

The spirit of the Lord in the midst. (Quality: very good)

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- [0 : 00] ...to the second book of Chronicles, chapter 20, and reading a part of verse 14.
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- Then, upon Jehaziel, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation.
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- Well, it will indeed be a divine favour if the Lord should be pleased to fulfil these very words in my soul.
- [1 : 11] To my spirit, really much of what weighs upon me is in relation to the solemn work of the ministry.
- And we have, in this account here, and in this very moment in the life of Jehaziel, the fulfilment of what is needed in the hearts and lives of every God-sent minister continually.
- I must acknowledge that I have oh so often pleaded these very words in my own great and solemn need.
- But while, as I have said, there is much upon my spirit that relates to the solemn work of the ministry, and yet, all that surrounds it is indeed truth, which the Lord not only fulfilled at this time in the life of King Jehoshaphat and those with him, but there are truths here which the Lord has been pleased to fulfil and bring to pass in the lives of his dear people many, many times and throughout many years.
- Now, I do not know, and I am thankful for this, I do not know how any of you have come to this service.
- [3 : 14] But I am thankful for this, that the Lord knows. And the Lord knows all that may have been asked of him in secret in any of your lives.
- But if I am enabled to set forth a little at least of the truths that I have found in this chapter here, then I must begin like this.
- King Jehoshaphat well knew that his own sins had procured these things unto himself.
- And alas, how often that is so in the lives of poor sinners.
- We oft bring mischief on our heads by some unwary step. And if ever a king of Judah made an unwary step, he certainly did when he joined in affinity with ungodly King Ahab.
- [4 : 44] And really, what we have before us this evening is the outcome of the Lord's hand, the Lord's judgment upon King Jehoshaphat in a very particular way.
- If you carefully read, as perhaps you have, of the life of King Jehoshaphat, you will have found that he had a particular besetting sin.
- He had that when he first gave in, and he did give in to the request of King Ahab when he sought, and what did he seek?
- He sought that King Jehoshaphat would join with him in going to war against the enemies of Israel.

And just to go back for a few moments to this, you will find, recorded in chapter 18, And Ahab, king of Israel, said unto Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth Gilead?

[6 : 13] Now listen to his answer. King Ahab was a most ungodly man, and he had a most ungodly wife.

But we have the very blessed evidence that King Jehoshaphat was a child of God. But, oh friends, in our lives, we are in constant danger of being left to take a step on our own.

And just to show you the contrast between these two kings, what was the response that King Jehoshaphat had to this request?

But listen to the way he speaks to King Ahab when he said to him, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth Gilead?

And he answered, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war. Oh, how quickly any one of us can be left to take a wrong step.

[7 : 34] And if we think about the way that he answered King Ahab, surely we could word it like this, I am as thou art, an ungodly king, I am as thou art, or we could put it like this, I believe, I am as the world is.

I am as the world is. And we are living in days when this is solemnly taking place, and how we need to be very careful in every step that we may anticipate taking in our lives.

But the contrast and the mercy was this, and dear friend, the Lord knows how many of us here this evening have had to bow our head in shame before our God when we have been left to our own spirit, to our own will, and when the Lord, as he did here, so mercifully overruled it all for good.

And I am sure there are those here this evening, and you have proved this. And when we think of the way the Lord may have dealt with us in our lives, and at times especially, we have this in verse 4 in chapter 18.

And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today.

[9 : 22] You think of that. And yet, he'd fallen, he had fallen into this sin, joining in affinity with an ungodly king.

My mind goes back many years now, in this moment. One Lord's Day morning in our chapel, in the chapel, in Eastbourne.

During the course of the sermon in the morning, the Lord moved me to ask those that were before me this question.

And as this thought has returned to my mind and spirit, I would put it to you like this. I would ask the same question that I had to ask that Lord's Day morning.

And the question was this, have you prayed about it? Have you prayed about it? And the Lord knows what your it may be.

[10 : 33] Have you prayed about it? Well, the Lord sent his word into a poor man's very soul that Sunday morning because he was at a point adjoining in affinity with an ungodly businessman.

And the Lord in mercy spoke to him and prevented it. And after however long he said, I want you to come with me.

And he took me to that, it was a business. He took me there, he said, there I was going. That is where I was going. But the Lord in mercy prevented it.

Now, the Lord then overruled. And if you think about it further, King Jehoshaphat, his life was spared.

The enemy, and you may remember this, because, and you think of it, that God's servant, Micaiah, had already said, if thou certainly return in peace, he was speaking to his king, Ahab, if thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the Lord spoken by me.

[11 : 57] And he said, hearken all ye people. And God's servant, they are not strangers to this exercise. I've known it myself. And I have really felt, well, if the Lord has not spoken, if the Lord does not fulfill his word, then I can't be his servant.

And of course, the same solemn truth could be applied to us here this evening. But notice what King Ahab did.

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, went up to Ramoth Gilead. Now listen, and the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself.

He evidently had taken notice of what God's servant Micaiah had said, and he was trying to defend himself. In other words, he was trying to save his own life. It would seem to me that God's word, he couldn't get rid of it.

And in a sense, it's a mercy, and it would have been his mercy, if he had, had a gracious effect upon his heart. But oh, think of it, and the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself.

[13 : 20] This is in chapter 18, verse 29. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle, but put thou on thy robes.

So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went to the battle. What was he doing? He was deliberately putting king Jehoshaphat in danger, and yet he asked him to go with him.

And I would think that when Jehoshaphat said, I pray thee, inquire, I pray thee, the word of the Lord today, and I'm sure that king Ahab, he didn't like that.

He wouldn't have liked any mention of the God of Israel. No, but, and he wouldn't have liked any mention of asking direction from God himself.

Well, you know what happened, and it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, because they had been told by the king of Syria, fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel.

[14 : 35] And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that he said, it is the king of Israel.

Therefore, they come about him to fight. But Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him, and God moved them to depart from him.

Oh, friends, the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. And those of us here this evening that have traced this out at times in our life, the overruling hand of God, and his mercy, I want to just further notice the opening words in chapter 19.

And Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. Oh, he returned in peace.

But notice what follows. And Jehu, the son of Hanani, the seer, went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?

[15 : 58] Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. And it goes on and it says, Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

What I just want to notice is this. You see, the intervening time, however long it may have been, but oh friends, this work comes into my heart.

I trust into my soul. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

And if we are left to sow to the flesh, we shall have the flesh reap corruption, but if we are given the grace to sow to the spirit, we shall have the spirit reap life everlasting.

But oh, you see, the effects of sin. And so, to my understanding, we have the fulfillment of this in this 20th chapter.

[17 : 11] And so this chapter begins with, it came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, you know, they were the descendants of Lot's children by his own daughters.

And the children of Mount Seir were the descendants of Esau. And they were old enemies, and they were enemies to the children of Israel.

And so, you see, here they are now confronted with what would have been in those days a mighty host. Now, as enabled then, I want just to set this before you.

The sanctifying effects of God's mercy and his grace and his love. Oh, you see, the response of King Jehoshaphat when you receive the news, the message.

Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat. They told him, there cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria, and behold they be in Hazazon, Tamar, which is in Gedi.

[18 : 38] Ah, but here we have the blessed effects of sanctifying fears, sanctified trouble and distress, and Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

He took the only course that he could. They were in great danger, Israel, and here was the king, and I believe you know what had taken place beforehand in his life, the way the Lord had saved his life, the way the Lord had returned him in peace to Jerusalem.

I believe it all returned to him. And are there not times in our lives when there are things that may have happened however long ago, the Lord will bring them again into our very souls, and we are brought to the same point as king Jehoshaphat here, and Jehoshaphat feared.

Now I wonder if there are any that have come to the service this evening, and you come here with fears, and the Lord knows what they are, the Lord knows how you've come, the Lord knows the burden of your souls, and he knows what you may have brought before him in secret, and the Lord knows how long you've been bringing yet.

And it may be there's someone here this evening, and you may have come like this, you may have said, Lord, the minister that we expect this evening knows nothing about me.

[20 : 30] He knows nothing about me. Have any of you been asking that the Lord would send me with a word for you? The Lord knows, and you will know if that is how you have had to pray.

so your need is known to God. Your burden is known to God. And I add this thought, and the Lord knows all about your dear pastor too, and his dear ones, and he knows all about you here as a people.

Oh, that I could be once more the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message. church. So then, they were brought at once before God.

Not only did this have a right effect in their king's soul and heart, but it had a gracious effect upon them.

And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord. Even out of all the cities of Judah, they came to seek the Lord.

[21 : 38] You know, it's a wonderful thing, when the Lord may bring a pastor and his people together. Now, when the Lord has granted it to this poor sinner, we've known it.

We've known it. And I do not know what your exercise may be as a people, with your pastor, and all that it may be, that I can leave with the Lord.

But where did they come to? with all this burden, where did they come? And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court.

So you see, in a united way, they brought all this into God's house. And dear friends, there's no better place to bring our burdens, our cares, and our needs.

Because there, the Lord has promised that he will bless, he will abundantly bless the provision of his house and satisfy his poor with bread.

[22 : 50] Well, here he is there. And so they stand together. I could hope there could be those here tonight who may feel you're brought together under God's word.

there's this in it that may bring you together. And yet in a sense you may not be aware of it, I mean with regard to others. But this is what the Lord does when he will bless his dear people.

And so the dear king, he pleads before his God, and he said, art not thou God in heaven, and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen?

And in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? And he goes on. Now can we go on a little like this here this evening?

Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend forever?

[23 : 58] Oh, when we're enabled to plead like this, of course it's needed in our nation today as never before, and oh how it's needed in Zion, the city of our God, and how it's needed if one may use such wording in our chapels, but when the Lord brings, and I'm going to venture to say this, when the Lord brings a pastor and his people together, and he brings them as they were brought here together, and he says, and if when evil cometh upon us, as the sword judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, oh friends, isn't it this that we need every time we gather for worship?

here? Oh, that we could know more of this, when we come together into God's house, and there is the burden for the dear pastor, and his ministry, and the people, and there's this coming together in the house of God, and we read, and it's in brackets, and I expect it is in brackets in your Bible too, that is, I mean, in verse nine, in this twentieth chapter, let us just read it then, if when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, you know, this is something very sacred, when any congregation, any people, when we are really favoured, to really feel, I have known it, as I have stood here over the years, may we know it again this evening, may you dear people feel it with me, that we are here together, and that we might feel that we are indeed in the very presence of

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and cannot we say, there are those of you that can say this, I believe you dear pastor can say this, from his very heart, because he's proved it, for thy name is in this house, and cry unto thee in our affliction, and then thou wilt hear and help, oh, but then he goes on pleading, and he says in verse 12, O our God, wilt thou not judge them, in spite of all my sins, Lord, in spite of all our sins, O our God, wilt thou not judge them, for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know what to do, perhaps you were very feelingly there this evening, you may have come like that, to this very service, neither know we what to do, and I can tell you this dear friend,

I've been there many times, and I'm still there, and I believe it's a place that any God given, any God appointed pastor will continually come into, neither know we what to do, well that's one thing, but oh if we are favoured to know more of what follows, but our eyes are upon thee, you know we can have one of these things without the other, we can and how often we've been there, neither know we what to do, and if we are left to ourselves in it, that is just where we are, though the contrast then, when it is true, but our eyes are upon thee, oh have any of you come like this here this evening, and then I want just to mention another very important truth, I hope I'm saying this right, I hope the

Lord is moving me to say this, but friends I think of you and I've been asking the Lord again, that I might be given a word from heaven for you, with you dear pastor, here once more this evening, the Lord alone knows, if I shall ever stand here again, but you see it's this, they were brought together in Christ, and then that thirteenth verse, that has stood out, oh so many times, in my own life, especially as a pastor, oh think of this, here they were, these mighty enemies approaching, and they didn't know what to do, they didn't know how to handle it, and yet the Lord brings them here, and all Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones, their wives and their children, oh don't we need this, don't we need this in our chapels today, oh don't we need it still at East

[29 : 16] Ball, but you see here is the way in which the Lord brings them, that he may bless them, he brings them, that he may now speak to them, and here of course, as I mentioned at the beginning, we have really the solemn work of the ministry.

You might say, well explain it then, well may the Lord help me so to do. You know, in this congregation, and it must have been a great congregation, there stood this poor trembling man, Jehaziel.

And I'm sure it's right for me to say that he was as full of fear about these approaching enemies as anyone. And that's how it is with God's servants.

That's just how it is with a poor trembling pastor. As your dear pastor comes here and has done again and again, but friends, this is how he comes.

And that is how God's servants come. There they stand. Why, when they come into the pulpit, they come into it as a poor earthen vessel, empty, polluted, dark and vain, troubled under a sense of their own sin, their own guilt, and their own shame.

[30 : 44] sin, but what happened then to this poor trembling man, well we have it then, to my mind and heart this has been a word for me personally, over many years, many, many times, and I've had to plead it, but I think it was yesterday, in thinking of hoping to preach last evening at Eastbourne, and then the thought came, well you're due to go to Cranbrook tomorrow, and my heart went up to the Lord, and I said, Lord grant me a word, and dear friends, these very words came to me, and that is why I'm here with them, then, oh to my soul, you know, this word then, then, in that moment, their great need, and there they stood, they did not know what to do, and yet, they were brought to this, and then, upon

Jehaziel, came the spirit of the Lord, in the midst of the congregation, and what a wonderful, it's a miracle, you know, really every time a poor man ventures to preach, and if the Lord helps him, it is a miracle of grace, it really is, but here it is there, then, upon Jehaziel, came the spirit of the Lord, in the midst of the congregation, now that turned him, from a poor, weak, sinful, helpless man, into a servant of God, oh if only I could be favoured to be that, here this evening, well you see now, he had messages to deliver, I can only hope that the Lord has brought me here tonight with these very words, for this purpose, that I might then be enabled to bring before you the same truths, hoping that the Holy

Spirit will apply them to our hearts, and that you dear people, might even go home with these great words of promise, and they are these, oh you see now he was God's servant, and he said, hearken ye all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, thus saith the Lord unto you, oh if only the Lord would speak these words, if it could only be into one poor trembling heart, and my own this evening, and yours, here it is there, this is what he had to deliver, 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, here then is the beginning of words of promise, thus saith

God's, God's, God's, and then the Lord adds this to it, now again I do not know how it is with any one of you that are here tonight, but friends, the Lord knows, and that includes, and would ever include, the dear young people too, what does it say then in verse 16, the Lord had promised them, be not afraid, nor dismayed, by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's, now listen, tomorrow, tomorrow, you know sometimes in our life, we very feelingly have a tomorrow, it can be of course literally, there could be someone here this evening, you may be dreading tomorrow, you may be dreading the future, you may be dreading the things that have come into your life, and you do not know what to do with them, you do not know how to handle them, you may have tried, and in trying you may have made things worse, we often do, if we are left to ourselves, we make matters worse, oh then, if only the Lord would speak to some poor trembling soul, or souls here this evening, tomorrow, go ye down against them, behold, the Lord tells them exactly what's going to happen, he tells them where their enemy is going to be, tomorrow, go ye down against and behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz, and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jerul, do you have things then in your life, do you dread tomorrow, are you dreading the future, what the

Lord knows, and how often the Lord's people are, we are a poor, fearing people, the Lord has said so, I will leave in the midst of a poor, and afflicted people, but they shall trust in the name of the Lord, now he goes on then, with further words of promise, ye shall not need to fight in this battle, so friend, there's a battle in front of you, and indeed the life of a child of God, is one continual battle, it's like a battlefield, and we're often with Rebecca, when she went to inquire of the Lord, and when she came, didn't she, and she said, if it be so, why am I thus, and the Lord told her why it was, and in every believer, to arm is a seen, known and felt, but the

[37 : 35] Lord has promised, that grace will reign, and grace reigns, to pardon crimson sins, to melt the hardest heart, now then, these further words of promise, ye shall not need to fight in this battle, set yourselves, stand ye still, and see, and see, the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah, and Jerusalem, fear not, nor be dismayed, tomorrow, go out against them, for the Lord will be with you, for the Lord will be with you, well if any of us go home with this, this evening, we shall have something to go home with, and we shall have something to go home with, that the Lord is going to fulfil, ill, he's going to bring your it to pass, for the

Lord will be with you, now what was the effect of it, upon the very soul of King Jehoshaphat, and his people, notice the wording, in verse 18, oh if only, we, if only I, friends if only I could bow my head, in Cranbrook Chapel, again this evening, in this pulpit, the Lord knows that I would, but it's the work of his spirit, but oh to know this, and Jehoshaphat bowed his head, with his face to the ground, oh he couldn't get low enough, and neither will you, if the Lord favoured you, if you're favoured in believing, and if the Lord should say to someone here tonight, son or daughter, go in peace, go in peace, the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast passed of him, oh if only we could know more of this,

I often think, and it's my constant exercise really, I think of Abraham's servant, when he was favoured with wondrous answers to prayer, and the man bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord, I think of dear Moses, when God brought him right into his presence, and Moses made haste, and bowed himself to the earth, I think of the apostle John on the isle of Patmos, and when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead, oh if only, if only I could know more of this, if only I could know more of this, I feel to know so little, but I thank the Lord if I've had a few moments, when I have bowed my head before him, now, just in closing there, what was the effect of this?

You know dear friends, these enemies were still there, oh they were still approaching, but they had been told, they had been told, set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, oh Judah and Jerusalem, fear not, nor be dismayed, tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you.

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.

[41 : 23] Now, if the Lord should grant any of us a little of this tonight, friend, you will go home, and by faith, you will embrace the blessing, or you will embrace the deliverance, if the Lord is in it, you will bow your head, and you will embrace the deliverance, and the blessing that God has spoken to you, because it's yet to be fulfilled.

Now it was going to be fulfilled, and one final word before I say amen this evening, and it's this, how did their deliverance begin?

I feel this is very important teaching, how did their deliverance begin? Well, let me just read verse 21 and 22 to you in closing, and when he consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever.

They were given the grace to praise God before the Lord granted them the victory over their enemies, and the blessing, and I just leave verse 22 with you.

Oh, to my soul there's been so much in this from time to time, and when they began to sing and to praise, and when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord said, notice the wording, the Lord said, ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah, and they were smitten, you think of how the Lord did it.

[43 : 21] The children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them, and when they made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, everyone helped to destroy another.

Oh, friends, with God nothing is impossible. Amen. Amen.