

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

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THE BATTLE IS NOT YOURS, BUT GOD'S

The event recorded in **2 Chronicles 20 v 1 – 19** during the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of the southern kingdom of Judah, is a classic example of spiritual warfare. The principles of warfare in this passage are very relevant for us today as we find ourselves faced with our battles against the forces of Satan, and this study considers these principles. Jehoshaphat was a very God-fearing man, and a spiritual summary of his reign is given in 1 Kings 22 v 41 – 50. Also, 2 Chronicles 17 records his early years and his godly influence, although chapter 18 goes on to describe his unwise dealings at one point with Ahab, king of Israel to the north. Jehoshaphat was rebuked on his return to Jerusalem by Jehu, a seer, and in the rest of chapter 19 he had clearly taken due note. Like us, he didn't get everything right.

1. The attack of the enemy (v 1 - 2).

Chapter 17 v 10 - 12 especially suggests that the power and personality of this man of God kept any challenge at bay. We certainly believe, and preach, that "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4 v 4 (AV)). Often Christians find that God's grace and His many blessings can and do shield them from enemy attacks for long periods of their Christian experience. They may face the usual ups and downs of human existence, but open satanic attack may be rare. This makes it all the more upsetting when it does happen. Then it can impact on us at one or more of many possible levels - personal, family, church, work, or even national, as in this story.

2. Jehoshaphat was "alarmed" (v 3).

He was clearly a strong and determined man, and while from chapter 17 it seems not much caused him undue worry and concern, he found the news from En Gedi was really upsetting. In our own Christian walk the sense of peace and joy will often carry us through many circumstances, but there are some events that can cause us a degree of alarm and fear that is a challenge to our usual Christian security. Paul describes the spiritual armour as being necessary "when the day of evil comes" (Ephesians 6 v 13). This is exactly how the enemy works; he will attack when we feel confident in our spiritual walk, and often the attack is without warning. Our spiritual composure is broken and we are "alarmed".

3. Enquiring of the Lord and proclaiming a fast (v 3).

For many Christians fasting may not be a feature of their daily walk, but the Lord taught fasting in Matthew 6 v 16 – 18. There it is mentioned following His teaching on prayer, and is presented as a private matter between an individual Christian and the Lord. While Jehoshaphat proclaimed the fast for the whole nation, the New Testament's emphasis on the Christian's personal relationship with God means fasting also becomes very personal. It appears to be a Holy Spirit-led decision, occurring when we wish to demonstrate to God our earnestness in the matter for which we are approaching Him, especially when the intercession concerns real spiritual warfare. Fasting may not be only about embracing a reduced food intake for a period; it is voluntarily foregoing any legitimate element of our normal life style for a period of intense spiritual battle, showing God we mean business and are deeply engaged with the matter in hand (e.g., 1 Corinthians 7 v 5).

4. Fellowship and unity in the spiritual battle (v 4 and v 13).

This is a wonderful description of mutual concern and oneness in the face of the imminent attack. Wives and children were all included! When we face real spiritual warfare, it is vital we share that situation and stand together (Galatians 6 v 2). It is not a time for criticism, recriminations, unforgiveness and jealousies.

5. Seeking God in the place that bears His Name (v5).

They met in front of the temple courtyard. As Christians we all enjoy the wonderful freedom of coming into God's presence anywhere and at any time. This is a precious liberty and privilege. But many Christians find that they have a certain location, or time of day, when they find access into God's presence is more real than usual. This is not to be made a matter

of legality or superstition, but can be very helpful in concentrated spiritual warfare. The old Celtic believers used to call this the “thin place” - the place where the distance they felt between themselves and God was very thin.

6. Features of Jehoshaphat’s prayer (v 6 - 12).

- a) Respect for God (v 6). This was a critical moment for the king and his people, and his prayer was a major part of their fight against the enemy. His opening words established their understanding of and respect for the person of God, as they trusted Him to help them. Jesus taught the same principle in the pattern prayer he gave us in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 6 v 9 (AV): “Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name”. Flippancy and over-familiarity in our approach to God is wrong at any time, and especially uncalled-for when we are desperate for His help. Maybe we should seek more reverence in our regular times of communal worship.
- b) Our covenant relationship with God (v 7 – 9). When we come into a relationship with God it is on the basis of a covenant; it is a legal position. Jehoshaphat mentioned God’s eternal covenant with them as children of Abraham and possessors of the promised land. We are children of God on the legal basis of being justified and adopted into His family through our personal acceptance by faith of the Lord Jesus and His atoning work. Therefore, now being His children legally, we have every right to seek His help when faced with an enemy attack, and this is the root of our security at all times.
- c) Reality in prayer (v 10 – 11). The point of Jehoshaphat’s prayer was not lost in a fog of religious language and platitudes. He was honest, precise and straightforward. Sometimes our prayers are so couched in formal, polite and stilted words it’s hard for anyone to get to the nub of what is being asked. On occasions such as this, prayer is the heart of the true child of God pouring out their desperate plight to the heart of the Father.
- d) Clearly stating our need (v 12). Jehoshaphat was not ashamed to honestly declare their impotence in the face of the enemy’s threats. The knowledge of our wonderful position in Christ should not mask our helplessness when the forces of Satan attack us: “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you”.

7. God’s answer (v 14).

A Levite in the assembled company suddenly had an anointing of the Holy Spirit. In this Church Age, as true Christians we all have the indwelling Holy Spirit as the legal seal of our adoption (e.g. Ephesians 1 v 13 – 14). He gives gifts according to God’s grace and purposes, and the Word of Knowledge is one such gift (1 Corinthians 12 v 8). It was rather different before Pentecost, and in those previous dispensations the Holy Spirit came on certain people at certain times for certain purposes. In our battle situations, we must be open to God’s answers coming to us through His anointing on others.

8. God takes over (v 15).

The genuine and heartfelt prayers of God’s children always receive an answer, and here the Lord clearly states that matters are now His responsibility. Consequently, the people were not to be afraid or discouraged, even though the threat was still very real. As His children, how wonderful to rest on Father’s eternal promises of care, love, faithfulness and ultimate authority over all principalities and powers – “Great is Thy faithfulness”. The conditions for God taking over are the same today as they were then: “If my people...” (2 Chronicles 7 v 14). God’s help in times of spiritual trouble is entirely dependent on us renouncing our own plans and abilities, and humbly seeking His. This may not be an easy lesson to learn.

9. The timing is God’s (v 16).

The time for them to act was not today, or next week, but specifically tomorrow. So often when we cry out to God, we miss His answer because we consciously or subconsciously seek to put His answer into a time frame of our choosing. Sometimes God tells us to wait, sometimes He gives us a step-by-step agenda. But the important thing to remember is that He is the God of eternity and time is all of a oneness with Him. We are bound by our concepts of time; God is not.

10. We are to stand, not fight (v 17).

In Ephesians 6 the spiritual armour is defensive, apart from the sword (the Word of God), and in 6 v 13, thus attired, we must stand and keep on standing. Our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers (6 v 12). Ultimately it is the armies of Heaven that will engage the enemy and his schemes. However, in our standing we have to be prepared, and in Jehoshaphat’s case his men had certain responsibilities to go to the place of battle and take up their positions. In other words, there had to be preparation. When we are engaged in a spiritual battle there may well be things we must do by way of preparation, such as a recording and reporting of events, attacks, things said or done, etc. We have an area of responsibility by way of preparation, which God can then use in the battle.

11. Thanksgiving before the result (v 18 – 19).

Thanksgiving, worship and praise flowed before the victory. When God has given a clear response to our pleas for help, a prior spirit of praise and gratitude is absolutely in order.