

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 1 - Study 12 Proper Fear before God

C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: Jehoshaphat feared, set himself to seek the Lord, proclaimed a fast through all Judah, and Judah gathered to ask help of the Lord.

These are brief studies, not
“teachings” or “doctrines.”

Volume 1, Study 12

2Chronicles 20

‘And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.’

Yesterday I wrote that which follows these beginning paragraphs. This morning, November 4, 2008 election day, I knelt as usual to pray before sitting down to face my computer. However, I was having a difficult time concentrating and I had to begin several times. Then, not having finished, I said, “Lord it is so difficult for my flesh (the human aspect of me) to look to you when there are so many evil things that distract me.”

I kept thinking of the evil shenanigans going on in the struggle for political dominance in America. It is not who wins or loses that bothers me so much, but the methods they use in getting there. Do not get me wrong: I am well aware of our God: that He is in control of the nations and that whatever we get is according to His Plan for America (which at any given time may be blessing or judgment). King David said that he loved the good and hated the evil; thus it is for anyone who loves David’s God.

Then it occurred to me that emotions similar to mine were surely multiplied many times over as described in the text below. But even more is the *testing* that goes on inside me: that I look more at the perceived problems than I look to the Master for who He is. This *temptation* (to look more at the low condition than to my high Lord, is actually *a test*. If we will think of it in terms of a *test* instead of a *temptation* then it will more bring into focus how we humans, though saved by Grace, fail to look up. When we feel good and joyful, the best of us look up in praise; but when we feel otherwise, we look around at our environment; this behavior demonstrates our condition of being more dominated by mankind and by the world than by the Maker of both mankind and the world.

Therefore, I count it joy as I again go through the text below. My hope is that you will catch some of my hope and joy as we go along. “Holy Father help us so that our **‘our eyes are upon thee’**.”

1-2) It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other[s] beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat [king of Judah] to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar, which is Engedi.

With the brother nations of Moab and Ammon (their land was located just east across the Jordan River from Judah) another army from the direction of Syria was even now traveling south along the east side of the river to join in the attack against Judah. At the time of this report this army was marching along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

3-5) And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court,

Actually, as with the first ‘house of the Lord’ (the initial tent or tabernacle), there was a great plaza in front of Solomon’s temple designed for the purpose of such huge gatherings. In regards to the initial tent (tabernacle) this area was called *the place of congrega-*

tion; but in the KJV it is often referred to as the ‘**tabernacle** (i.e. tent) **of the congregation**’ in that it was as close as the people could go toward the tabernacle. This special area in front of ‘**the house of the LORD**’ was considered holy for the people when they gathered in this fashion for such a purpose. (This is fully explained in God’s Hook in the chapter on Moses and Aaron and also in God’s Rock: the Life of Moses and the Exodus Epoch.)

On this occasion there was a huge gathering and the men came with their armor and weapons of war and with them were their wives and children. The men 1) would not leave their families alone unguarded and 2) the wives and children were every bit a part of *calling on God and of what God was going to do*.

6-9) And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

This is referring to their present temple that built by Solomon and it further refers to Solomon’s prayer to God before the people when he dedicated the temple. Note that these people calling upon their God knew Him to be the Ruler of nations. Every Christian should also arrive at the understanding that his or her God is the Ruler of nations.

10-11) And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir [i.e. Edom], whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them [i.e. the Edomites], and destroyed them not; Behold, I say, [see] how they [now] reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.

Also to join in the attack was an army from Edom, the land just south of Ammon and Moab. When Moses led Israel around to the east side of the Jordan River during the Exodus Epoch, God specifically forbade the Israelites from fighting with Edom and Moab and Ammon even though Esau was spoiling for a fight. (This also is well described in God’s Rock.)

12-13) O our God, wilt thou not judge them [i.e. all of the approaching armies]? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

The king of Judah owned a Bible (all the writings of Moses and the Psalms and the prophets up until this time). Also he had the prophets of his day. He had the high priest and priesthood and Levites. Yet, in his fear he went quickly and directly to his God, ‘**And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.**’ Though the men arrived ready for war, Jehoshaphat’s emphasis was upon seeking God and leading his people to do the same. He was in no frame of mind and heart to start figuring how they were going to fight for God or to arrange all of the spiritual ones together to claim the victory. Please note that even though the episode is told regarding the king and the people as a whole that there is enough emphasis (which I hope to point out) regarding each and every person of the people.

‘...we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but *our eyes are upon thee*.’ Whichever fashion God chooses to answer in such a time of need - when His people are down on their knees and their eyes are gazing up toward Him - the business is entirely His business. Even so, all through our own Bible is the promise that He will hear and will answer when we are in our proper and

humble position before Him.

In our day, there are many Christians who view themselves as waging war against the enemy for God. Yet, I suggest that we ‘stand’ instead of “fight”...and that initially our ‘stand’ should be upon our knees instead of upon our feet. We should stop assuming that, though ‘the battle is God’s’, “we are His hands, His feet, His mouth...” In my lifetime (I am 68 years mature and Barbara is 66) the Church’s efforts have proved such assumptions to be wrong. What we and the world desperately need is for God to take matters into His hands and *openly for all to see do something that is obviously not of man*. Considering the present condition of the world and the Church, the more likely thing that God might *do* is to judge America and the world. However, the God of the Bible is both Merciful and Just as we will see in the following verses.

14) Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation;

Here ‘...in the midst of the congregation’ is more properly ‘...in the midst of the host’, the ‘host’ being the warriors who are standing in ranks beside and not far from the king. In much earlier years there had been the practice of levites carrying the arc of the covenant into battle with a priest of two in charge of them. That practice was never of God and under His obvious displeasure toward the practice it had been abandoned. Yet, many stout levites and priests were always enjoined in the battles. Such was the case of Jahaziel son of Zechariah, one man among the sons of Levi in their ranks. Upon this man came the Spirit of the Lord...and he prophesied.

15) And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.

Interesting is it not, considering the circumstance, that God tells the people what they already know: in that, if the battle was theirs then they were lost. Of course, the prophesy is a verification to the people 1) that they are in the proper condition for God to do His thing and 2) that something very much out of the ordinary is going to occur. They do not know what the something happens to be and they will not be involved in doing it.

16-17) To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the [upper] end of the brook, before the [entering in of the] wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.

The people still do not know what God will do, but they know what they are supposed to do...and that is not to even think about doing anything that might be remotely helping God. They are to ‘set yourselves’. They are to ‘stand...and see’. When told to do this by the Lord, the time has come to rise from one’s knees and stand and look and see what He will do. This part is not “the faith part”. The faith part was when the king dropped to his knees in fear and called the people to join him. In God’s Hook, in the chapter about the Prophet Balaam, the king of Nineveh and his city did this very thing. In World War II, Winston Churchill called upon his people to do it...and so did President Roosevelt.

Yes, the ‘standing’ part also is in faith, but it is a consequence of having an inward assurance that the Lord has responded and that now He is going to *do something*. It is when God *manifestly does something* that He is hallowing His Name. Sadly, too many Christians think that they have something to do with *God’s somethings*. The Christian that loves God truly desires that men see God in His Glorious Actions...so that to Him is all the honor. Whenever God does such a glorious thing it is either ‘salvation’ or ‘judgment’.

18) And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

Note that the proper respect of the king was to bow his crowned head with his face to the ground because, in the very face of God's words, the king realizes that he is not to look into the glory contained in those words. Here, then, is the maintaining of respect for the king's God-given position, yet within the ultimate respect for God's Words of Salvation. All the people then fell under the awe of the Spirit of God, when led in humility by their king. Interesting is it not that *ultimate fear of God* is when *God's Spirit responds to the heart of men and energizes in them real awe and humility*.

19) And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

The king is in the proper position regarding this God-inspired-circumstance, and so are the people, and so are the levites who are truly inspired into their orchestrated duties... each group working that which they had been long trained to do. Dear reader, this is worship at its inspired best. Though the occasion was huge, just as true was what occurred in each person of the people. It is just as true in the inward parts of a mother when for the first time she views the little person who has been inside her...when the father views for the first time the tiny product of his love and care for a woman.

One day about noon it was just as true...when I was nearing where I had left my car. I had been hunting and, in returning, I was walking up a rather steep hill when a misty low slow-moving cloud appeared above me such that the sun shone through it like as God's glorious breath was slowly encouraging the misty presence along. It was a time to go to my knees or to stand and simply say, "Yes, Lord" to His Glory being manifested in this simple manner to this simple man who simply loved Him. One never knows what one's Lord and Master might do at any given time.

One's response at such a time does not depend on what God has just done or will shortly do. Instead it depends on what God has done in the inward parts of His little sheep over the years, as the little sheep has allow the Shepherd to do and continued doing. It is not the circumstance of the moment that determines the little sheep's response, instead it is the condition of the little sheep's inward parts which determine the outward response to any new God-circumstance. So it was with the king of Judah, with the people of Judah, and with the sons of Levi. Each person - man, woman, child- responded as each had been inwardly prepared to do under this unction of the Spirit of God.



20) And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

Note that Isaiah and none of the prophets of God were involved in this episode. It was Jahaziel the son of Zechariah to whom God had given His prophetic words and now it is the king whom God inspires to prophetic words as well. '**...Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established**'; '**...believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.**'

When a person is actively believing (i.e. faithing) in the Lord such that he is '**established**', then he will know inwardly by the Spirit when a prophet is speaking by the Spirit. In such a circumstance, then, believing (i.e. faithing) in the prophet's heavenly words is also by the faith of heaven. The latter follows perfectly when the former is properly '**established**'. What we are seeing in this passage is like the overflowing of a cup due to the infilling of God's Spirit working what only He should be doing...to His honor and Glory.

21) And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that [they] should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Every person was operating in ‘**the beauty of holiness**’. Before the king and army would march out of Jerusalem, having consulted with the people, the king directed the singers (i.e. of the group of levites who had such duty) to the head of the column.

Imagine the column marching out of the gates of Jerusalem witnessed by all the people who would stay in Jerusalem and wait on the Lord. The singers were within ‘**the beauty of holiness**’, as were the people to wait, as were the king and each warrior in the army. One can experience ‘**holiness**’ upon one’s knees or marching out ‘**to see what the Lord will do**’.

22) And when [at the very time that] they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

Even as God’s king and army, led by the singers, were passing through the gates of Jerusalem, God was setting up ambushers in the upper part of the valley where the battle was to be enjoined. It seems that the army coming south from the direction of Syria never got the chance to participate. The army of Ammon, the army of Moab, and the Edomite army coming from their south evidently were to meet together and fight in the valley.

The book God’s Rock describes these kinds of actions and the terrain in which they occurred. A ‘wilderness’ was actually an area that was good for foraging flocks and the area always had at least one central open water source, typically a spring or a well. The ‘wilderness’ might be rather small or fairly large. In this case it was a valley with a stream that flowed from its head down through the valley where the battle was supposed to be fought. It seems that the separate armies were to meet before daylight and set up the stage for the battle.

Now understand that the Ammonites and the Moabites were brother tribes as were the tribes of Israel and they had nearly exact speech one to the other and they had somewhat similar battle gear. The Edomites coming from the south would be distinct in their speech and battle gear.

As these armies emerged into the upper valley in the darkness of predawn they were ambushed by God’s ambushers. Who or what were these ambushers? When Christ Jesus comes upon a white horse followed by his army he shall fight with ‘the sword of his mouth’. I do not know what all of this means or how it works, but it is of God.

23) For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir [i.e. Edom], utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir [i.e. the Edomite warriors], every one helped to destroy another [who was not exactly like himself in battle gear].

God’s ambushers (likely spiritual forces of some kind, perhaps angels) confused the armies in the darkness. But since the armies were to meet as prearranged in the darkness this would never have happened except that the God of Israel had been putting the fear of Him into their hearts. That is, they knew the God of Israel...who was one of their own gods...and they knew that they were going expressly against what they should be doing. In their jealousy against Judah and its holy city and its temple, etc., they saw Judah’s weakness and had come together to plan taking over the holy land promised to Abraham. Here then was the improper fear of God.

When the distinctly different Edomite forces approached in the night, fear took hold of the Ammonites and Moabites, who between them were a greater force, and they destroyed to a man the Edomites. But in the escalating fear, an Ammonite of one battle gear turned against an Moabite in other battle gear and they slaughtered each other. Of course, all along the enemies of Judah thought they were killing Judaites, but their ferocity arose out of the fear that Yahweh Elohim was in the process of killing them for their obstinacy against Him. All of this was quickly occurring in the darkness in the upper part of the valley. The flowing stream must have been more blood than water.

24) And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

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**25) And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the [expensive apparel of the] dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off [i.e. 'raked off'] for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil [i.e. taking loads of it back to Jerusalem], it was so much.**

For that extended age in history and from early times it was the practice of armies going out to conquer other nations, lands, and people that the warriors took with them many valued objects that they had taken as spoil from earlier war campaigns. Usually the chiefs did much the same, having in their tents items taken from other chiefs and kings. The idea, of course, was to keep the good fortune with them. In many cases it was a religious thing which reminded them not to forget the gods that had helped them achieve their successes. While it was a means of devotion to their gods, also it was a statement to those gods that if they were beaten that the spoils dedicated to the gods would go to other peoples with other gods. They were jealous toward their gods and wanted their gods to be jealous toward them.

This is how in many of the battles fought by Israelites when their God was helping them they would not only win, but would become enriched. The book God's Rock has in its pages more than a few of such battles and enrichment of spoils. God's warriors also were jealous toward their God as He was jealous toward them.

We see this in the story of Gideon in God's Hook where Gideon used his share of the spoils, as best he could, for the glory of God. When Gideon died the people turned away from God and turned against Gideon's sons and family. The glory did not last long. But this should be the case since God is Glory and all that He does is Glory; He does not need one speck of glory that man might give Him. Ah, but to be one whom God would use for some little while to His glory, though but a tiny speck in the Ages of Adam, is written in the Books kept in heaven. Gideon's ephod and the heart that formed it is written there.

Moreover, a concept was developed in the Mosaic Law that the winning warriors would always bring the major spoils to a central place and a significant portion went to the temple and its functions, but also to the people who stayed at home. David did this with all of his men before and after he became king.

**26) And on the fourth day they assembled themselves [i.e. the king and the army] in the valley of Berachah [i.e. 'Blessing']; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.**

**27) Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies.**

Every warrior was staying within what God was doing. Not one man had decided to take some of the spoils and head for his home. Indeed, the wives and children of these men were in Jerusalem becoming amazed by all of the spoils being brought in every day for three days. With Jehoshaphat (the God-anointed king of Judah) in the lead, the joy was being expressed by each and every warrior...not just by the singing levites.

In the passage, we have seen faith, worship, expectation, victorious spoils, and now 'rejoicing over the enemy'. (See Luke 10:17-24 when Jesus 'rejoiced in spirit' in the knowledge of the impending victory of God's Plan, of God's apostles, and of God's people because of the downfall of Satan.)

**28) And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD.**

**29) And the fear of God [i.e. the fear of Yahweh Elohim, God of a chosen people Israel] was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.**

This *fear is a healthy fear* regarding the condition of the world, both for God's people and for the good things and people of the world. It tends to make the enemy cower and back into their dark dank holes.

There are a great many people with a great many agendas in America and in the world that appear to be against God's purposes, even if not viewing themselves and God's enemies. Concealed behind such agendas, perhaps unrealized by many of the people with such agendas, is an agenda directly against God the Father and God the Son. In the earlier years of my lifetime this was not so easy to see, but in the latter part of my lifetime it has become so open that for a person not to see it must mean that he or she is blind.

So, then, I ask, "Why are the creatures of darkness out and about even marching down our streets in the light of day? Why does our judicial system not deter crime? Why have our prisons become a turnstile for those who would prey upon society? And why in American society has there been a rather late blooming poisonous rose drawing many into its deadly fragrance? Why have our politics from town level all the way to the federal level become deceptively agenda driven when it used to be primarily driven for the nation and the people. Why have the people who are determined that they know what society needs become so motivated by Machiavellian deception?"

I suggest that in America there used to be a Light in the Church that deterred the creatures of darkness from emerging any distance from their holes, since creatures of darkness cannot abide that Light.

Ah, but today they are walking in the light of day with no fear or shame. Those who use deceit and manipulation (even church leaders using manipulation to their members to get them to "get with the program and work for God") are working a work not of God, even though they may have become convinced that they are working God's work. **'These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.'** John 16:1-3

**30-32) So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about. And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: he was thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the LORD.**

Here was a man that from a boy had personally given himself over to his God.

**33) Howbeit the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers.**

So it was with the people of Gideon's day. So it has always been with God's people Israel. So it has always been with the Church from its beginning. So it is today in America and in much of the world because the Light that was in the Church is no longer there deterring the creatures of darkness...and deterring God's people from our petty worldly ways. The churches that we admire the most, which are convinced that they can win the world for Christ, are convinced that they can fight the good fight against God's enemies... where is the Light in them? Our victory songs and slogans are hollow and the creatures of darkness laugh openly at them...even as the world pauses in its scurrying to nowhere to wonder about the Church that used to be.

**34-35) Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, who is mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel. And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:**



Here is the ever-present temptation of Satan who knows that, even when a man or woman of God does not live the world, there is still a love in heart for the brethren. It is in the heart because it must be there for the person who loves God. Joining to do some earthly good for God's people is rebellion against God, but we become deceived as we become enamored with ourselves. Eve did it. As we become relaxed toward God instead of standing against the enemy, we think that we can do some earthly good for God's people because there good things in the world that God's people desire. "What can be wrong with that", and "all of God's people cannot be wrong", etc. When God's people look to a leader instead of looking to God (as in Gideon's case) the leader, in his love for the people, can become tempted in a blindsiding manner by the Deceiver. No one deceived has ever known that he is deceived.

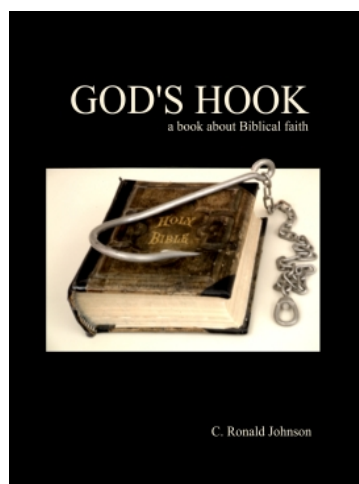
**36) And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongeber.**

Business is good and most of God's people should be in business or working for a business to put food on the table for the family. Blessing often flow from God by the means of such work. However, Jehoshaphat king of Judah was in a different business ...wherein blessing to him and to the people were supposed to flow from the God Israel.

**37) Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.**

Here is demonstrated God's love for this man and the man's office as king of God's people. Dear reader, I pray that God would love you enough that He would do similarly to you and to your loved ones. "Lord help us to welcome your interference in you lives. Bless us by knocking out many of the things in our lives that we consider to be *blessings that go along with being in you family*. If we cannot become smarter regarding your ways, then at least limit our circumstances into your will."

**These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press**



a book  
about  
Biblical  
Faith

the life of  
Moses  
and the  
Exodus

