

# CHAPTER 20

We have here,

- I.** The great danger and distress that Jehoshaphat and his kingdom were in from a foreign invasion (v. 1, 2).
- II.** The pious course he took for their safety, by fasting, and praying, and seeking God (v. 3-13).
- III.** The assurance which God, by a prophet, immediately gave them of victory (v. 14-17).
- IV.** Their thankful believing reception of those assurances (v. 18-21).
- V.** The defeat which God gave to their enemies thereupon (v. 22-25).
- VI.** A solemn thanksgiving which they kept for their victory, and for a happy consequences of it (v. 26-30).
- VII.** The conclusion of the reign of Jehoshaphat, not without some blemishes (v. 31-37).

## <del>400</del> 2 CHRONICLES 20:1-13

### JEHOSHAPHAT'S PRAYER TO GOD

We left Jehoshaphat, in the foregoing chapter, well employed in reforming his kingdom and providing for the due administration of justice and support of religion in it, and expected nothing but to hear of the peace and prosperity of his reign; but here we have him in distress, which distress, however, was followed by such a glorious deliverance as was an abundant recompence for his piety. If we meet with trouble in the way of duty, we may believe it is that God may have an opportunity of showing us so much the more of his marvellous loving-kindness. We have here,

**I.** A formidable invasion of Jehoshaphat's kingdom by the Moabites, and Ammonites, and their auxiliaries, v. 1. Jehoshaphat was surprised with the intelligence of it when the enemy had already entered his country, v. 2.

What pretence they had to quarrel with Jehoshaphat does not appear; they are said to come *from beyond the sea*, meaning *the Dead Sea*, where Sodom had stood. It should seem, they marched through those of the ten tribes that lay beyond Jordan, and they gave them passage through their borders; so ungrateful were they to Jehoshaphat, who had lately put his hand to help them in recovering Ramoth-Gilead. Several nations joined in this confederacy, but especially *the children of Lot*, whom the rest helped, <sup><4816></sup>Psalm 83:6-8. The neighbouring nations had feared Jehoshaphat (<sup><4470></sup>2 Chronicles 17:10), but perhaps his affinity with Ahab had lessened him in their esteem, and they had some intimation that his God was displeased with him for it, which they fancied would give them an opportunity to make a prey of his kingdom.

**II.** The preparation Jehoshaphat made against the invaders. No mention is made of his mustering his forces, which yet it is most probable he did, for God must be trusted in the use of means. But his great care was to obtain the favour of God, and secure him on his side, which perhaps he was the more solicitous about because he had been lately told that there was *wrath upon him from before the Lord*, <sup><4492></sup>2 Chronicles 19:2. But he is of the mind of his father David. If we must be corrected, yet *let us not fall into the hands of man*.

- 1.** He feared. Consciousness of guilt made him fear. Those that have least sin are the most sensible of it. The surprise added to the fright. Holy fear is a spur to prayer and preparation, <sup><5810></sup>Hebrews 11:7.
- 2.** *He set himself to seek the Lord*, and, in the first place, to make him his friend. Those that would seek the Lord so as to find him, and to find favour with him, must *set* themselves to seek him, must do it with fixedness of thought, with sincerity of intention, and with the utmost vigour and resolution to continue seeking him.
- 3.** He *proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah*, appointed a day of humiliation and prayer, that they might join together in confessing their sins and *asking help of the Lord*. Fasting from bodily refreshments, upon such extraordinary occasions, is a token of self-judging for the sins we have committed (we own ourselves unworthy of the bread we eat, and that God might justly withhold it from us), and of self-denial for the future; fasting *for* sin implies a resolution to fast *from* it, though it has been to us as a sweet morsel. Magistrates are to call their people to the duty of fasting and

prayer upon such occasions, that it may be a national act, and so may obtain national mercies.

**4.** The people readily assembled out of all the cities of Judah in the court of the temple to join in prayer (v. 4), and they *stood before the Lord*, as beggars at his door, with their wives and children; they and their families were in danger, and therefore they bring their families with them to seek the Lord. “Lord, we are indeed a provoking people, that deserve to be abandoned to ruin; but here are little ones that are innocent, let not them perish in the storm.” Nineveh was spared for the sake of the little ones, <sup><3341></sup>Jonah 4:11. The place they met in was the *house of the Lord*, before the *new court*, which was perhaps lately added to the former courts (that, as some think, which was called the *court of the women*); thus they came within reach of that gracious promise which God had made, in answer to Solomon's prayer, <sup><1475></sup>2 Chronicles 7:15. *My ears shall be attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.*

**5.** Jehoshaphat himself was the mouth of the congregation to God, and did not devolve the work upon his chaplains. Though the kings were forbidden to burn incense, they were allowed to pray and preach; as Solomon and Jehoshaphat here. The prayer Jehoshaphat prayed, upon this occasion, is here recorded, or part of it; and an excellent prayer it is.

**(1.)** He acknowledges the sovereign dominion of the divine Providence, gives to God the glory of it and takes to himself the comfort of it (v. 6): “*Art not thou God in heaven?* No doubt thou art, which none of the gods of the heathen are; make it to appear then. Is not thy dominion, supreme over kingdoms themselves, and universal, over all kingdoms, even those of the heathen that know thee not? Control these heathen then; set bounds to their daring threatening insults. Is there not *in thy hand the power and might which none is able to withstand?* Lord, exert it on our behalf. Glorify thy own omnipotence.”

**(2.)** He lays hold on their covenant-relation to God and interest in him. “Thou that art *God in heaven* art the *God of our fathers* (v. 6) and *our God*, v. 7. Whom should we seek to, whom should we trust to, for relief, but to the God we have chosen and served?”

**(3.)** He shows the title they had to this good land they were now in possession of; an indisputable title it was: “*Thou gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend.* He was thy friend (this is referred to, <sup><3023></sup>James 2:23,

to show the honour of Abraham, that *he was called the friend of God*); we are *his seed*, and hope to be *beloved for the father's sake*," <sup><5113></sup>Romans 11:28; <sup><4003></sup>Deuteronomy 7:8, 9. "We hold this land by grant from thee. Lord, maintain thy own grant, and warrant it against all unjust claims. Suffer us not to be *cast out of thy possession*. We are tenants; thou art our landlord; wilt thou not hold thy own?" v. 11. Those that use what they have for God may comfortably hope that he will secure it to them.

(4.) He makes mention of the sanctuary, the temple they had built for God's name (v. 8), not as if that merited any thing at God's hand, for *of his own they gave him*, but it was such a token of God's favourable presence with them that they had promised themselves he would hear and help them when, in their distress, they cried to him before that house, v. 8, 9. "Lord, when it was built it was intended for the encouragement of our faith at such a time as this. Here thy name is; here we are. Lord, help us, for the glory of thy name."

(5.) He pleads the ingratitude and injustice of his enemies: "We are such as it will be thy glory to appear *for*; they are such as it will be thy glory to appear *against*; for,

[1.] They ill requite our ancient kindnesses. Thou *wouldst not let Israel invade them*, nor give them any disturbance." <sup><4003></sup>Deuteronomy 2:5, 9, 19, *Meddle not with the Edomites, distress not the Moabites, come not nigh the children of Ammon*, no not though they provoke you. "Yet now see how they invade us." We may comfortably appear to God against those that render us evil for good.

[2.] "They break in upon our ancient rights. They come *to cast us out of our possessions*, and seize our land for themselves. *O! our God, wilt thou not judge them?*" v. 12. Wilt thou not give sentence against them, and execute it upon them?" The justice of God is the refuge of those that are wronged.

(6.) He professes his entire dependence upon God for deliverance. Though he had a great army on foot, and well disciplined; yet he said, "*We have no might against this great company*, none without thee, none that we can expect any thing from without thy special presence and blessing, none to boast of, none to trust to; but *our eyes are upon thee*. We rely upon thee, and from thee is all our expectation. The disease seems desperate: *we know not what to do*, are quite at a loss, in a great strait. But this is a sovereign

remedy, *our eyes are upon thee*, an eye of acknowledgment and humble submission, an eye of faith and entire dependence, an eye of desire and hearty prayer, an eye of hope and patient expectation. *In thee, O God! do we put our trust; our souls wait on thee.*”

## 2 CHRONICLES 20:14-19

### GOD'S PROMISE OF VICTORY

We have here God's gracious answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer; and it was a speedy answer. *While he was yet speaking God heard:* before the congregation was dismissed they had assurance given them that they should be victorious; for it is never in vain to seek God.

- 1.** The spirit of prophecy came upon a Levite that was present, not in any place of eminency, but *in the midst of the congregation*, v. 14. The Spirit, like the wind, *blows where* and on whom *he listeth*. He was of the sons of Asaph, and therefore one of the singers; on that office God would put an honour. Whether he was a prophet before this or no is uncertain, most probably he was, which would make him the more regarded. There needed no sign, the thing itself was to be performed the very next day, and that would be confirmation enough to his prophecy.
- 2.** He encouraged them to trust in God, though the danger was very threatening (v. 15): *“Be not afraid; you have admitted fear enough to bring you to God, do not now admit that which will drive you to God, do not now admit that which will drive you from him again. The battle is not yours; it is not in your own strength, not for your own cause, that you engage; the battle is God's: he does and will, as you have desired, interest himself in the cause.”*
- 3.** He gives them intelligence of the motions of the enemy, and orders them to march towards them, with particular directions where they should find them. *To-morrow* (the day after the fast) *go you down against them*, v. 16, 17. It is fit that he who commands the deliverance should command those for whom the deliverance is to be wrought, and give the necessary orders, both for time and place.
- 4.** He assures them that they should be, not the glorious instruments, but the joyful spectators, of the total defeat of the enemy: *“You shall not need*

to strike a stroke; the work shall be done to your hands; only stand still and see it," v. 17. As Moses said to Israel at the Red Sea (<sup><4243></sup>Exodus 14:13), "God is with you, who is able to do his work himself, and will do it. If the battle be his, the victory shall be his too." Let but the Christian soldier go out against his spiritual enemies, and the God of peace will *tread them under his feet* and make *him more than a conqueror*.

**5.** Jehoshaphat and his people received these assurances with faith, reverence, and thankfulness.

**(1.)** They *bowed their heads*, Jehoshaphat first, and then all the people, *fell before the Lord, and worshipped*, receiving with a holy awe and fear of God this token of his favour, and saying with faith, *Be it unto us according to thy word*.

**(2.)** They lifted up their voices in praise to God, v. 19. An active faith can give thanks for a promise though it be not yet performed, knowing that God's bonds are as good as ready money. *God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice,* <sup><4915></sup>Psalm 60:5.

## <sup><4111></sup>2 CHRONICLES 20:20-30

### AMMON AND MOAB DESTROYED

We have here the foregoing prayer answered and the foregoing promise performed, in the total overthrow of the enemies' forces and the triumph (for so it was rather than a victory) of Jehoshaphat's forces over them.

**I.** Never was army drawn out to the field of battle as Jehoshaphat's was. He had soldiers *ready prepared for war* (<sup><4478></sup>2 Chronicles 17:18), but here is no notice taken of their military equipment, their swords or spears, their shields or bows. But Jehoshaphat took care,

**1.** That faith should be their armour. As they went forth, instead of calling them to handle their arms, and stand to them, to keep ranks, observe orders, and fight valiantly, he bade them *believe in the Lord God* and give credit to his word in the mouth of his prophets, and assured them that they should *prosper and be established*, v. 20. That is true courage which faith inspires a man with; nor will any thing contribute more to the establishing of the heart in shaking times than a firm belief of the power, and mercy,

and promise of God. The heart is *fixed* that thus *trusteth in the Lord*, and is kept in perfect peace. In our spiritual conflicts, this is the victory, this is the prosperity, even our faith.

**2.** That praise and thanksgiving should be their vanguard, v. 21.

Jehoshaphat called a council of war, and it was resolved to appoint *singers to go out before the army*, to charge in the front, who had nothing else to do but to praise God, to praise his holiness, which is his beauty, to praise him as they did in the temple (that beauty of holiness) with that ancient and good doxology which eternity itself will not wear thread-bare, *Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever*. By this strange advance towards the field of battle, Jehoshaphat intended to express his firm reliance upon the word of God (which enabled him to triumph before the battle), to animate his own soldiers, to confound the enemy, and to engage God on their side; for praise pleases God better than all *burnt offering and sacrifice*.

**II.** Never was army so unaccountably destroyed as that of the enemy; not by thunder, or hail, or the sword of an angel, not by dint of sword, or strength of arm, or any surprising alarm, like that which Gideon gave the Midianites; but the Lord set ambushments against them, either hosts of angels, or, as bishop Patrick thinks, their own ambushments, whom God struck with such confusion that they fell upon their own friends as if they had been enemies, and *every one helped to destroy another*, so that *none escaped*. This God did *when his people began to sing and to praise* (v. 22), for he delights to furnish those with *matter* for praise that have *hearts* for it. We read of his being *angry at the prayers of his people* (~~1801~~ Psalm 80:4), but never at their *praises*. When they did but begin the work of praise God perfected the work of their deliverance. What ground there was for their jealousies one of another does not appear, perhaps there was none; but so it was that the Ammonites and the Moabites fell foul upon the Edomites and cut them off, and then they fell out with one another and cut one another off, v. 23. Thus God often makes wicked people instruments of destruction to one another; and what alliances can be so firm as to keep those together whom God designs to dash in pieces one against another? See the mischievous consequences of divisions which neither of the contending parties can give any good account of the reason of. Those are wretchedly infatuated, to their ruin, that fall foul upon their friends as if they were enemies.

**III.** Never was spoil so cheerfully divided, for Jehoshaphat's army had nothing to do besides; the rest was done for them. When they came to the view of this vast army, instead of finding living men to fight with, they found them all dead men, and their carcasses spread as dung upon the face of the earth, v. 24. See how rich God is in mercy to those that call upon him in truth, and how often he out-does him in truth, and how often he out-does the prayers and expectations of his people. Jehoshaphat and his people prayed to be delivered from being spoiled by the enemy; and God not only delivered them, but enriched them with the spoil of the enemy. The plunder of the field was very great and very rich. They found precious jewels with the dead bodies, which yet could not save them from being loathsome carcasses. The spoil *was more than they could carry away* at once, and they were *three days in gathering it*, v. 25. Now it appeared what was God's end in bringing this great army against Judah; it was to humble them and prove them, that he might *do them good in their latter end*. It seemed at first a disturbance to their reformation, but it proved a recompence of it.

**IV.** Never was victory celebrated with more solemn and enlarged thanksgivings.

**1.** They kept a day of praise in the camp, before they drew their forces out of the field. Many thanksgivings, no doubt, were offered up to God immediately; but on the fourth day they assembled in a valley, where they blessed God with so much zeal and fervency that that day's work gave a name to the place, the valley of *Berachah*, that is, *of blessing*, v. 26. The remembrance of this work of wonder was hereby perpetuated, for the encouragement of succeeding generations to trust in God.

**2.** Yet they did not think this enough, but came in solemn procession, all in a body, and Jehoshaphat at the head of them, to Jerusalem, that the country, as they passed along, might join with them in their praises, and that they might give thanks for the mercy where they had by prayer obtained it, *in the house of the Lord*, v. 27, 28. Praising God must not be the work of a day only; but our praises, when we have received mercy, must be often repeated, as our prayers were when we were in the pursuit of it. Every day we must bless God; as long as we live, and while we have any being, we must praise him, spending our time in that work in which we hope to spend our eternity. Public mercies call for public acknowledgments *in the courts of the Lord's house*, ~~(136)~~ Psalm 116:19.



**V.** Never did victory turn to a better account than this; for,

**1.** Jehoshaphat's kingdom was hereby made to look very great and considerable abroad, v. 29. When they heard that God fought thus for Israel, they could not but say, *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun*, and *Happy art thou, O Israel!* It begat in the neighbours a reverence of God and a cautious fear of doing any injury to his people. It is dangerous fighting against those who have God with them.

**2.** It was made very easy and quiet at home, v. 30.

**(1.)** They were quiet among themselves. Those that were displeased at the destroying of the images and groves were now satisfied, and obliged to own that since the God of Israel could deliver after this sort he only is to be worshipped, in that way only which he himself has appointed.

**(2.)** They were quiet from the fear of insults from their neighbours, God having given them rest round about. And, if he give rest, who can give disturbance?

## ~~<447b>~~ 2 CHRONICLES 20:31-37

### **JEHOSHAPHAT'S NAVY WRECKED**

We are now drawing towards the close of the history of Jehoshaphat's reign, for a further account of which those who lived when this book was published were referred to an authentic history of it, written by Jehu the prophet (~~<447b>~~2 Chronicles 19:2), which was then extant, v. 34. This was the general character of his reign, that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, kept close to the worship of God himself and did what he could to keep his people close to it. But two things are here to be lamented: —

**1.** The people still retained a partiality for the high places, v. 33. Those that were erected to the honour of strange gods were taken away (~~<447b>~~2 Chronicles 17:6); but those where the true God was worshipped, being less culpable, were thought allowable, and Jehoshaphat was loth to disoblige the people so far as to take them away, for as yet they had not prepared their hearts to serve the God of their fathers. They complied with Jehoshaphat's reformation because they could not for shame do otherwise,

but they were not hearty in it, did not direct their hearts to God in it, did not act in it from any good principle nor with any zeal or resolution: and the best magistrates cannot bring to pass what they would, in reformation, when the people are cool in it.

**2.** Jehoshaphat himself still retained a partiality for the house of Ahab, because he had married his son to a daughter of that family, though he had been plainly reproved for it and had like to have smarted for it. He saw and knew that Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, did very wickedly, and therefore could not expect to prosper; yet he joined himself with him, not in war, as with his father, but in trade, became his partner in an East India fleet bound for Ophir, v. 35, 36. There is an emphasis laid upon the time — *after this*, after God had done such great things for him, without any such scandalous and pernicious confederacies, given him not only victory, but wealth, yet after this to go and join himself with a wicked king was very ungrateful. *After God had given him such a deliverance as this should he again break God's commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?* What could he expect but that *God should be angry with him?* <sup><15913></sup>Ezra 9:13, 14. Yet he sends to him, to show him his error and bring him to repentance,

**(1.)** By a prophet, who foretold the blasting of his project, v. 37. And,

**(2.)** By a storm, which broke the ships in the port before they set sail, by which he was warned to break off his alliance with Ahaziah; and it seems he took the warning, for, when Ahaziah afterwards pressed him to join with him, he *would not*, <sup><1724></sup>1 Kings 22:49. See how pernicious a thing it is to join in friendship and society with evil-doers. It is a hard matter to break off from it. A man may much better keep himself from being taken in the snare than recover himself out of it.