

The Power Of The Word • 2 Chronicles 17:1-11

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Getting Ready

1. A US Army Officer who taught at an artillery training school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, said that the contrast between the students of 1960 and 1965 was dramatic!
2. Though the ages of the men being trained remained the same, their attitudes were *completely* different
3. In 1960, instructors had a hard time keeping the men awake during class
4. But in 65, the students were alert and attentive
5. The difference? The class of 65 would be leaving in six weeks for Vietnam
6. The earlier class saw no practical application for what they were learning; it was all just academic for them
7. the later class knew that what they were learning was a matter of life and death

B. Are We?

1. What kind of students are we when it comes to our study of the scripture?
2. Do we see that *we too* are at war?
3. We are engaged in a life and death struggle with the forces of hell
4. In case you haven't noticed, let me inform you: The battle is heating up!
 - a. the casualties are mounting
 - b. and the pace of battle is quickening
5. We need to be attentive, alert, sober, and vigilant
6. And if there ever was a time when God's people needed to be diligent in their study and application of the Word of God it is now!
7. How about you?
 - a. are you a *tourist* or an *explorer* when it comes to the bible?
 - b. are you on a *tour* through scripture
 - c. or an *expedition*?

II. TEXT

A. Set The Scene

1. Of the kings who ruled Judah, there were only a couple who measured up to the stature of David
2. One of them was Jehoshaphat
3. It is his story we look at today and see *why* he is likened to David
4. Jehoshaphat's father, Asa, reigned for 41 years
 - a. he led the nation in two dramatic religious reforms
 - b. but his last 5 years saw his heart harden toward the Lord
5. Jehoshaphat grew up seeing the results of his father's leadership of the nation

- a. when Asa's heart was tender toward God, the nation prospered and was secure
 - b. when he turned from the Lord, calamity ensued
 - c. and as we read on, we see that Jehoshaphat discovered something from his father's example that was vital to the success and life of the nation
6. What Jehoshaphat discovered, we must also discover if we are to be successful at life

B. Vs. 1-2

{1} Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and strengthened himself against Israel.

{2} 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.

- 1. At this point in history, Judah and Israel have split in to two separate nations
 - a. Judah was the southern nation, ruled by the descendants of David
 - b. Israel was to the north, and was ruled by a motley parade of wannabe kings
- 2. Most of the time, relations between the two kingdoms was marked by bitter strife and continual border clashes
- 3. When Jehoshaphat first came to the throne, the border between the two nations was constantly moving back and forth

C. Vs. 3-4

{3} Now the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former 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 acts of Israel.

- 1. Jehoshaphat was a good and godly king
- 2. In fact, though his father Asa had been a good king as well, Jehoshaphat isn't likened to Asa
- 3. He is likened to David!; and this is high praise indeed
- 4. For David was a man that God says was after His own heart
- 5. This gives us an important insight into the life of Jehoshaphat and that special discovery he made I mentioned a moment ago
- 6. What was it about David that earned him the special title, "a man after God's heart"?
 - a. what is the one thing that made David stand head and shoulders above everyone else in terms of spiritual things?
 - b. it was his intense desire for God
 - c. and the way this desire, this all consuming passion was manifest in David's life was his whole-hearted devotion to God's Word
 - d. David's single passion was unbroken fellowship with God
 - e. he wanted to *experience* God
 - f. we know this because he said it himself in Psalm 27 [v. 4]

One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire

in His temple.

g. or how about Psalm 63 [1-3]

{1} O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.

{2} So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.

{3} Because Your lovingkindness *is* better than life, My lips shall praise You.

h. in David's day, the avenue God had given for people to know and experience Him was His Word

i. so David was a zealous and avid student of God's Word

j. Psalm 119, the longest chapter of the bible, is David's monument to the Word of God

1) every one of its 176 verses speak of the glory and importance of scripture

2) every one of them reveals the central place the word of God has in the life of faith

3) in v. 105 he says,

Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path

4) in vs. 10 & 11 he says,

With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!

5) the only way one can hide God's word in their heart is if they take the time to study and memorize it

k. and indeed we know David did memorize God's word because the rest of his Psalms are filled with references to scripture

7. It is this devotion to God's word we see in Jehoshaphat as well, and it is why he is linked to David in verses 3 & 4

D. Vs. 5-6

{5} Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah gave presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honor in abundance.

{6} And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.

1. Because Jehoshaphat was devoted to God, he was devoted to God's Word

2. And this devotion was translated in to action as he continued the tradition of religious reform that marked his father's reign

3. But this brings up a question:

a. why did these reforms need to be renewed?

b. were did these idols and high places come from if his father had removed them?

4. When Asa had first ascended the throne over 40 years before, he had swept away all the idols and pagan altars

5. Then, ten years later, he did it again because the people had secretly set them up again

6. During this second reform of Asa's reign, he had led the nation in a dramatic renewal of their covenant with God

- a. the people had enthusiastically committed themselves to the Lord
 - b. and had even gone so far as to vow to execute anyone who worshipped an idol
 - c. it was a time of revival, and the people were earnest in their commitment
 - d. but the fires of revival quickly died till there was nothing left but a cold ash
7. Just 30 or so years later, Jehoshaphat once again finds pagan altars and idols
 8. How could the nation turn so quickly from its seeming passion for revival to the perversions of its past?
 - a. how could these pagan altars keep popping up?
 - b. like mushrooms that grow off decaying plants, idols sprang up from the rotting morality of the people
 9. We had a plant in our front yard that was a constant hassle
 - a. it was a fast growing prickly thing that had to constantly be trimmed back
 - b. it acted like a magnet for windblown trash and we were constantly pulling stuff out of it
 - c. just a big hassle!
 - d. I toyed with the idea of pulling it out for a long time, and one day did it
 - e. but once I removed the top growth and started to work on the roots, I realized we were in for some trouble
 - f. it was one of those plants that has tuber roots; and there were literally thousands upon thousands of them!
 - g. well, the plant is gone, but the roots are still there
 - h. and tiny green shoots keep popping up all the time
 - i. only liberal doses of Round Up keep it at bay
 10. Asa's reforms, in which he only removed the idols and altars, never got to the root of the problem
 11. So as soon as his reformers left an area, new idols and altars would spring up
 12. The problem was that the root of idolatry was still alive in the hearts of the people
 13. Jehoshaphat went farther than his father did in his reforms
 - a. not only did he remove the altars and idols
 - b. he also sought to remove the root of paganism from the hearts of the people
 - c. how he did this we see in the next verses . . .

E. Vs. 7-9

{7} Also in the third year of his reign he sent his leaders, Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah.

{8} 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.

{9} 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 solution was to teach the Word of God to the people
2. So he sent gifted teachers, men who were experienced in the Scriptures, to declare the Word of God to the people
3. No doubt Jehoshaphat received his insight to the importance of the Word of God from the prophecy given by Azariah to his father some 30 years before
4. That prophecy, given in chapter 15 shows how Azariah linked the troubles of the nation to their relationship with God's word
 - a. when the scriptures were neglected, trouble came
 - b. when the scriptures were honored, trouble was overcome
5. Jehoshaphat determined that the Word of God would not merely be the possession of the elite and the scholars
6. He determined to teach the entire nation the precepts of God
7. The results of this campaign of education in God's Word is found in the next verses

F. Vs. 10-11

{10} 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.

{11} Also some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver as tribute; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred male goats.

G. A Timely Word

1. What a timely word this is for us today!
2. There are many parallels between ancient Israel and the Church, and we see one of them here
3. You see, the Jews were unique in the ancient world because they worshipped God alone
 - a. unlike the other nations who believed in many gods
 - b. Israel believed in and worshipped only one
 - c. and the foundation of their faith was the books of Moses
 - d. which they believed to be the very Word of God
 - e. so devoted to the scriptures were they that they became known as the *People of the Book*
4. What was true for Israel is true of the Church
 - a. the foundation of our faith is the Bible
 - b. which we hold to be the very Word of God -
 - c. and the basis of all faith and practice
 - d. we too are a People of the Book!
5. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says . . .

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

6. It is of the utmost importance that we affirm this truth today
 - a. because while it is a truth few would argue with,
 - b. in fact, the role of the Bible in the Life of the Church is under serious

- attack!
- c. in many quarters, the Bible is honored in merely a sentimental and formal sense
 - d. but it doesn't *really* form the heart of faith and practice
7. In fact, we are seeing something happening today that should be of grave concern
 8. The claims of revival are being voiced from many quarters
 - a. it seems that many churches and individuals are having profound religious experiences
 - b. a renewed commitment to God and the work of the Holy Spirit is the consistent report that comes from these centers of this revival
 - c. and the church has been deeply split between those who say it is a genuine revival and those who maintain it is merely a counterfeit
 9. It is not my intention to critique either position this morning
 10. But I will say this, if the current revival is not accompanied by a commitment to the teaching of God's word, then no matter how genuine and far reaching it is, it will not last even one generation!
 11. Asa's revivals didn't last because they only provided a momentary experience of religious devotion based on *emotions*
 12. His reforms only removed the *outward* evidences of paganism
 13. Because the truth of God's Word never took root in the hearts of the people, the roots of sin were free to sprout as soon as the excitement of revival died

H. The Word

1. My concern as I look with real interest at what is being called *revival* is that the Word of God virtually absent
2. Rather than renewed devotion to the scriptures, *personal experience* is being given the first place
3. There seems to be more interest in hearing "Thus saith the Lord," from this or that Christian celebrity than in checking it against what God has *already* said in the undisputed authority of scripture
4. God can and does speak to us in fresh words today,
5. But Moses tells us that we must check every word of a prophet against the objective standard of God's Word

I. Revival

1. We should all hope and pray for revival
2. But genuine revival is something that is a sovereign work of God; it cannot be manufactured by man
3. What we *can* do is to give ourselves to the study and application of God's word
4. Deut 29:29 says . . .

The secret *things* belong unto the LORD our God: but those *things* which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.

5. Jehoshaphat knew that revival could be *sustained* by the teaching of scripture, so he increased the office of teacher and placed a greater

- emphasis on the ministry of teaching in the nation
6. The result was tremendous blessing for the people
 7. The same will be the result for any church that devotes itself to the teaching of the Word of God
 8. You see, we can never underestimate the power of God's word
 9. In Psalm 138:2 we read that God has magnified His word above His very name!
 - a. think of that!
 - b. God's name is holy & sacred
 - c. so holy is His name that the third commandment prohibits us from taking it in vain
 - d. yet God magnifies His word above His name!
 10. In 2 Timothy 2:15 we find this . . .

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

J. Aqueduct

1. On our vacation, traveled on HWY 5; crossed the California Aqueduct several times
2. Brings water from the Owens Valley hundreds of miles south to the parched deserts of Southern California
3. The entire length of the aqueduct is lined with concrete to keep the precious water flowing south rather than being lost into the soil
4. The Christian life is like that aqueduct; it's a balance of both doctrine and experience
 - a. the experience is like the water
 - b. and the doctrine is like the concrete
 - c. when both are together, there is a well balanced life as doctrine *directs* the flow of experience
 - d. but if you remove doctrine, experience can travel just about anywhere and will soon be lost
 - e. if you remove experience, things become dry and lifeless
 - f. the Christian life is one in which the experience of God is directed by the Word of God
5. Christian, are you diligent in your study and application of God's Word?
 - a. is scripture really as important to you as you say it is?
 - b. or do you hold merely a sentimental attachment to it?
6. If you ate physical food as often as your nourished you spirit on the Bread of Life, how healthy would you be?
7. Some of us are weak and struggling this morning
8. But for most, the reason should be clear - God's Word is not a part of your spiritual diet!
9. It is still true today; Man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from God

III. CONCLUSION

A. Calvary Chapel

1. CC has a reputation for being an effective teaching ministry
2. We must be diligent to make sure that we don't merely maintain a comfortable facade and reputation
3. We must stay devoted to the Word of God
 - a. and not just in the sense of holding it up and claiming it's important to us
 - b. we need to open it, read it, dig in to it, and bring our lives in to conformity with it
4. Our motto is "LEARNING & LIVING GOD'S WORD"
5. Let's not just quote it and put it on our bulletin - Let's live it!

B. You

1. Finally, my dear brother and sister,
2. We live in perilous days
3. In just a few weeks we will be seeing how late the hour is and how soon Jesus will be coming for the Church
4. If there was any day in which God's people needed to be diligent students of the Word of God, it's today
5. In Matthew 24, Jesus warned that the deception of the last days would be so great even the elect might be deceived
6. Paul warned the Thessalonians that a great delusion would come upon the whole earth
7. He told Timothy that the end times would be marked by people giving heed to doctrines of demons
8. How else can we have our spiritual senses trained to discern error but by a diligent study of Truth?
9. The days are gone when Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights are enough for the nurture of your spiritual life
10. You must read and study on your own
11. Besides, how will you know I or anyone else are teaching the truth unless you are studying on your own.
12. There is no greater service I can render to you than to lead you Christ
13. And there is no surer way to lead you to Christ than to lead you to His word