

The Bible 20/20 Week 17: “The Real Battle” (5-3-20)

Opening: 2 Chronicles 17-20 - 5 generations after David, and now Jehoshaphat is about to be king

2 Chronicles 16:9a (ESV)

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.

Note: God is looking for a “blameless” heart towards Him - really means whole or at peace. God is looking for those who are pursuing peace and wholeness with Him, who are dedicated to keeping right relationship.

Now, Jehoshaphat replaces his mostly faithful father Asa who didn’t finish well (bitter to God, harsh to people)

2 Chronicles 17:3-6 (ESV)

(3) The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, (4) but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel. (5) Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand. And all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor. (6) His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

Note: Jehoshaphat’s heart was towards the Lord! (2 Chronicles 16:9)

- Notice the action involved - seek, walked, ways! Rightly walking with the Lord is a movement/journey
- Also note - He lived in contrast to the ways of the Northern kingdom (Israel)

Today: Let’s look at 2 movements in Jehoshaphat’s life (each were around battles he found himself in)

1) Ahab’s Battle - a smart alliance

2 Chronicles 18:1-3 (ESV)

(1) Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab. (2) After some years he went down to Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab killed an abundance of sheep and oxen for him and for the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead. (3) Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, “Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?” He answered him, “I am as you are, my people as your people. We will be with you in the war.”

Note: Ahab wines & dines J-phat to get him to go to war with Ahab against the Syrian Army

- **J-Phat:** already made a “smart” alliance with the North through marriage (his son w/ Ahab’s daughter)
- **J-Phat:** We are one people, so your war is our war

From this point forward J-phat operates as if they are aligned in purpose & thinking, & united in relationship

Even though there is plenty of evidence against this . . .

- Jehoshaphat says we need guidance, so they seek direction from prophets (18:4-28)
 - False prophets brought in, and they give a good report (you’ll be victorious!)
 - True prophet brings bad report (Ahab will die & your people will be scattered, but return safely home)
 - Ahab throws this prophet in prison, and they still go out to battle . . .

2 Chronicles 18:29-30 (ESV)

(29) And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes." And the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle. (30) Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of his chariots, "Fight with neither small nor great, but only with the king of Israel."

Note: Ahab, let's still go, since I'm the one who might die, I'll just go in disguise.

Consider these 2 men . . . Ahab plays J-Phat, and J-Phat buys it!

Ahab - smart, cunning, ruthless

Jehoshaphat - good-hearted, trusting, clumsy

2 Chronicles 18:31-32 (ESV)

(31) As soon as the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is the king of Israel." So they turned to fight against him. And Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; God drew them away from him. (32) For as soon as the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

Note: J-Phat - Clumsy & cries out - AHHHH!!!!

- **Micah example** - Mr. Magoo (power wheels truck, bike, etc.)
- **J-Phat** - Even with his clumsy approach and this bad alliance, God protects the good-hearted J-Phat

Ahab wasn't so lucky . . .**2 Chronicles 18:33-34 (ESV)**

(33) But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded." (34) And the battle continued that day, and the king of Israel was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians until evening. Then at sunset he died.

Note: Ahab, even with all his cunning and ruthless brilliance, he couldn't avoid his inevitable defeat!

- His way was broken, and his failure was sure!

So Jehoshaphat returns from battle . . . With an important lesson to be learned!

2 Chronicles 19:1-3 (ESV)

(1) Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. (2) But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. (3) Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asheroth out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God."

Note: Jehu says - These guys are not your family! (compare to 18:3 - J-phat tells Ahab we are one people!)

- He was good-hearted, good-intentioned, but made a wrong alliance!
- J-Phat was fighting the wrong battle & aligned with the wrong people!

Application & Warning: Our cultural moment . . .

What are we fighting for? Who are we aligning with? What's the right battle with the right approach?

***Unpopular Opinion Alert . . .**

In our current moment:

- There is so much: opinion & anger!
- Race to be right - I want to be the one with the right answer and the right response
- My expert is better than your expert mentality
- We sure have a lot of Covid-19 experts & Pandemic Response Warriors considering . . . None of us had ever even heard of this thing until 3-6 months ago!

Is this even the battle we are called to right now?

There are 2 ways to live: one is like Ahab and the other is like Jehoshaphat . . .

Galatians 5:17 (ESV)

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV)

(19) Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery,*

*Many of us stop reading right there and think its not talking about me. but let's keep going . . .

enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, (21) envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Try these on for size: enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness

Real Talk: Far too many of us are focused on being "right" instead of on being "good"

A certain **political party** or **cultural ideology** is not the answer, it's not our true place, or what we should be fighting for.

There is 1 kingdom we are called to and it's the kingdom of God!

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

(22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Note: There is no law, rule, or restriction that can keep me from letting God be my King and His Spirit rule my life.

- This way of living should permeate my life, my home, and my interactions with a world in need!
- How much Jesus have I brought into my home and shared with those in need around me?

The real battle and a right response . . .

2) Jehoshaphat's Battle - a humble reliance

2 Chronicles 20:1-4 (ESV)

(1) After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. (2) Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you . . . (3) Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. (4) And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

Note: The real battle is the one that comes to your doorstep, and the real question is what will you do then?

- J-phat was afraid, so he sought the Lord!

2 Chronicles 20:5-12 record His response: J-Phat stands before everyone & publicly cries out for help!

2 Chronicles 20:12 (ESV)

O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

Note: We are powerless & ignorant. But our eyes are on you!

- **My Basketball Award Example:** Christian Character award vs. Team MVP (8th grade year)
- **J-phat's position of humble reliance** - I'm not strong, I don't know what to do, but my eyes are on you!

Jahaziel - worship leader (5th generation from Asaph - a legacy of worship. See: devotional video from 4/24)

(vs. 13-17) He declares a word from God to all the people and how they are to proceed . . .

2 Chronicles 20:17 (ESV)

You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you."

Note: Stand, Hold, and See - God is fighting on your behalf!

So, They prepare for worship instead of a battle - they go out to face the enemy led by the worshippers . . .

2 Chronicles 20:22, 27, 30 (ESV)

And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. . . (27) Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. . . (30) So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

Conclusion: Victory, Peace, & Rest are not found in our own Brilliance, or an unholy Alliance.

But when people are willing to be Clumsy & Imperfect, yet whole-heartedly look toward God for help!

2 Chronicles 16:9a (ESV)

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.

Let's Pray!

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What does it mean to have a “blameless” heart towards God (see notes on 2 Chronicles 16:9)? Jehoshaphat is described that way in 2 Chronicles 17:3-6 - what can we learn from that description of his life about how to have a heart towards God?
- 2) Jehoshaphat makes an alliance with King Ahab, who appeared to be a friend on common ground, but he wasn't. How can we watch out for this in our lives? What were some of the biggest differences between Ahab & Jehoshaphat? Ahab was smart and resourceful, but he wasn't a trust-worthy guy. Jehoshaphat was good-hearted and trusting, but didn't always have the best judgement.
- 3) Even though Jehoshaphat had bad judgement in this story and got himself into a tough situation - God delivered him. Have you ever seen God rescue you from bad situations that you stumbled into? What does this teach us about God?
- 4) Compare the descriptions found in Galatians 5:19-21 (living by the flesh) with Galatians 5:22-23 (living by the Spirit). Reflecting on these verses - what areas are you struggling with right now? Are there ways you have responded poorly in this situation? Are there ways you have seen the Holy Spirit help you respond rightly in our current circumstances?
- 5) What does it look like for us to choose “the right battle” in our current situation? How can we have a heart towards God, and see His kingdom and His presence more in our lives? In our homes? In our interactions with others?