

Unit II: Learning about Faith

Overcoming Fear

DEVOTIONAL READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-15

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 20:5-20

PRINT PASSAGE: 2 Chronicles 20:13-20

KEY VERSE

Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.
(2 Chronicles 20:20c, KJV)

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“Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.” (2 Chronicles 20:20c, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Reconstruct the faith actions that led to Jehoshaphat’s victory.
- Acknowledge situations where you are overcome by immobilizing fear.
- Set aside time each day to invite God’s presence and help in your facing your fears.

*Key Terms

Dismayed (verse 15)—Hebrew: *chathath* (khaw-thath’): shattered; frightened; cracked; “discouraged” (NIV).

Salvation (verse 17)—Hebrew: *yeshuah* (yesh-oo’-aw): help; victory; security; “deliverance” (NIV).

Spirit (verse 14)—Hebrew: *ruach* (roo’-akh): breath; wind; breath of life.

Tomorrow (verse 16)—Hebrew: *machar* (maw-khar’): in time to come; later; “to morrow” (KJV).

Worshipping (verse 18)—Hebrew: *shachab* (shaw-khaw’): bowing down; showing obeisance; prostrating oneself; “in worship” (NIV).

Yahweh (verse 13)—Hebrew: *Yhwh* (yeh-ho-vaw’): the proper name for the God of Israel; “LORD” (KJV/NIV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

Fear is an emotional response to something considered dangerous or threatening. Many people frequently experience the stages of fear ranging from nervousness to intense terror. In addition, most people experience temporary fear or nervousness in response to stressful situations like having to speak or perform publicly or being startled unexpectedly. Recovery from temporary fear is usually resolved after a perceived threat is gone. Generally, fear is a useful response because it prepares one to react to danger by increasing and sharpening body functions that help us survive. However, there are inherent physical and



The Biblical Context

First and 2 Chronicles were originally one book in the Hebrew Scriptures. Known as “The Book of Chronicles,” it was eventually separated into two parts as it appears today. Human authorship is uncertain, but evidence points to the priest Ezra, the esteemed reformer among post-Babylonian exile returnees to Judah. First and 2 Chronicles were composed before 42 BC and addressed the Israelites who had returned from Babylonian captivity for historical, spiritual, and Christological purposes. Historically, these books document Israel’s history under kings (monarchies), the importance of rebuilding the Temple, and tracing the nation’s genealogy. A primary spiritual purpose was validating that God’s plan for Israel had not been abandoned despite the people’s rebellion and sin that led to exile from their homeland. The book’s purpose was to keep the hope of the promised Messiah alive among the people despite any experiences that may have cast doubt on whether God’s covenant promises were still in effect. Specifically, 2 Chronicles records the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah from Solomon to the Babylonian Exile. The book mainly focuses on the accomplishments of Judah’s “good kings” instead of on those of the ones considered “bad kings” because of their moral and spiritual failures to inspire hope among the returning exiles. One of these “good kings” was Jehoshaphat, Judah’s fourth king, who remained faithful to God and led Judah in a series of religious reforms. His obedience to God saved Judah when an enormous army of Moabites, Ammonites, and others threatened to invade and destroy Jerusalem.

emotional dangers in experiencing chronic fear in the form of panic disorders or phobias. These conditions can disrupt normalcy and often require professional intervention. Everyone, without exception, fears something. Fear is something we face daily. If we allow it to, fear can steal our joy and peace. The question we must answer is what believers should do when confronted with the fear that comes with facing uncertainties—job loss, a loved one’s death, concerns about the future, aging, or sickness. The good news is that when fear “knocks on the door,” believers can turn to the Scriptures to remind them of God’s love and His many promises to protect and give inner peace beyond understanding. Many Old and New Testament saints faced challenges and situations that produced fear despite their relationship with God. However, instead of being permanently immobilized by their fear, those saints activated their faith and turned to God as their source of strength and deliverance. Jehoshaphat, one of Judah’s “good kings,” provides the classic example of responding to a crisis by turning to and trusting God instead of succumbing to fear.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Battle Is the Lord’s (2 Chronicles 20:13-17)

KJV

13 And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

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;

15 And he said, Harken 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.

16 To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

17 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.

NIV

13 All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.

14 Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

15 He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.

16 "Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel.

17 "You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you."

Sometime after his near-death experience resulting from an unholy alliance with Ahab against the Syrians and sweeping religious reforms, Jehoshaphat received alarming news of a three-nation enemy coalition preparing to invade Judah. His immediate response was to seek God in prayer and to call all of Judah to join in a national fast to request His intervention (see verses 1-12). After a moving prayer, Jehoshaphat and the people stood expectantly in the Temple court (**verse 13**), as God empowered the Levite Jahaziel to address the assembly (**verse 14**). God's response through this prophet was encouraging and instructive. First, God directed Jehoshaphat and the people not to fear or be discouraged by this imposing enemy—because the battle was the Lord's and not theirs (**verse 15**). Next, God revealed the enemy's location and instructed the men of Judah to march against them (**verse 16**). God assured Judah's army that upon sighting the enemy, they would not need to fight (**verse 17**). All they had to do was take their position, stand still, and see how God would execute their deliverance because of His presence. Usually, the body's response to fear prepares individuals for "flight" to avoid or protect themselves from danger. Spiritually, Jehoshaphat shows us that faith in God should motivate and encourage God's people to turn to Him in prayer instead of fleeing. Although he had a powerful army at his disposal (three hundred thousand well-trained, fully equipped soldiers), Jehoshaphat sought God before considering mobilizing them. He realized that hope for deliverance in this overwhelming situation should be placed in God and His omnipotence. Fear is a natural and unavoidable reality for humanity. Jehoshaphat's attitude and actions and God's encouraging promises to Judah and him can be applied to our lives when crises cause fear. If we follow Jehoshaphat's example of first turning to God in prayer, we, too, can be assured of His constant presence through the indwelling Holy Spirit and His trustworthiness to fight for us.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What prompted Jehoshaphat to turn directly to God instead of trusting his powerful military force?
What applicable lesson does his action teach us regarding dealing with fear?

Have Faith in God (2 Chronicles 20:18-20)

KJV

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.

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.

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.

NIV

18 Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD.

19 Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

20 Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful."

Jehoshaphat and the people's response to hearing this encouraging promise from God was to fall on their knees and worship, while some of the Levites stood and offered thunderous praise (**verses 18-19**). The people's praise and worship was an act of faith. So great was their confidence in God to keep His promise that they praised "*from* victory" not "*for* victory" before the battle was fought. The following morning, as the people faithfully complied with the Lord's instructions, Jehoshaphat confirmed his trust in God by issuing to the people a call to faith (**verse 20**). First, he urged them to have faith in God so that they would be upheld (kept safe and secure). Second, he reminded the people to put their trust in His prophets (His Word), Jahaziel, and others, to experience success in their situation. This verse provides the key to overcoming fear—rejecting any self-confidence while, instead, acknowledging God and His Word as the only source of deliverance to loosen the immobilizing grip of fear. Many centuries later, believers still face various hostile conditions that cause fear: lethal viral epidemics, hate-generated mass shootings, inflation, and the threat of financial collapse, acts of violence against targeted groups, sharp political divisions, and a "falling away" from the Lord's church. These and a variety of other conditions can produce immobilizing fear in human hearts. However, Jehoshaphat taught believers how to prevent this fear from overwhelming them—turn to God in prayer, and acknowledge His presence, power, and provision.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can we mature to the point of facing fear with praise and thanksgiving even before we see God's deliverance?

A Closing Thought

Everyone experiences fear in life. Fear (in and of itself) is not harmful, unless it is unfounded or becomes physically and spiritually immobilizing. The essential question is how Christians can overcome fear and continue to be living testimonies to others. The solution in the lesson highlights Jehoshaphat's example of turning to God in prayer and trusting obedience. Walking by faith, even in the face of fear, requires having a vital relationship with God.

Your Life

Overcoming fear begins with acknowledging its reality in our lives. After making this acknowledgment, we must remember whose we are and that God has a predetermined plan and purpose for our lives. Therefore, we can turn to Him in faith, trusting Him to deliver us from fear's adverse effects. Then we can practice our faith in Him in practical ways to help others overcome their fears.

Your World!

We don't have to look far to discover someone experiencing fear and anxiety. Life is filled with multiple challenges and situations that are beyond human control. Our overcoming the immobilizing effects of fear involves acknowledging our inability to deliver ourselves, declaring our trust in God, and practicing active obedience to His Word.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, we acknowledge You as the source of deliverance from the fears that threaten to immobilize us. We praise You for the gift of faith that allows us to trust You to guide us daily. Help us practice our faith in ways that will help others see how to overcome their fears by turning to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson challenges us to demonstrate our spiritual transformation by practicing our faith using our unique spiritual gifts. Read Romans 12:3-8.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, January 22	"A New Spirit and Heart"	(Ezekiel 11:17-21)
TUESDAY, January 23	"A Transforming Testimony"	(John 9:17-25)
WEDNESDAY, January 24	"Be Holy, for God Is Holy"	(Leviticus 20:22-26)
THURSDAY, January 25	"A Prayer for Transformation"	(Psalm 51:1-15)
FRIDAY, January 26	"God Breathes New Life"	(Ezekiel 37:1-14)
SATURDAY, January 27	"From Death to Life"	(1 John 3:14-24)
SUNDAY, January 28	"God Gives Different Gifts"	(Romans 12:3-8)

Notes
