

Faith Under Fire Study 3: Surrounded City

by Lt. Ashley Koebel

The Story

Quiet murmurs were heard around the room. A nobleman standing near the back was whispering about his days in the war. In another part of the room, a revered advisor of the king stood speechless. Every now and again an indiscriminate gasp eked through his open mouth. A priest stood near the center of the room. His eyes met no one else's. It was difficult to determine whether the hardness in his face was resolution or detached compliance. In the epicenter of the noise sat a king. His arms rested on his throne, and his chin sunk into his left hand. It seemed that he could not hear the flurry of words and looks about him.

When Jehoshaphat put his mind to something, he was going to do it. No nobleman or councilor or even servant was silly enough to question him. He had made many drastic decisions before, but this one was new. Their little country was surrounded. Jehoshaphat had called all the people in the land to fast and pray. They had for days, and now it was time to make a decision.

Jehoshaphat squinted his eyes and imagined his father. His father had once been so strong, powerful and wise. The last years of his life, he stayed at home, suffering from some strange ailment of his feet. Jehoshaphat remembered this old man standing at a similar meeting. In this meeting, his father, King Asa, had declared that all idols throughout the land should be brought down. This was not a popular decision. When hard times came, many felt it was Baal who alone could provide. Some had even seen success. The nations around them had good crops. Surely Baal specialized in harvest. Would an almighty God really care if His people only asked Baal for help with his specialty? King Asa ensured that every shrine was torn down. Though it created many enemies for him, especially from the farmers who relied on Baal during harvest, King Asa did not lose his resolve.

Jehoshaphat remembered how things had changed with age. A king has many enemies and is in constant fear for his life and his family's. Somehow, it seemed the pressure had got to the king and he cracked. It was like a disease took him over. Later, an army from the north came against Israel. In hopes ridding his fear, Jehoshaphat's father took all of the golden treasures out of the temple and gave them as a gift to Syria. Syria, in response, offered some of their soldiers. Judah won the battle, but Jehoshaphat watched painfully as his father lost his personal war. In his old age his feet became diseased, but Jehoshaphat could not help but think that the disease was not really in his feet, but in his heart.

Jehoshaphat opened his eyes fully as he stood. The sudden commotion commanded the attention of all in the room. "My father destroyed the idols in this land. You remember well the resistance from the people. When I became king, my first task was to finish what he started. All the high places came down. I will not back down from what we started. What God started with King Asa, may He finish with Jehoshaphat." Jehoshaphat held out his hand for his staff, and a servant rushed it to him. "The only King we will approach for help is God."

Then, Jehoshaphat dressed himself in his very best and diplomatic robes, walking to the temple. He was going to ask for defense from the most powerful King he knew, and no one else.

The Scripture

2 Chronicles 20:5-9(NIV)

Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard and said:

“Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, ‘If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.

Choices

A teenager discovers that she is pregnant. A young woman struggles to find her place in the world of business. An executive is given the option of promotion, with the cost of his integrity. A homeless youth must decide how to survive on the street. These are pivotal points that many of us have faced or will face.

There are many choices that we must make, each day. The most drastic decisions, the most pivotal points in our lives tend to come without trumpets or any music. They come quietly and unexpectedly.

There are those who make a choice to win the battle, and there are those who make a choice to win the war. The question is not, “what will the result of my choice be?” The question is rather, “who will I be as a result of my choice?” Will my faith in God stand in this trial, or will it waiver?

Stand Up

In the end, what do you have? You only have your integrity. Nothing else belongs to you. The only war that we should be waging is the inner-war to trust in God, in spite of the problems around us. Trust the One who will not fail you. Stand up, even if it means losing a battle, you must win the war.

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. 2 Chronicles 20:15