

THE BATTLE OF LIFE
2 Chronicles 20:15

Intro: One of the greatest uses of the historical events recorded for us in the OT is in the applications which can be made to our own lives. The times are certainly different, and the circumstances are different, but we can often see ourselves and our circumstances very clearly in what we read of Abraham, and Moses, and David, and in the lives of many of the others. Sometimes we may read about a certain person, or a certain event, and not be too impressed. But at another time, when our circumstances have changed, it seems that a particular chapter or part of a chapter almost jumps off of the pages of Scripture in its meaning for us.

As I mentioned this morning, I discovered 2 Chronicles 20 many years ago. Since then I have read it many, many times. In contrast with what I have just said, it seems that this chapter speaks to me every time I read it, possibly because there have been very few times in my life when I have not needed what Jehoshaphat learned at this special time in his life.

The days of Jehoshaphat would have to be called some of the better days in the life of Judah. Jehoshaphat was a godly king. He really sought to please the Lord. He not only sought to obey the Lord himself, but his reign was unique because of the special emphasis he placed on teaching the Word of God to his people. God made him so great that the nations around him were afraid of him, and, without being required to do so, they sent tribute to him in the form of money as well as livestock.

His biggest weakness was his friendship with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. After a close brush with death when he went to war on Ahab's side, he came back to his own country to set up judges throughout Judah to help his people understand the ways of the Lord, and then to do what the Lord wanted them to do. Jehoshaphat evidently took the promises of Deut. 28 seriously, and he enjoyed the blessing of God upon his reign as king.

But one day some alarming news came to Jehoshaphat. Let us call it

I. JEHOSHAPHAT'S PROBLEM (2 Chron. 20:1, 2).

We have no statistics on the three nations that had banded together against Jehoshaphat, but it is apparent that Jehoshaphat felt that he had no chance of winning a war with them. They were the Moabites, the Ammonites,

and very likely, the Edomites who inhabited Mount Seir (see verse 23). Already they were in En-gedi, which means that they had gone around the southern end of the Dead Sea, and were in the land of Judah when Jehoshaphat received word of the invasion. So we read in verse 3 that Jehoshaphat "feared." He was a man who feared the Lord, but here it is speaking of the way that he feared those three mighty nations.

The next thing that we read in the chapter has to do with

II. JEHOSHAPHAT'S PRAYER (2 Chron. 20:3-13).

How quickly things can change! That is true for all of us. It probably was an even greater surprise to Jehoshaphat because he had been trying so hard to please the Lord. He may have felt that something like this could never happen to him--but it did!

Immediately he recognized one thing: He needed the Lord's help, and he needed it right away! And he knew that the Lord's help was enlisted by prayer!

So he did two things, as we see in verses 3 and 4:

- 1) He began to pray himself.
- 2) He called the whole nation to join with him in prayer.

Jehoshaphat was not a stranger to prayer. Cf. 2 Chron. 17:3, 4. But perhaps his work had caused him to neglect his time with the Lord--we do not know. Nevertheless, his only hope for deliverance was with the Lord, and so he urgently called his people to prayer.

And what a prayer this was! Trouble is a great teacher. We do our best praying when we face some urgent need. And so it is very important for us to learn what we can from Jehoshaphat's prayer.

There are four things to note about this prayer:

- 1) Jehoshaphat's recognition of the Lord God, Who He is, and His relationship to the nations (v. 6).
- 2) What God had done for them as their God (v. 7).
- 3) God's promise to them (vv. 8, 9).
- 4) His request (vv. 10-12). Here he expressed their helplessness, their ignorance of what to do, and their faith.

Those were days in which the Lord God dealt with His people in a different way from today. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, and he told the people what the Lord would do.

But it is written here for our encouragement. It tells us that God does hear us, that He is concerned, and He does answer us when we come to Him as Jehoshaphat came.

Let us look at

III. GOD'S ANSWER (2 Chron. 20:14-17).

(Read the answer.)

The main thing that the Lord had to say to Jehoshaphat was that which we read in verse 18.

The people of God in those days were able to draw upon the experiences of the Lord's people who lived before them. I wonder if Jehoshaphat was reminded of Moses at the Red Sea as God spoke to him through the prophet? Do you remember the Lord's words to Israel when they got to the Red Sea with the Egyptians coming? Cf. Ex. 14:13, 14.

"The battle is not yours, but God's." This is always true, if we could only learn this lesson. Every trial is a test of faith, a test to see if we will trust God, or take matters into our own hands. God never forsakes us, but He does order our circumstances so that we will see that that special problem is too big for us, and we need Him to lift it right out of our hands!

Next we see

IV. JEHOSHAPHAT'S FAITH (2 Chron. 20:18-21).

Apparently Jehoshaphat's fear was gone. He worshiped the Lord, and together with his people they praised the Lord. He encouraged his people to trust the Lord. And then he appointed singers to go ahead of the army singing what was probably the main song that the Israelites ever sang.

It is one thing to call the Lord "good" when things are going well, but He wants us to be able to call him "good" when things are not going well. And remember that up to this point there had been no change in the danger that Jehoshaphat and his people were facing!

What did God do?

V. THE LORD'S VICTORY (2 Chron. 20:22-25).

This was not a case when the Lord worked through His people; it was a case when He took it completely out of

their hands. No soldier in Israel did a thing. God did it all, but He used those three armies to destroy themselves. The victory was complete. "None escaped." And the spoil was so great that it took the people of Judah three days to gather it all!

But does the story end there? No, it doesn't! The Spirit of God has recorded for us

VI. THE TWO RESULTS (2 Chron. 20:26-30).

It is so easy for us to forget to be thankful. We often pray for the Lord's help, but then, like the nine lepers in Luke 17:11-19, we forget to come back to the Lord with our praise. Praise is our way of telling the Lord that we know where the blessing has come from. It did not belong to Jehoshaphat, nor to the prophet who brought the message from the Lord, nor to the singers, and certainly not to the army of Judah, BUT TO THE LORD!

And so we read of

- A. The praise of king and people (vv. 26-28).
- B. The effect upon "all the kingdoms of those countries" (vv. 29, 30).

Concl: Do you see the application that this story has for you and for me?

I know that none of us is threatened by exactly the same kind of a problem that Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah faced in those days, but I know we all have our problems. And it is possible that no two of us has exactly the same problem. But what is it in your life that is too great for you tonight? What causes you to be fearful? Do you realize that one reason for the problem is to make you recognize your need for the Lord's help, and to make you turn to Him in prayer? Do you realize that your problem is really His problem if it is your problem? It might be too big for you, but it is not too big for Him.

What does He want you to do with your problem? He wants you to give it to Him, and then to praise Him that He is with you, and will not forsake you. If you are aware of things in your life that need to be changed, even your prayerlessness, then get that straightened out with the Lord. AND THEN TRUST THE LORD TO MEET YOUR NEED, WAIT UPON HIM. HE CANNOT AND WILL NOT FAIL YOU.

And when the trial is past, don't forget who delivered you.

Be sure to praise Him for the blessings you have received, and do it just as earnestly as you came to Him with your burden weighing you down.

Life is a battle! Some of our battles are big; some of them are not so big. But usually every day we live we face the battles in one form or another, sometimes many of them. So let us tell ourselves as we face the battles of life, that the battle is not ours; it belongs to the Lord. Let us pray. Let us trust. Let us wait. Let us worship and praise the Lord even before we see the victory. And then, as we gather up all of the blessings that the Lord gives us with the victory, the spoil, let us show that we know that the victory was not ours, any more than the battle was, but all of the praise belongs to the Lord, and to Him alone.