

Jehoshaphat – Lessons Learned – 2 Chron 17-20

2 Chron 17

Continuing with our Lessons Learned series, we're going to look at a guy named

Jehoshaphat this week

And if you're familiar with him at all, it's probably from the phrase "Great Jumpin' Jehosaphat" – a cute substitute for "Holy Cow"

And if you're curious as to where that phrase comes from (this is totally for free) . . .

The best I could find is a legend where J supposedly ate some mushrooms that doubled his size, allowing him to flatten enemy warriors by jumping on them

Hence – Great Jumpin' Jehosaphat (AllExperts.com)

I think whoever came up with that one ate some bad mushrooms themselves

B/c it certainly has nothing to do with the *biblical* account

What does, and what u need to know about **His Life**, in order to learn the lessons in yours

- Is that he was **King of Judah**; And he began his reign in **872BC**

That made him a **contemporary of Elijah and Ahab** in the north, in Israel

Remember that the nation had split about 60 years earlier into the 10 northern tribes called Israel, and the 2 southern tribes called Judah

So J was king of Judah, while Ahab was king of Israel

And having begun his reign at the age of 35, he **reigned for 25 years**

Mostly doing what was right in God's eyes (**Did what was right**)

Which led to great blessing in *his* life (**Blessed by God**), *and* in the life of his people

(**Our Lessons**) And one of the first lessons we can learn from J's life, is that . . .

Lesson #1 – Obedience brings blessing (17:1-12a)

I've said it before, and I'll say it again – b/c it's all over the Bible, and J is no exception

3-5 – He sought *God's* will for his life, and did it – he *obeyed* his commandments

Staying well away from the sinful practices of those around him

On top of that, v6 says – *His heart was courageous in the ways of the Lord.*

Now we're right back to Esther in stepping up to the plate to do the right thing, trusting God for a good result

Which for J meant eliminating idol worship in the land, like the 6b says

That couldn't have been a popular decision, but knowing it was God's will, he did it, and was *courageous* about it at that

He was careful to obey God's commands and live God's way

- What's more – he taught others to do the same (7-9)

J not only eliminated *false* worship, but instituted *true* worship

And he didn't just obey it himself, he taught others, and expected them to do the same

And look at what happened (10-12a)

J's obedience to do what God said, and teach others to do the same . . .

Resulted in a healthy fear of God, peace with other nations, and blessing upon blessing

That's in addition to the tribute (the gifts of honor) that his own people brought him (5b)

Consequently, *the Lord established the kingdom in his hand* (5a) – i.e. he solidified his leadership, *and* the loyalty of those who followed him

That's what obedience brings – obedience to live according to God's Word *yourself*, *and* obedience to teach it to others

It brings blessing

- I think that's one of the reasons why God continues to bless us as a church

We're not only striving to be obedient to his word *ourselves* . . .

But we're teaching it to others as well

Do you realize how many evils we avoid b/c of that?

How many problems we prevent? How many issues we preempt?

How many petty arguments that never come up? How much kingdom time we save?

We're blessed, but not just b/c of the *good* things we enjoy, but the *bad* ones we avoid

And the same can be true in the life of your family, or the life of your friends

If you do what God's word says . . . and-and-and – *teach* it to others

You want a family that's blessed for their obedience? Teach them the Bible

You want a circle of friends who are blessed by obedience? Teach them the Bible

And don't forget to live it out yourself

That's lesson #1 from J's life – Obedience brings blessing

Learn the lesson, and *enjoy* the life

Lesson #2 comes from chapter 18, and it's a perfect example of that NT principle found in 1 Cor 15:33 that . . .

Lesson #2 – Bad company corrupts good character (18:1-3; 28-29)

(**1 Cor 15:33**) *Do not be deceived* [Paul says]: "*Bad company ruins good morals.*"

You can be as obedient as you want, but if you start associating with the wrong people – it *will not last*; Don't be deceived

Your godliness, your holiness, your obedience – will wane

It will slide despite your best intentions

And pretty soon, you won't even *want* to be obedient to God any more

That's what bad company does – it corrupts good character *****

- Look at 18:1 – *Now J had great riches and honor*

He was blessed; Things were going great; Couldn't be better

And if that's where the verse stopped, he would have spared himself and the nation great trouble

But it doesn't; It goes on to say – *And he made a marriage alliance with Ahab.* (18:1b)

IOW he pledged his son to be married to Ahab's daughter – oops

He knew better than that

He knew better than to enter into a relationship with someone who worshipped a false God, in this case Baal

Even if his motives/intentions were good . . .

Like trying to bring peace between the nations after 60 years of hostilities . . .
Even if we give him the benefit of the doubt on his motives, his method stunk
It opened him up to adverse influences; Which is exactly what bad company does (2-3)
Ramoth-gilead – a city southeast of the Sea of Galilee, captured by the Arameans

Ahab invited J over, threw him a big party, buttered him up, and then sprung the big question

And J, despite his previous obedience, despite his previous blessing . . .
Despite the fact that Ahab loved evil, and worshipped Baal, and hated God . . .
Despite that fact that the Law of Moses forbid such unions . . .
Despite the fact that they would unequally yoked – he agreed
And did so in the face of godly counsel to do otherwise

That's what the next verses indicate, where Micaiah, one of the few prophets of God still around, and still speaking truth – said it was a bad deal from the get-go
But did J listen after such a strong warning? Look at v28
Just like that; They totally ignored him

- And if that's not bad enough, look at v29
What? Bad company not only corrupts good character, it corrupts good thinking
J just as well have put a great big bulls-eye on his chest and said, "Hey, shoot at me!"
Meanwhile, his buddy, who induced him to fight, is in disguise; Hello

So the battle rages, and contrary to what you might think – J escapes, while Ahab dies
But he didn't escape *God's* wrath (19:1-2)
We don't know exactly what that wrath entailed, but he *must* have lost some of his men in the battle since they were defeated . . .
And we *do* know that when he died, his daughter-in-law, Athaliah, King Ahab's daughter . . .
Seized the throne, brought the evil of Israel to Judah, and tried to kill his entire family

- Not good; Bad company corrupts good character
Which means you better choose your friends wisely
B/c they will, by the very nature of friendship, influence you

If they're a bad apple, it won't be long before you're rotten yourself
Making poor decisions; Saying yes just to keep the peace with them . . .
And no longer *wanting* to obey God, no matter how good you've been in the past

Don't be deceived; You're not the exception to rule
Show me your friends and I'll show you your future
Bad company corrupts good character every time

Fortunately, for J, he turned things around in ch19 before he faced his next big challenge in ch20; From which we learn the lesson that . . .

Lesson #3 – Against all odds, God is still mighty to save (20:1-30)

No matter how much the deck is stacked against you, he can do it

There's no problem he can't handle; No foe he can't defeat; No threat he can't thwart
Even against all odds, he's still mighty to save

In which case, it's a no-brainer for us to seek his help

In fact, that's the first of 6 responses modeled here by J and his people, in the face of such insurmountable odds, and their faith in God's mighty power to save

1. Seek his help – through prayer and fasting (v3)

20:1-3; He was afraid, and rightly so, b/c he was facing insurmountable odds
He was going to get pounded

But instead of cowering in the corner, or wallowing in his pity . . .

He set his face to seek the Lord (3) – he devoted himself to knowing God's will and seeking God's help

Know what that is? That's prayer; The essence of which is captured in v12

Oh that our mindset would mirror that more often

And to make sure that was the case, he declared a fast among the people (3b) . . .

A dedicated time, set aside for the express purpose of seeking and knowing God's will

When you're facing insurmountable odds and don't know what to do – look to the Lord
Seek his help through prayer and fasting; And get others to join you

2. Gather with his people – for encouragement and support (v4,13)

4 – *Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord*

13 – *All Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.*

They didn't have to do that

They could very easily have prayed right where they were, right where they lived

But instead, they came from far and wide to be *together*; Why?

B/c that's where the encouragement and support is

That's one of the reasons God has given us the church, the body of Christ

And that's why we're to belong together in fellowship, mutual partnership

So that through thick *and* thin, especially thin, we can support and encourage one another by coming together

And make no mistake about it – the level of support and encouragement you receive in a crisis . . .

Will be directly proportional to the level of your involvement when times are good

Not b/c we want it that way, but b/c nobody knows you

It's one more reason why SG's and Bible Studies and Service Teams and Outreach

Groups are such a big part of our church

So those around u can provide the encouragement/support you need in times of crisis

Gather with God's people

3. Follow his leaders – for guidance and direction (v14-17)

That's one of the reasons God has raised them up (14)

All that, to say he was a legitimate spiritual leader – a Levite priest on whom the Spirit of God rested

And look what he said (15-17)

One of the means of saving that God often uses – is raising up leaders to speak on his behalf, and bring clarity to the situation

Men and women with the boldness and faith, to guide and direct God’s people as he gives utterance

People like pastors, and elders, and deacons, and staff

And under-shepherds like SG Leaders, and Service Team Leaders, and CM Teachers, and Youth Leaders, and Women’s Ministry Table leaders, and Marriage Counselors

If that’s you, and God gives you utterance – i.e. he gives you biblical thoughts that apply to the moment, you best speak up

And if God has placed you within their care – you’d do well to listen

Especially if you’re between a rock and a hard place like J

B/c it may very well be, that their words are the means by which God will save you

4. **Worship him wholly – with no reservations (v18-19)**

With *all* your being; Your whole person – mind, body, *and* voice; Holding nothing back
That’s what J and the people of Judah did

18 – *Then J bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshipping the Lord.*

That’s worshipping him wholly – with no reservations

Something I want you to be free to do in *our* worship services – especially if you’re facing a crisis

If you want to come down front to get on your knees – do so

If you want to bow your head with your face to the ground – do so

But whatever you do, lift your voice (19)

Some of you get that, and you do it – u praise the Lord in worship w/ a *loud* voice

You engage your whole heart, your whole being, and it overflows from your lips

And it’s an awesome thing to be a part of

But others of you? You’re pathetic – and I say it that way b/c God deserves better

Some of you act like church mice when it comes to worship – if you open your mouth at all, it’s barely a squeak

Which I can understand if you don’t know the Lord – I don’t have a problem with that

Or if you don’t know the songs

But if you *do* know the Lord, and you’re a church mouse when it comes to worship – shame on you

Your paltry worship is not fitting for a God who is mighty to save

Open your mouth, engage your heart, and worship him wholly

5. **Believe him completely – to do what he says (v20b)**

20; This is where we so often fail

We don’t really *believe* that God is bigger than our problems

We’re not convinced that he really *can* do something about it, or will

And we certainly don’t trust his timing

If you want to see God’s mighty power to save . . .

If you want to experience his life-giving intervention in your situation . . .

If you want to feel his life-changing presence in your soul . . .

You have to believe completely, that he’ll do what he says

B/c against all odds, God is *still* mighty to save

6. **Obey him fully – for blessing and peace (v25, 29-30)**

This takes us right back to lesson #1 where obedience brings blessing (21-23)

They believed and obeyed – and God saved; Resulting in blessing upon blessing

Look at 24-25, 29-30

That’s peace, and that’s blessing

And it came as a result of their *full* obedience, to step out in faith and do what God said, even though it didn’t make sense against such overwhelming odds

I hope you’re encouraged by that

Encouraged to seek, gather, follow, worship, believe, and obey

B/c those are the keys to experiencing the mighty power of God in your life every single day

But especially when the odds are against you

Pray

The Lord's Table

As we go to The Lord's Table, please join us if Jesus is Lord of your life

You don't have to be a member, just a believer

But if he's not your Savior and Lord . . .

If you haven't trusted him to save you from your sin . . .

And committed your life to living for him – let the bread and cup pass

And take the time to reflect on what's preventing you from doing so

- Either way, believer or unbeliever – examine your heart

B/c if you eat and drink without considering your worthiness to participate . . .

The Bible says you'll be guilty of showing disrespect and irreverence toward God . . .

And risk bringing judgment on yourself

So examine yourself, and get right with God, and commit to do so with others . . .

And then rest in the grace of his sacrifice for your sins

As you receive the *bread*, go ahead and take it on your own when you're ready – as a picture of your relationship with Christ, who suffered for you *personally*

But hang on to the *cup*, and I'll lead us in drinking *that* together, as a picture of our *corporate* relationship with him, as head of our church

- At the last supper, after eating the bread, Jesus said took the cup, saying . . .

This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

IOW the contents of this cup are symbolic of his blood, the *life* he gave, to guarantee yours – that's the new covenant

Do this, as often as you drink it [he said], in remembrance of me