

## ***FPFWC Christian Development***



### **Learning About Faith**

January 2024

Winter Quarter

*January 20, 2024*

**Lesson #3 – Faith and Encouragement**

SCRIPTURE TEXT –2 Chronicles 20:13-20

**ICE BREAKERS-**

1. Why is it so important to prioritize and incorporate prayer and worship within your family?
2. How can our trust in the Lord during difficult challenges be an effective witness for the Lord to those around us?
3. How is your public witness strengthened when you publicly worship God?

*Key Verse: “Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.—2 Chronicles 20:20b*

**LESSON BACKGROUND –**

The book of 2 Chronicles covers the time period 970 BC to 536 BC. This period spans from Solomon, the last king of Israel as a united monarchy, to Cyrus, the king of Persia who ended the Babylonian exile. Readers of the Bible may wonder why the books of 1-2 Chronicles are useful, since their content often mirrors that of 2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings. A clue is found in the titles of 1 and 2 Chronicles as appearing in the Greek version of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint. There the titles translate into English as “Things Omitted.” That is certainly appropriate regarding the text of today’s lesson, which focuses on events during the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (the southern kingdom of divided Israel) from about 872 BC to 848 BC. The text of 2 Chronicles 17:1–21:3 has much more information about him than is recorded in 1 Kings 15:24; 22:1–50.

Uncertainty exists regarding the author of Chronicles. As a result that person is often referred to merely as “the chronicler.” The priest and scribe Ezra, who led the return from exile in 458 BC, is our best guess for being the author. This is because 2 Chronicles 36:22–23 is virtually identical, letter for letter, to Ezra 1:1–3 in the Hebrew.

Some students propose that Ezra (if indeed he was the author) wrote 1-2 Chronicles to teach God’s people to avoid sin, lest they suffer anew the consequences that led to exile in the first place. A special focus on the importance of faithfulness to the Lord can be detected in 1 Chronicles 22:13; 2 Chronicles 17:3–6; 24:20; 29:6–9; 31:20, 21; 36:15–21—texts with no parallel in 2 Samuel or 1-2 Kings. Ezra would have agreed with the often-quoted statement that “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (George Santayana, 1863–1952).

Jehoshaphat reigned during the period of the divided monarchy in Israelite history. He was one of the more godly kings of Judah (see 2 Chronicles 17:3–4). He is noted for his efforts to rid Judah of idol worship and to promote the teaching of God’s law throughout

the land (17:1–9). Also noteworthy is the respect held by surrounding people and the attention he gave to various building projects and to administrative reforms (17:10–19).

On the downside, however, Jehoshaphat entered into an ill-advised alliance with ungodly Ahab, king of northern Israel, who enlisted Jehoshaphat's aid in retaking some territory from the Syrians. At Ahab's behest, Jehoshaphat wore his royal robes into battle against the Syrians while Ahab disguised himself in an effort to keep the prophet Micaiah's prediction of his death from being fulfilled (2 Chronicles 18:1–31a). The move nearly cost Jehoshaphat his life, but "the Lord helped him" (18:31b), and he was spared.

After hearing of God's displeasure with that alliance (2 Chronicles 19:1–3), Jehoshaphat reorganized his government both physically and spiritually (19:4–11). At an unspecified time later, a coalition of enemy forces began to march toward Judah (20:1–2). This resulted in the king and country becoming unified in fasting and public prayer—prayer that confessed utter reliance on the Lord to defeat this threat (20:3–12). The Lord's response came next.

### **LESSON COMMENTARY**

The poignant note in v. 13 that **all Judah**—men, women, and children—stood **before the LORD**, captured the sense of faith and hope of the nation as a whole in this time of distress. The point was clear: "We are powerless—so You, Lord, must fight for us." No doubt such a prayer echoed the faith and feelings of the Chronicler's generation as well.

**20:14–17.** The nation's faith and hope were rewarded with a word from the Lord through **Jahaziel** (v. 14b) who was a Levite (v. 14c). In true prophetic fashion, **the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel** (v. 14a), and he spoke the actual words of the Lord (v. 15a). In one of the great clarion calls to faith, the Lord told His people, (1) **Listen** to Me (v. 15b); (2) **Do not fear** them (v. 15c), because (3) **the battle is not yours (v. 15d) but God's**. They could be sure that in spite of their weakness, they were strong (cf. 2Co 12:10) because the Lord intended to fight for them. The people were instructed to place themselves where they could observe the battle (2Ch 20:16, 17b), but it was reiterated that they were not to fight (v. 17a). They were given the supreme promise of security and victory—**for the LORD is with you** (v. 17c). The Chronicler no doubt wanted the reader to see this as another of the great instances of the Lord's promise to defend and preserve the nation (cf. Ex 14:13–14; Dt 20:4; 1Sm 17:37)—this was a promise the Chronicler's generation needed to hear and to trust.

**20:18–19.** The response to the Word of the Lord was, appropriately, humble worship (v. 18) and vociferous praise (v. 19).

**20:20–23.** The king and the people prepared for the battle itself in several steps. First, they obeyed the Word of the Lord (they **went out to** the designated location, v. 20a). Second, Jehoshaphat again encouraged them to put their **trust in the LORD your God** and in His prophets (His Word to them) (v. 20b).

**LESSON NUGGET** – We need a word from the Lord. God always has a special word for those who turn to Him for help. When you face a battle, spend much time in His Word and in prayer, for then He will give you that needed word of encouragement.

*Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*