and verse 3. Better read verse 1. Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance and he joined affinity with Ahab.

He made peace with Ahab. Ahab, verse 3, King of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth Gilead? Are the Syrians. He answered him, I am as thou art and my people as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war.

Now in a sense it was perfectly legitimate to war against Syria. And to seek to regain what they had stolen, Ramoth Gilead. But we've seen again and again that it's not the nature of what you're doing that ultimately will determine whether it is spiritual or whether God's favor is upon it.

It's the principle involved. It's whose activity it is, not what the activity may be. And however noble, however apparently legitimate, may be the project you have in mind, the issue is the principle that you are invoking.

If only the Christian church would learn this. It isn't the question of evangelism. Of course evangelism is right.

Of course evangelism is legitimate. Of course missionary enterprise is right. Of course missionary enterprise is legitimate.

Of course church worship is right. Of course church worship is legitimate. But that ultimately is not the criterion.

The criterion is as to what principle we are going to invoke in the process of evangelism, in the process of missionary enterprise, in the process of public worship. That's the criterion. Because with all the sentiment in the world and all the best will in the world, you can promote for God what God will constantly repudiate, as he repudiated Ishmael.

Because all his purposes were vested in Ishmael. And this is something we will not learn. We imagine that if only something is dubbed evangelical, if only it talks about saving perishing millions, if only it's within an evangelical Christian context, it must, it must inevitably earn God's approval.

And it does not, and it will not, if it doesn't invoke divine principle. Jehoshaphat hadn't learned this. And he joined affinity with Ahab.

He was rebuked by the one faithful voice, Micaiah, who alone among the prophets declared God's counsel concerning Ahab. And Jehoshaphat's own spirit was disturbed. There was something within him that did not consent.

And yet he allowed his behavior to be twisted by this unholy affinity with a man whom God repudiated because he had made a covenant with the one whom God had condemned. And Micaiah, as you probably know, the only prophet who declared God's counsel with purity and told them that God would frown upon this unholy activity, they threw into jail and silenced his mouth. And so it was that Jehoshaphat was led into behavior that was governed by a principle totally foreign to a true heart relationship to God.

Shouldst thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord. Nevertheless, 2 Chronicles chapter 19, nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and listen, thou hast prepared thine heart to seek God. You probably remember that Ahab perished in the battle and the dogs licked up his blood in fulfillment of the curse that God had placed upon him.

That he had disguised himself that the Assyrians first thought that Jehoshaphat was King Ahab and they had received strict instructions to fight only against King Ahab and it must have been a terrible shock when King Jehoshaphat escaped barely with his life and saw the awful judgment of God come upon his unholy affinity. And God looked into his heart and he saw the awful shock that he had received and that deep down in his soul he wanted to discover a new principle of action. It may well be that God has been looking into your soul these days, that there are those of you who have been engaged with all kinds of Christian activity, with apparently legitimate goals and ambitions and ends, and yet if the truth were told for many months, maybe even years, there has been something in you that has not responded, either to the methods used or to the principles involved, and yet you have slung Micaiah into jail and you have been trying to silence this one pure voice that has been protesting to your heart.

And maybe, I don't know who you are, but maybe God has led you to the place where you have been rocked right to the very foundations of your being. You've seen your little castles, your spiritual castles, your noble ambitions, your lofty ideals, all the things that you cherish for God, you've seen them crumbling in on top of you. That's what happened to King Jehoshaphat.

And God said, there's this good thing found about you. You've prepared your heart to seek God. At last, at last, at last, you're focusing your attention upon God himself.

You're no longer reckoning with Ahab's, no longer reckoning with projects, however legitimate. You're beginning to reckon with God. Wherefore now, verse 7, let the fear of the Lord be upon you.

For remember this, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. It's when a man really begins to be afraid of God that he stops being so flippantly light-hearted and skin-deep in his enthusiasm, in terms of Christian activity, and begins to recognize that it's not the mechanics that count, but the man. Not the amount of perspiration, but the source of inspiration.

Not whether the plant is impressive, but whether the power is authentic. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Take heed and do it.

Take heed and do it. Mix with faith the truth of which you've become convinced. Act on the assumption that the truths you've heard are true.

For there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. You cannot bribe him, and you cannot pay him off. Thus shall you do, verse 9, in the fear of the Lord, faithfully and with a perfect heart.

Verse 10, and what cause soever, no matter what it may be, what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities between blood and blood, between law and commandments, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord. This do, and ye shall not trespass. In other words, every situation, no matter whatsoever kind it may be, must be related wholly, exclusively, and only to God himself.

Verse 11, last sentence, deal courageously, the Lord shall be with the good. Deal courageously means, take courage and do, take courage and act. Mix with faith the truth that the word of God has conveyed.

All right, now God's made pretty clear to King Jehoshaphat the new principle that is now to govern his life. From henceforth, any unholy affinity with Ahab who compromises with Ben-Hadad, sentenced to death and spared, is out. Absolutely out.

Jehoshaphat now knows that there is only one person with whom he has to do under any circumstances at any time. That's God. I say, have you arrived? Have you arrived at that point? Has God at last weaned us and stripped us of any other consideration? Have we really arrived at this place where we give complete moral consent to the fact that we are committed to Jesus Christ alone, exclusively, and only to what Jesus Christ has committed in us? Have you arrived? All right, now this is the point at which the principle in application must become experience.

And it is this that is demonstrated for us now in the 20th chapter. For hardly has God demonstrated the principle, and the principle is immediately put to the test. And the significance of chapter 19, of course, is that it stands between chapter 18 and chapter 20.

And the King Jehoshaphat, to which we are now about to be introduced in chapter 20, is as different from the King Jehoshaphat in chapter 18 as chalk is from cheese, as darkness is from light, as life is from death. As I am profoundly convinced that if never before have you come to recognize the fact that the Lord Jesus alone is the one who has the right to behave in you, the only legitimate spiritual nucleus about which your whole human personality must be in orbit. But you have now come to this place and intend, as God helps you, to step out on the basis that it's true, the man who will step out into the future tomorrow will be as different from you in the past as Jehoshaphat in chapter 20 and in chapter 18.

It came to pass after this also, verse 1 of chapter 20, that the children of Moab and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat saying, there cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria, and behold they be in Hazazun Tamar, which is in Gedi. Now what's Jehoshaphat to do? Seek affinity? Find some unholy alliance? Who's he going to reckon with? God.

God. And only God. For now he is operating under an entirely new principle.

Jehoshaphat feared, verse 3, and he set himself, his face, to seek the Lord. He said, this is something that we must relate at once to God. He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah, and Judah gathered

themselves together to ask help of the Lord.

And Jehoshaphat, verse 5, stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem in the house of the Lord before the new court. And he said this, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? And rulest not thou over the kingdoms of the heathen? And in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? That's how he began. Art not thou God? Simply a rhetorical way of saying, thou art God.

Thou art. Presented with this new situation so threatening and overwhelming, he simply looked into the face of God in obedience to the new principle and said, thou art. And he that cometh to God must first believe that God is.

And what next? And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. That all that God is, is available to all those who are available to all that God is. So what's the next stage? Verse 7. Art not thou our God? Thou who art the God that art, art our God.

Identity. Art not thou our God? Who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend forever? And they dwelt therein and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If when evil cometh upon us as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house and in thy presence. For thy name is in this house.

And cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. Now behold the children of Ammon, and Moab, and Mount Seir. Ever heard of them? That's Esau.

Whom thou wouldst not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and destroyed them. Not behold, I say, how they reward us to come to cast us out of thy possession. They want to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.

O our God, wilt not thou judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us. Neither know we what to do. But our eyes are upon thee.

That's perfect. Well done, Jehoshaphat. That's perfect.

That's exactly it. He comes in humble acknowledgment of the fact that God is. He identifies himself with his people, with the God who is.

He lays the whole situation on the table and says, God, just look at it. And so far as this situation is concerned, we have nothing, we are nothing, and we can do nothing. But our eyes are unto thee.

That's perfect. That is the complete antithesis of the attitude of the old Adamic nature. The old Adamic nature says, have a look at yourself.

You can and you must. And you can't. And in the last resort, you don't.

When the Lord Jesus Christ looks at you tonight, he says, you can't. You cannot. But I can.

And he will. And he does. That's the difference, in principle.

The flesh says, you can and you must. You can't and you don't. The spirit says, you can't.

Christ can. He will. And he does.

Jehoshaphat has become a new man. By the appropriation of a new principle. What's God's reaction? All Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones, their wives and their children.

Then came upon Jehaziel, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, verse 14, the spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation. And he said, hearken, ye all Judah and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou King Jehoshaphat, thus saith the Lord unto you. Be not afraid, nor dismayed by reason of this great malady, for the battle is not yours, but God's.

The battle rests fairly and squarely where you've placed it, on God's shoulders. Listen, my dear Christian friends, this is precisely God's answer always. The moment you and I are prepared to recognize our inbred, innate bankruptcy.

To recognize that our greatest asset is our total weakness. Never so rich as when we realize how poor we are. In such a way that again and again and again we are prepared, alone, to adopt this attitude in the presence of the God who is, I have nothing, I can do nothing, and I am nothing.

God says, thank you. That gives me the chance to be God's side. In you.

It's no longer your battle. It's mine. And so you yield the obedience of your moral will.

As some of us have learned to see, Esther yielded the obedience of her moral will to Mordecai. This doesn't mean inactivity. But it means that the moment you have yielded your moral consent to the divine activity, he is the one who now motivates and activates your native will.

He comes and undergirds and strengthens you from within because by your moral consent you've given him the right of action. I wonder if you grasp this principle. God will never, never, never rob you of your capacity to exercise your own moral choice.

But God waits for the day when, by your own free volition, you yield by moral choice the totalitarian lordship of your life to Christ himself. He will never, in other words, burst his way into your human personality. Faithful is he that calleth you who will also do it, but he'll never do it until you consent to him doing it.

But the moment your moral will has been yielded to his demands upon your life, he then steps in and activates your native will and puts muscle into your spiritual experience. So no sooner did God assume responsibility for the battle than he gave his instructions, verse 16, tomorrow go ye down against them. It's going to be my battle, but you march.

That's the paradox of the Christian life. God's battle, but you march. Behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz.

Ye shall find them at the end of the brook before the wilderness of Zeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem.

Fear not, nor be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them. That's the paradox.

God says stand still and go against them. What it means is this, that you acknowledge that he is the only one who will assume responsibility for the battle, but you place yourself wholly in availability at his disposal. Your reliance does not, in other words, relieve you of the obligation of obedience in action.

Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground. All Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord. And the Levites and the children of the Kohathites and the children of the Kohites stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

And they rose early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa. And as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem. Believe in the Lord your God.

Don't believe in me. Believe in the Lord your God. Remember who it is now that we are reckoning with, God.

It's his battle. He's told us to march, but remember it's his battle. So shall ye be established.

Believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness. As they went out before the army to say, Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever.

And they marched against the enemy, with no guarantee of victory, other than that God had said, The battle's mine, not yours. You go and fight. I'll take care of the enemy.

You march. I'll be responsible for the victory. And in anticipation of a God-given victory, what did they do? They began to sing and to praise.

In other words, they acted on the assumption that God meant exactly what he said. That he was precisely as good as his word. That the truth that God had declared through his prophet was true.

Verse 22. And when they began to sing and to praise, that's what God waited for. The Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab and Mount Sinai, which were come against Judah, and they were smitten.

And all they had to do was to chase their enemies. They returned, says verse 27, every man of Judah and Jerusalem and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemy. Now this was the experience of the new principle.

And God waited for them to sing praise. God waited for the appropriation in advance of a God-given victory. And when God heard them sing and when God heard them praise, in advance of victory, God said, now it's time for me to act.

Now that's precisely what some of us discovered on Saturday evening. Rejoice evermore. Encourageably cheerful.

No matter how overwhelming the odds, no matter how threatening may be the horizons, rejoice evermore without exception. Be aggravatingly cheerful. And pray without ceasing.

Maintain this unrelenting attitude of total dependence. The battle isn't mine, it's His. Because the God who is, is my God.

And I've laid everything on the table and I've stood right back. And I've said, I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing. But my eyes are to Thee.

So in everything, give thanks. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the spirit.

For the Holy Spirit is the one who credits you with the victory of Christ. And God waits for the song of prayer. That's why the victorious Christian, the one who's practicing the presence of Christ, living in the good of what he is in the present tense, is always saying thank you, thank you, thank you.

Here's the principle demonstrated again that we saw last Wednesday evening. Jehoshaphat began by saying, thou art. And ended up by saying, thank you.

And God smote his enemy. Simple, isn't it? Has God brought you out of chapter 18? Into chapter 20? Have you graduated through the bitterness of failure? Into the appropriation of a God-given victory? God's waiting for you to say thank you. By your moral consent to the exercise of his sovereignty that credits you with all the fullness of Christ and makes you more than conqueror through him that loves you.

Then you can go out and chase your enemy. Now let's bow our heads in prayer. We thank thee, dear Lord, for every lesson of thy word.

Forgive us, dear Lord, for those unholy affinities that we've had with all that meets with thy disapproval. Forgive us, we pray thee, for those occasions when we've jailed Micaiah and stifled him. The pure voice of God to our hearts.

And we've refused to listen to the Spirit's protestations at every manifestation of the flesh. Oh God, lead us into this hilarious abandonment. That no matter what the pressure may be that comes upon us, we may learn to look up into the face of God and say, Thou art, and sing the song of praise that is the birthright of every redeemed sinner indwelt by the risen Christ, who is our victory, who is our strength, who is our life, and thus be more than conquerors, reigning in life by one Christ Jesus, and knowing his smile of blessing upon every step that's taken in humble obedience, and for his dear sake.

Amen.

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