

ALIVE: The Marks of a Christian
“All Present and Attentive to God”
Faithfulness: II Chronicles 20:1-30

- 1 The Moabites and Ammonites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.
2 Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in En Gedi.
3 Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.
4 The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.
5 Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD
6 and said: “LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.
7 Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?
8 They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying,
9 ‘If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.’
10 “But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them.
11 See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance.
12 Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”
13 All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.
14 Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel.
15 He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you:
‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s.
16 Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel.
17 You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’
18 Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD.
20 Early in the morning they set out. Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.”
21 After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: “Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.”
22 As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

23 The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.
24 When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped.
27 Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the LORD had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies.
28 They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the LORD with harps and lyres and trumpets.
29 The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.
30 And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

Introduction

The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness. This seventh description of God's good fruit in our lives is about standing fast, being reliable, unwavering, trustworthy, loyal and devoted. Faithfulness can apply to God, to believers, and to each one of us.

Our society has become increasingly self-centered. People too often discard their spouses, their friends, and their promises. It seems that faithfulness applies to only one person – *me!* In the Old Testament book II Chronicles, there are historical examples of the imperfect faithfulness of God's people and the perfect faithfulness of the Lord.

I. The Imperfect Faithfulness of Christians

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, learned about faithfulness the hard way (don't we all, for that matter). He was 35 when he became king of Judah and reigned for 25 years. He began his reign faithfully obeying God's commands. In chapter 17, it says how "the LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he sought the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel... His heart was devoted to the ways of the LORD" (see II Chron 17:3-9). But when he had become wealthy and secure in his reign, it says, he allied himself with Ahab, the faithless king of Israel through the marriage of his son to Ahab's daughter.

In chapter 18 some years later, Ahab asked him, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?" Even with prophetic warnings against Ahab and his false prophets, Jehoshaphat said, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will join you in the war."

So, here we are in chapter 20. The Moabites and Ammonites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat (his name *Yehosaphat* means "Yahweh has judged"). With a vast army advancing up the northwest side of the Dead Sea, needless to say, Jehoshaphat was alarmed. And he "resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him... All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD."

Although far from perfect in his faithfulness, Jehoshaphat turned to the Lord and gathered his people the new temple courtyard. Just imagine the scene, the mood, the tension. They all had been fasting because of the anxiety of impending calamity.

Think about it: are there any areas of your life that you don't want or think to turn over to God? Things about your education or career, problems with marriage, children or family, your finances for living now or in retirement? Why do we hold on to these things trying to control what we can't control?

Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD and said: "LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you... For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. Our God, will you not judge them?" Will you not "Yehosaphat" them?

When do you ever praise God right in the middle of a problem – before an answer comes? Why or why not? Someone said that "praise looks forward to a manifestation of God's steadfast love, faithfulness to his promises."

II. The Perfect Faithfulness of God

Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel, a Levite whose name means, "Yahweh sees!" He said: "This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow march down against them... You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.' It says that "Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD."

As believers, you and I are not exempt from anxiety and fear. But we have a God to whom we can take them. It has been said (but I haven't checked) that the simple phrase from the Lord "Do not be afraid" occurs 365 times in the Bible. That's enough for each day's quota of fearful situations (Paul Tournier, *The Strong and the Weak*).

The prophet Joel also urged God's people: "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart... Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing" (Joel 2:12-14).

The next morning, Jehoshaphat led his people out, calling them to have faith in the Lord, and leading them in praise. They saw their enemies turn on each other, and returned to Jerusalem in joy. After that, "the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side." I love imagining,

visualizing this battle where the Lord took care of everything.

Continued enjoyment of the “Promised Land” looks forward to all of those saved by the person and work of Jesus. The history of an Old Testament king, the land and the people of God were limited by time and space. The timeless fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan is found in King Jesus, the kingdom of heaven, and all those at any time in any place who trust in the Messiah/Savior, Jesus Christ.

In New Testament Hebrews 4, God’s word says, “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess... Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Conclusion

II Chronicles 20 ends like this: “Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: ‘Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.’ As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. Then they destroyed one another. When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped. Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the LORD had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies. They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the LORD with harps and lyres and trumpets.”

Paul writes in Romans 5: “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, (remember Jehoshaphat’s prayer: ‘For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us’) God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us... For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (read Romans 5:1-11).

The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness. God is perfectly faithful and the Holy Spirit wants to grow this fruit of the Spirit in us.

Let us pray together.

Ephesians 1:3-14

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,

9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.