

## A Delighted Heart – 2 Chronicles 17:1-11

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Tourist or Explorer*

1. There's *tourists & explorers*.
2. *Tourists* merely *pass through* a place, to *see* what's there.
  - a. They take pictures as they build memories.
  - b. But they usually stay on the path & follow the guide, covering as much ground as they can.
3. *Explorers* don't want to just *see* something—they want to *experience* it.
  - a. They rarely use a guide & avoid the path made for tourists because they want to *discover* things others rarely find.
  - b. The explorer wants to not just see, but to *understand*.
  - c. He/she wants to return home with *more* than pictures –
  - d. He wants the *understanding* of his *discovery* to have *changed* him.
4. Here's a piece of pottery from my last trip to Israel.
  - a. It's over 2500 years old. I picked it up at Tel Dan in northern Israel.
  - b. There is so much broken pottery at the sites we visit it literally makes up the ground.
  - c. Most people look down & assume what they're walking on is dirt with lots of little rocks in it, but it's often pieces of pottery.
  - d. Get off the path a few feet & you find stuff like this just sitting there.
  - e. I have a whole shelf in my office with pieces like this.
  - f. I collect one at each site we visit – because I want to be more than a tourist; I want to be an explorer.
  - g. So I get off the path & start looking.
  - h. When I find one, I pick it up & try to identify what kind of a pot it came from, how old it is, & then start imagining who owned it, what it held & how it came to be broken.

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5. Today, we're going to take a tour through the first part of 2 Chronicles 17.
  - a. I'll be your guide – but don't just be a tourist; be an explorer this morning.
  - b. As I give my tour-guide speech, let the Holy Spirit lead you to a discovery of something you can take home & make a part of your life.

#### B. *Vignette from Asa's Reign*

1. Before we dive into the story of Jehoshaphat in ch. 17, we need to take a quick look at something that happened during the days of his father, King Asa.
2. Asa was a good & godly king whose first 35 years were marked by tremendous peace & prosperity.
  - a. When Asa first came to the throne he removed the idol-altars that had been used since the days of his great-grandfather Solomon.
  - b. Asa was a man of principle & conviction; he did what he knew was right & best for the nation, though it wasn't popular with the people.
  - c. They went along with his reforms because there was little else they could do.
3. God knew the spiritual condition of the people was low, so he allowed Judah to

- be invaded by a massive force of Ethiopians.
- a. As the army of Judah went to meet it, Asa reminded them of their dependence on God
  - b. God then gave them such a stunning victory, the men of Judah were convicted & repented of their lack of devotion to the Lord.
  - c. It was a classic case of God's kindness bringing people to repentance.
4. The army returned from battle with so much loot they went to the temple at Jerusalem with hearts set on renewing their covenant with God.
  5. The revival that had before marked only Asa's heart became the experience of the entire kingdom.

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6. Look with me at v. 1 of ch. 15. Asa & the army are returning after the battle -  
**<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. <sup>2</sup> And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. <sup>3</sup> For a long time Israel *has been* without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; <sup>4</sup> but when in their trouble they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them.**

- a. Azariah told Asa the *reason* the people had turned to idols was because since the days of Solomon the priests had *neglected* one of their most important roles—to teach God's Word.
  - b. With the completion of the temple in Jerusalem, they spent all their time & effort there, going about the *rituals* of sacrifice.
  - c. Teaching in the hamlets & humble villages of the land was deemed *trivial* compared to walking among the marble & gold of the temple.
  - d. So while *rituals* were flourishing at Jerusalem, there was no relationship with God being cultivated among the people.
7. Azariah appeared before Asa to warn him that his reforms *would not last* if he did not correct the situation & reinvest the priests with their duty to teach God's people God's Word.
  8. Sadly, Asa didn't heed the prophet's warning.
  9. We'll see what happened this Wednesday.
  10. But all of this leads us now to the story of his son – Jehoshaphat.

## II. TEXT

### A. Vs. 1-5

**<sup>1</sup> Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and strengthened himself against Israel. <sup>2</sup> And he placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken. <sup>3</sup> Now the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, <sup>4</sup> but sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel. <sup>5</sup> Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand; and**

**all Judah gave presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honor in abundance.**

1. Jehoshaphat got off to a great start.
  2. V. 3 says God was with him because he walked with God.
  3. This is the *first* of David's descendants God says was like *him*.
  4. What made him like David we'll see a bit later.
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5. Because Jehoshaphat loved & served God, the nation was blessed with another period of peace & prosperity.
  6. He was also greatly honored by the people. The *Silverstein Poll* consistently gave him a 90% approval rating. ☺

**B. V. 6**

**<sup>6</sup> And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD; [stop]**

1. Jehoshaphat genuinely loved God!
2. His relationship with the Lord was sincere & intimate, not just some formal religious oath of loyalty.
3. God was *real* to Jehoshaphat & a part of his daily life.
4. He actually found *delight* in following the Lord. God was Jehoshaphat's joy.
5. Where's your delight? What's the source of your joy? What rings your bell? Floats your boat, puts the hot fudge on your sundae?
6. People have all kinds of things they turn to, to bring them delight.
  - a. *Surfers* have an 8 ft. pipeline. *Race* fans have NASCAR.
  - b. *Hunters* delight in deer season. *Shoppers* the Fall Clearance at Macy's.
7. Jehoshaphat's delight was God. He enjoyed nothing so much as hanging out with the Lord & learning more about Him.
8. He discovered something *every* true believer knows:
9. The more you know God, the more you love Him. The more you love Him, the more you want to know Him.
  - a. And on & on.
  - b. We'll come back to this in a moment, but first, the rest of v. 6 -

**moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.**

10. Jehoshaphat knew devotion to God is *exclusive*.
  11. Because the people made a *national covenant* with God, they could not tolerate the presence of idols.
  12. So he followed through on his commitment to the Lord & in his duty as the king & ordered the demolition of these pagan things.
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13. The question is: Where'd they come from?
    - a. During his father's reign there'd been **2 campaigns** to eradicate idolatry.
    - b. Were these missed in the previous sweeps? **No.**
    - c. These shrines were set up during the last years of Asa's reign by those who'd fallen from the fervency of revival that had taken place years before.
    - d. And *they'd fallen away because* Asa had not followed through on Azariah's call to renew the role of the teaching priest.
  14. Several years ago we had a plant in our front yard that became a major hassle.
    - a. It was a fast growing prickly thing that had to constantly be trimmed.

- b. It was a magnet for every windblown piece of trash that came down the street.
  - c. I was forever picking pieces of paper, plastic & those nasty little foam peanuts out of it.
  - d. I decided to get rid of it one day & lopped off the branches all the way down to ground level. Then I went after the roots – & realized I was in for a world of hurt.
  - e. The more I dug, the more of these little bulbs I found.
  - f. They'd all been connected before into the one plant.
  - g. But as I dug up hundreds & hundreds of them, I realized they spread out for several feet.
  - h. Over the next months, every one of those little bulbs that I'd missed shot up to make a new plant!
  - i. I'd multiplied my problem a thousand fold.
  - j. The **original** plant was gone, but because the roots were still in the soil, they each produced a new plant.
  - k. The only way to get rid of them was to spray on a liberal dose of **Round Up**.
15. Asa's reforms removed the pagan altars from Judah.
16. But a **root of idolatry** lay buried in the heart of the people just waiting for the chance to spring up again.
17. The only way to kill the wicked root was with the Word of God.
18. Jehoshaphat knew that was the solution. So . . .

### C. Vs. 7-9

**<sup>7</sup> Also in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of his reign he sent his leaders, Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. <sup>8</sup> And with them he sent Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah—the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. <sup>9</sup> So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people.**

1. The reason Jehoshaphat is linked to David in v. 3 is because like David, he understood that a heart for God is **a heart that loves God's Word**.
  - a. That was one of David's most common themes in the Psalms –
  - b. His hunger for the Word of God.
2. As I said—the more Jehoshaphat learned about the God, the more he loved Him. The more he loved Him, the more he wanted to learn of Him.
3. But where do we go to learn about God? To His Word.
4. Jehoshaphat knew the more he studied scripture, the greater his delight in his relationship with God.
  - a. The more careful he was in his walk; the greater his desire to be holy.
  - b. Which increased **God's delight in him** as his heart became **even more fully** devoted to the Lord.
5. When Jehoshaphat learned new shrines were popping up, he knew it was

because his father had failed to implement Azariah's prescription.

6. So he not only sent out his troops to tear down the shrines, he *also* sent out skilled teachers with God's Word to deal with the root of idolatry which lay hidden in the hearts of Judah.

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7. Now – check out God's response to this . . .

#### **D. Vs. 10-11**

**<sup>10</sup> And the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat. <sup>11</sup> Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver as tribute; and the Arabians brought him flocks, 7,700 rams and 7,700 male goats.**

1. V. 2 says Jehoshaphat built up the army & defenses of Judah.
2. He was careful to take care of the *practical* needs of national defense.
3. But Jehoshaphat knew the *real defense* of the nation did not rest in fortresses & weapons –
4. It was based in their *commitment to & dependence on* God.
5. And Jehoshaphat knew the consistent teaching of the Word of God was crucial in *keeping* the people *growing* in their relationship with Him.
6. As they *gave themselves whole-heartedly* to Him, He worked in the world around them to bring about a time of great blessing –
  - a. Not just for Judah, but for the nations as well.
  - b. It says “the fear of the Lord fell on” them. The fear of the Lord is the *beginning of wisdom*.
  - c. So profound & palpable was God's blessing at this time that –
    - 1) Even Israel's ancient nemesis the Philistines brought a special tribute to Jehoshaphat for the blessing he'd brought the region.
    - 2) The nomadic eastern tribes that had raided Israel's herds & pastures for generations returned with a gift to make amends for their many raids.
7. The overwhelming lesson Jehoshaphat & Judah learned from all this is how when we give ourselves completely & without reserve to God – *Life works* because He makes it so.
8. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” Jesus said, “and He will take care of everything else.”

#### **E. A Heart for God**

1. I've read Chronicles many times. I've even studied & taught it before.
  2. But this time through, I discovered something I'd not seen before. It's the *emphasis* God puts on the *heart*.
  3. Have you noticed that over the last few weeks?
  4. Here we are reading an *historical chronicle* of all things – material that's *potentially* about as dry as it gets – yet over & over we're confronted with the issue of the heart.
  5. In fact, the word “heart” is used *56 times* in Chronicles.
  6. The enduring lesson the Spirit wants us to glean from all this is the importance of *what our heart is given to*.
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7. Ezra, wrote this to people who were literally living among *ruins*

- a. Those ruins were the result of a people *whose hearts had turned* from God to idols.
  - b. Ezra wrote to both encourage & warn them.
  - c. It was their task to *rebuild*, but they could only do so if they gave themselves without reservation to the Lord.
  - d. Once the ruins were restored, the only way to *preserve* them was if they maintained their devotion to Him.
8. So Ezra *taught* them by penning this chronicle – which became a part of the Word of God.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. So Many Voices

1. What we find in these verses is vital because it sets before us a clear idea of what's important; what we need to concern ourselves with.
2. There are so many voices today telling us what to do,
3. So many groups with their agendas clamoring for our attention.
4. We feel torn as we listen to them because each makes a good case for why *their* goals are most important.
5. Right here, God's tells us what's *most important*.
  - a. He says us what we need to do is give our heart to HIM!
  - b. Without reservation, holding nothing back.

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6. There's no *delight* greater than Him.
7. How about that? Do you delight in God?
  - a. Or is your relationship with Him more of a burden; a duty, an obligation?
  - b. How grieved God is when we conceive of Him as some onerous tyrant who has to be appeased by obedience to a list of rules,
  - c. As though God was a Circus ringmaster cracking a whip to make us jump through flaming hoops.
  - d. That is *not* God! He wants nothing to do with that!
  - e. He yearns for us to find our delight in Him because we discover Him to be the Wonderful Friend & Lover *He really is*.
8. One of the reasons Jesus came was to reveal what God is *really like* because a hard & crusty man-made religion had grown up around Him.
  - a. If all Jesus came for was to atone for sin then He could have lived in obscurity for 30 years then gone to the cross.
  - b. But no, Jesus *came to reveal the Father's Heart* as it says in Hebrews 1:2
  - c. In John 14, Philip said to Jesus: "Show us the Father!" Jesus replied, "Have I been so long with you & you still don't know? Philip, if you've seen Me you've seen the Father."
9. One day as Jesus watched the people going about their daily lives He was moved with compassion for the way their faith in God had been turned into a heavy religious burden.
10. He cried out – Matthew 11:28-30

**“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy [fits] and My burden is light [opposite of burdensome].”**

- a. Together, these words “easy & light” speak of a way of life that’s a *delight*.
- b. It’s a *life that works* because it’s lived as it’s supposed to be.
- c. As Jesus said, that life is *at His side – connected* to Him.

**B. The Word**

1. Jehoshaphat shows us that a heart that delights in God is a heart given to & shaped by His Word.
2. When we give ourselves to the Lord this way, He works in our world to make it all come together just as it should.