

## Relying on the Lord – 2 Chronicles 13

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Bricklayer's Accident Report

1. What follows is an accident report filed by a construction worker in Australia.
2. It was reprinted in the newsletter of the Australian *Workers' Compensation Board*.

Dear Sir,

I am writing in response to your request for additional information in Block 3 of the accident report form. I put "poor planning" as the cause of my accident. You asked for a fuller explanation and I trust the following details will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the day of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a new six story building. When I completed my work, I found that I had some bricks left over which, when weighed later were found to be slightly in excess of 500 lbs. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley, which was attached to the side of the building on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went down and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow descent of the bricks.

You will note in Block 11 of the form that I weigh *135 lbs*. Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rapid rate *up* the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, I met the barrel which was now proceeding downward at an equally impressive speed. This explained the fractured skull, minor abrasions and the broken collar bone, as listed in Section 3 of the accident report form. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were 2 knuckles deep in the pulley.

Fortunately by this time I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope, in spite of beginning to experience a great deal of pain.

At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Now devoid of the weight of the bricks, that barrel weighed approximately 50 lbs. I refer you again to my weight in Block 11. As you can imagine, I began a rapid descent, down the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, I met the barrel coming *up*. This accounts for the 2 fractured ankles, broken tooth and several lacerations of my legs and lower body.

Here my luck began to change slightly. The encounter with the barrel seemed to slow me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell into the pile of bricks and

fortunately only 3 vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, as I lay there on the pile of bricks, in pain, unable to move, I again lost my composure and presence of mind and let go of the rope. The empty barrel began its journey back down onto me. This explains the 2 broken legs.

I hope this answers your inquiry.

### **B. Messed up**

1. That's messed up. This poor guy made one bad decision after another.
2. Over the years, several people have come to me for help who've been just as messed up –
  - a. Not physically, but *financially* or *relationally*.
  - b. They've made a mess of their lives because of a *series* of bad choices.
3. Some of the stories I've heard are hard to believe.
4. As I listen, I wonder, "How could things have gone so south for this person?"
5. Just a few weeks ago, we had a guy show up here early Sunday morning who used to be a part of our church.
  - a. I married him & his wife years ago – a precious sister we all love.
  - b. He had amazing promise & was gifted in many ways, but he carried on a secret life of sin.
  - c. The problem with secret sin is that if you don't repent of it, it always becomes public – his did.
  - d. He left his wife, got into drugs & all kinds of nasty stuff & ended up on the streets.
  - e. When he showed up here a few weeks ago, I hoped it was a sign of his return to the Lord.
  - f. But it quickly became clear he had an ulterior & dangerous motive,
  - g. He'd gone completely over into looney-land & was planning on disrupting the service – so we had to tell him to leave.
6. I can't tell you how hard it was - I *love* that guy; even though he's turned his back on God & made a slew of bad choices that have messed up his life.
7. But I still pray for him – because over & over *again* I've seen in many of these messed up situations, when people halt their foolishness & call out to God, He comes running to save & restore, just as he did for the prodigal son in the story Jesus told.

---

8. Ch. 13 is a great example of that in the history of Judah . . .

## **II. TEXT**

### **A. Vs. 1-2**

**<sup>1</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king over Judah. <sup>2</sup> He reigned 3 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.**

1. Abijah was the son of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.
2. For reasons we'll learn in our study on Wednesday, Israel has now split into 2

nations –

- a. Israel to the north, ruled over by King Jeroboam.
  - b. And Judah to the south, ruled over by David's great-grandson, Abijah.
  3. A state of war existed between the 2 kingdoms; limited to border clashes along the boundary separating them.
  4. During Abijah's reign, things heated up.
- 
5. Last week I mentioned that the Bible gives a "report card" on each of the kings, whether they were good or bad, based on whether or not they served the Lord.
  6. 2 Chronicles *doesn't give us* an evaluation of Abijah, but 1 Kings 15 *does*.
    - a. There we learn Abijah was a *wicked* king because he followed the example of his father Rehoboam & did not *wholly* follow the Lord.
    - b. Like his father, Abijah only looked to God when things were going badly.

### **B. Vs. 3-12**

**<sup>3</sup> Abijah set the battle in order with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 choice men. Jeroboam also drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 choice men, mighty men of valor.**

1. Jeroboam initiated this by amassing a huge force then marching south to attack Judah.
2. Abijah received a report of the impending invasion & rallied his troops.
3. Not wanting to allow Jeroboam's army into the territory of Judah, he deployed his troops just inside the border of Israel.

**<sup>4</sup> Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, and said,**

4. Judah was outnumbered 2 to 1 – Abijah *didn't want* this battle.
  5. So he stood at a place his voice could be heard by as many as possible & launched into a speech that lasts all the way through v. 12.
  6. Ancient records tells us a pre-battle speech by a king or general was common.
    - a. A good deal of warfare is *psychological*, & many battles have turned on the thrust, *not* of a sword but a word.
    - b. So prior to the fighting, the leader of each side would lay out their case for why they were superior & going to prevail.
    - c. The goal was to *instill courage* in your troops while *dispensing doubt* to the enemy.
- 
- d. This is still done today.
  - e. The goal of bin Laden's videos is to justify, recruit, & create fear.
  - f. The US did the same thing with the UN & world community prior to the launch of the War on Terror in Afghanistan & Iraq.

**"Hear me, Jeroboam and all Israel: <sup>5</sup> Should you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt?"**

7. Salt was used mainly as a *preservative*.
8. A *covenant of salt* was a euphemism for an *unchanging promise*.
9. But hold on—Abijah doesn't have it quite right:
  - a. God didn't promise David his descendants would always reign in Israel,

**PERIOD!**

- b. There was a *condition* – David’s dynasty would last *as long as* they walked with God.
- 10. *Solomon’s* last years were spent in *apostasy*.
  - a. *Rehoboam* *forsook* God.
  - b. *Abijah* did the same.
- 11. So Abijah’s not telling the whole story here. Why? Let’s read on . . .

**6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord.**

- 12. True – Jeroboam *had* done that.
  - 13. What Abijah doesn’t say is that *God sent a prophet* to Jeroboam with a message that because Solomon had turned from God, the kingdom would be torn from him & Jeroboam would reign over the northern tribes.
  - 14. God *warned* Jeroboam: He was NOT to cause Israel to turn idols. If Jeroboam faithfully followed the Lord, *his* dynasty would last in the north, just as David’s would in the south.
  - 15. Abijah leaves all this out, because it doesn’t fit his purpose.
- 

**7 Then worthless rogues gathered to him, and strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and inexperienced and could not withstand them.**

- 17. These words were aimed at the fighting men of Israel arrayed against them.
  - a. Abijah wanted to shake their confidence in their leaders who’d called them to this campaign.
  - b. He says, “Your king is a traitorous rebel & his advisors are greedy scoundrels who are just using you to their own power-hungry ends.”

**8 And now you think to withstand the kingdom –**

- 18. Not “of Judah” but -  
**of the LORD, which is in the hand of the sons of David;**
- 19. Who, unlike your leaders, are appointed by God!  
**and you are a great multitude, and with you are the gold calves which Jeroboam made for you as gods.**

- 20. Oh – this is rich! After reminding them of their history as the people of Yahweh, Abijah pointed out the presence among them of the idols Jeroboam had made.
  - a. Even though God warned Jeroboam not to do this – like so many fools, Jeroboam thought he was smarter than God & did his own thing.
  - b. He invented a new religion based on the worship of a golden calf.
- 21. There was just no way to duck the fact that Israel had turned its back on God – while Abijah claimed Judah *remained loyal* to Him.

**9 Have you not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests, like the peoples of other lands, so that whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and 7 rams may be a priest of things that are not gods?**

- 22. He’s piling it on thick.

23. There weren't any *real priests* left in the north because Jeroboam had fired them all & they'd moved to Judah.
24. In their place, Israel had a bunch of pretender priests whose sole qualification was that they owned some livestock.
25. The men of Israel had to be feeling uneasy as Abijah unmasked their spiritually bankrupt condition.

**10 But as for us [Judah], the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken Him;**

26. That was simply NOT true – they had!

27. But as we read on, we see why he said that. Here it is . . .

**and the priests who minister to the LORD are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites attend to their duties. <sup>11</sup> And they burn to the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense; they also set the showbread in order on the pure gold table, and the lampstand of gold with its lamps to burn every evening; for we keep the command of the LORD our God, but you have forsaken Him.**

28. Abijah thought because the priests were still doing their thing at the temple in Jerusalem, God was content because He was getting His religious bone –
  - a. So everything was hunky-dory.
  - b. But the worship of idols was going on as well.
  - c. All those altars Solomon had built on the hills of Jerusalem were still in service.
29. For Abijah, God wasn't *someone* to have a *loyal relationship* with, as He was for David –
30. No, God was *something* you appeased thru *religion rituals* – & as long you jumped thru the right hoops, you could do whatever you wanted the rest of the time.
31. Of course, no one thinks that way anymore, right?

**12 Now look, God Himself is with us as our head, and His priests with sounding trumpets to sound the alarm against you. O children of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you shall not prosper!**

32. If it weren't for the negative report about Abijah in 1 Kings 15, what we read here would lead us to believe this guy was right on.
  33. This is a stirring speech. “God is on our side!” / Sadly – that's ALL it was – a speech.
  34. The issue wasn't “God is on our side” – what Abijah *ought* to have concerned himself with was, “Are we on God's side?”
- 
35. Abijah wasn't the only national leader to wrap himself in religion for political ends.
  36. The current candidates for President vie for the title of who holds their faith more dear.
- 
37. Abijah played the *religion card* because it was a clever & effective political trick.
    - a. He knew what to say & just how to say it to sound sincere.
    - b. Like I said, if not for 1 Kings 15, we'd think he was a true believer.

- c. He wasn't – he was just a slick operator.
  - 38. While Abijah made good speeches about religion, he never *lived it*.
  - 39. **David** did! **Solomon** did too, *at first*.
    - a. Then he turned from God & built altars to the idols of his many wives.
    - b. Rehoboam sort of walked with God for *the first 3 years*, then he *too* forsook God.
    - c. Abijah *never* walked with God.
  - 40. When it comes to our leaders – it's not enough for them to claim faith – Do they *live* it?
  - 41. There won't be any doubt about the one who *genuinely does* live it.
  - 42. No one doubted David's devotion to God – kinda' hard to do when he dances with all his might thru the streets of the capital in his BVD's!
  - 43. Abijah talked a good game – but he didn't live it.
- 
44. There's more to our story . . .

### **C. Vs. 13-19**

**<sup>13</sup> But Jeroboam caused an ambush to go around behind them; so they were in front of Judah, and the ambush was behind them.**

- 1. While Abijah was giving his speech, Jeroboam surreptitiously sent a large force around behind Judah's position in a classic pincers movement.

**<sup>14</sup> And when Judah looked around, to their surprise the battle line was at both front and rear; and they cried out → to the LORD, and the priests sounded the trumpets.**

- 2. Wait a minute, what are priests doing there?
- 3. They were there because while Abijah's faith may not have been sincere, *theirs was!*
  - a. And they knew that in Numbers 10:9 God said,

**When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies.**

- b. So as soon as the men of Judah, who were already out-numbered 2 to 1, realized they were surrounded,
- c. They did the only thing they could do—they cried out to God for help.
- d. The priests lifted their horns to their lips & did what they'd come along for.
- 4. These cries & trumpets were prayers! Short, earnest.
  - a. There was no time for eloquence or long-winded speeches like Abijah had just made.
  - b. All they had time for was a quick word – “Help God.”

**<sup>15</sup> Then the men of Judah gave a shout; and as the men of Judah shouted, it happened that God struck Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. <sup>16</sup> And the children of Israel fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hand. <sup>17</sup> Then Abijah and his people struck them with a great slaughter; so 500,000 choice men of Israel fell slain. <sup>18</sup> Thus the children of Israel were subdued at that time; and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the LORD God**

[of their fathers.](#)

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Why They Won*

1. Judah won for **one reason alone** – because God gave them victory.
2. He gave them the victory **because they relied on Him for it.**
3. They *had* to; they were outnumbered & out-manuevered.
4. They were in a no-win sitch: But they prevailed because they cast themselves in *complete dependence* on the Lord.
7. That's what the word "*rely*" means – *to lean on*.
  - a. It described someone who used a cane or crutch & can't get around without it.
  - b. Over the years I've talked with people *hostile* to Christianity.
  - c. One of the more common slams I've heard is that faith is just a *crutch for weak people*.
  - d. To which I reply – "Amen!" That's not the response they expect, so they ask, "You agree?"
  - e. I say, "*Absolutely*. My faith *is* a crutch – 2 of them actually. You see, I'll be the first to admit I'm weak – morally & spiritually, I'm broken & busted.

There's no way I could ever gain God's approval thru my own efforts.

Total dependence on God for everything is the only way to live.

In fact, any other way is a catastrophe.

8. Even though Abijah was a *religious pretender*, there were a whole bunch of soldiers in the army of Judah who *really did rely* on the Lord.
  9. Their presence made the difference between defeat & victory.
  10. Judah was in a real mess that day – but God *delivered* them.
  11. You may be in a real mess today – lean on the Lord for He is your strength.
- 

#### B. *Prayer, Not Circumstances*

1. Things were bad, against them – they cried out – God delivered.
2. For us too. Follow the Lord – don't let circumstances dissuade you.
3. Circumstances are nothing to God!
4. Pray & go forward by a faith that leans on Him.
5. Oh how He wants that!