

God Is Faithful

FOCUS THOUGHT

God is faithful to those who turn to Him in humility and prayer.

»» FOCUS VERSE

II Chronicles 7:14

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

»» LESSON TEXT

II Chronicles 12:5–7

5 Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.

6 Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous.

7 And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.

II Chronicles 13:10–16

10 But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the LORD, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business:

11 And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him.

12 And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.

13 But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them.

14 And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets.

15 Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

16 And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand.

SISTER PARKER

Minnie Weems Parker was in her forties when she heard about the Holy Ghost. She desperately wanted to receive this gift from God. It was during the Great Depression, and she was working long hours on the family dairy farm as well as battling a serious snuff habit. God delivered her from snuff and many other bad habits even before filling her with the Holy Ghost two years later.

The railroad track ran in front of her house, and she fed many “hoboes” with a warm meal and the gospel message. Her front porch was known as a preaching spot for traveling ministers, and many people received the Holy Ghost on or near her porch. As a result, she became known for miles around as Sister Parker. One particular night, men from other churches came to burn down her house. As they stood there with flaming torches, Minnie came out and began to pray. A white dove landed on the roof of the porch, and one by one the men left.

One night a man knocked on her door needing prayer for his dying baby. Minnie was sick in bed with a gallbladder attack, and her husband told the man there was no way she would be able to travel in her condition. Yet she got up and rode the man’s mule out to his house and prayed. The baby was healed, and so was she! From that moment forward, she never had another gallbladder attack.

Minnie faithfully shared the gospel and was a light to her community until she died in her early nineties.

▶▶▶ OUTLINE

I. THE KING OF EGYPT ATTACKED

JERUSALEM

- A. Shemaiah Prophesied to Rehoboam
- B. The King and Leaders of Israel Humbled Themselves
- C. The Lord Responded to Their Humility
- D. God Will Deliver Those Who Humble Themselves

II. ISRAEL WENT TO BATTLE AGAINST JUDAH

- A. Abijah Confirmed Judah’s Reliance upon the Lord
- B. Judah Cried Out to the Lord and God Gave Them Victory
- C. God Will Give Victory to Those Who Rely on Him

III. GOD’S PROMISE TO SOLOMON

- A. If My People
- B. Humble Themselves and Pray
- C. God Is Faithful to Those Who Turn to Him in Humility and Prayer

▶▶▶ CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

One of the greatest struggles a person has in his own flesh is the struggle with pride. Ego is inherent in each of us. It is always lurking beneath the surface, eager to be recognized, flattered, and lifted up. Pride drives us to succeed at any cost, living life on our own terms. We want to be self-made and we want everyone to recognize just how great we really are.

Deep in the heart of a Spirit-filled believer is the quest to live a life of true humility, but it cannot be achieved until the struggle against pride is won. It is astonishing how much effort it takes for humility to overcome pride to the extent it can flow outward in our conversations and actions. In the struggle between pride and humility we find truth in the saying “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

I. THE KING OF EGYPT ATTACKED JERUSALEM

Throughout Old Testament history, God's people found themselves at war with heathen nations. Most often, the cause of each conflict was rooted in the pride that had worked its way into their hearts and lives. The cycle repeated itself over and over: God would bless, the people would become proud of their blessing, their pride would lead to worldliness, God would bring an enemy army to do battle with them, and finally His people would humble themselves and pray, returning to a right relationship with God.

This is where we find Israel in II Chronicles 12. After Rehoboam had become king of Judah, he forsook the law of the Lord and led the people into sin. In the fifth year of his leadership, Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked Israel. The Bible tells us Israel was attacked because they had transgressed against the Lord (II Chronicles 12:2). Rehoboam had strengthened himself as king and was convinced he no longer needed to follow after the Lord.

» *Can you think of a time when you allowed the blessings of God to cause you to become arrogant, thinking that you had arrived? Explain.*

A. Shemaiah Prophesied to Rehoboam

God is a God of great mercy. He does not simply wait for people to rebel against Him so He can judge them. Instead, He will send a warning before He ever sends judgment. It was not the Lord's intent for His people to be destroyed by Shishak without first giving them an opportunity to humble themselves.

Before God turned them over to Shishak for retribution, He sent the prophet Shemaiah to speak with Rehoboam. The best way to deal with the actions and attitudes resulting from foolish pride is to address the problem head-on, and that is exactly what Shemaiah did. He told the king, "Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak."

» *In reflecting on your life, can you recall a time when God sent you a warning and extended mercy to you before bringing judgment to the situation? Explain.*

B. The King and Leaders of Israel Humbled Themselves

This warning struck terror into the heart of the king as well as the princes of Israel. They knew Shishak was a vicious warrior-king. They knew he was capable of destroying them and decimating their land. So their swift and humble response before the Lord was no surprise.

When our pride is confronted, a response is demanded. We can humble ourselves before God and fall on His mercy, or we can continue in stubborn pride and ultimately be destroyed. Like Rehoboam, we need to be quick to respond in humility and bow our faces before Him.

C. The Lord Responded to Their Humility

In their humble response, they declared, “The Lord is righteous.” There is more depth in that simple statement than we may realize. It was both an admission that their proud actions had been unrighteous, and an acknowledgment that God was righteous in punishing them for their pride. They found the right response when confronted with brutal honesty in the presence of God. It drove them back to a place of humility where they could realign their perspective and put God back in His proper place in their lives.

The Lord told Shemaiah that because the people had humbled themselves, He would show mercy to them. He would not allow Shishak to completely destroy them. Instead, the Egyptian king would only be allowed to take the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king’s house.

D. God Will Deliver Those Who Humble Themselves

Shishak could easily have taken the life of Rehoboam and held all of Israel captive. But because of Judah’s act of humility before the Lord, the king’s hand was stayed from doing so. God proved to His people once again that He will deliver those who humble themselves.

They not only found out that “pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18), but if people will humble themselves, God will deliver them from pending destruction.

It is wise to remember that even though God delivered them, they still suffered the loss of their treasures. There may be times when God will spare you while still allowing you to feel the pain of what your pride can cause you to lose. He does this so that your loss can serve as a future reminder of the danger of allowing pride to overtake you.

» *Can you recall someone else in Scripture whom God delivered after they humbled themselves and prayed? Give a brief account of the circumstances.*

II. ISRAEL WENT TO BATTLE AGAINST JUDAH

Soon after this, Abijah, the son of Rehoboam and the grandson of Solomon, ascended to the throne of the southern kingdom of Judah. At the same time, Jeroboam, an evil king, was ruling over the northern kingdom of Israel. Second Chronicles 13:2 lets us know there was war between the two nations.

Abijah had assembled an army of four hundred thousand proven men, but Jeroboam had amassed an elite fighting force of eight hundred thousand men. The numbers alone seemed to indicate an easy victory for Israel.

Before a sword was ever drawn or an arrow ever flew, Abijah stood on the edge of the battlefield and called out to Jeroboam. He reminded him that God had made a covenant giving the kingdom to David forever.

A. Abijah Confirmed Judah’s Reliance upon the Lord

Abijah continued his speech by telling Jeroboam that he had rebelled against the Lord. Jeroboam had gathered children of Belial unto himself to give him ungodly counsel. He and his people were worshiping false idols of golden calves, and the Levitical priesthood had been dismissed and replaced with worldly priests.

After letting Jeroboam know just how far his pride had taken him away from God, Abijah declared, “But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him” (II Chronicles 13:10). He went on to say the priesthood was still doing service in the house of the Lord and that God Himself was with them as their captain.

B. Judah Cried Out to the Lord and God Gave Them Victory

Judah did not allow pride to make them think they could win the battle. Neither did they allow arrogance to drive them into a war they could not win. The words of Abijah were not offered from the vantage point of pride, but rather from a strong confidence that God was with them and would fight for them. He boldly warned Jeroboam not to fight against the Lord God of his fathers because he surely would be defeated (II Chronicles 13:12).

Jeroboam disregarded Abijah’s words, and the battle began in earnest. He sent troops along Judah’s flanks in an attempt to surround them and attack from all sides. No doubt Jeroboam was confident this strategy would win the victory.

When Judah discovered they were surrounded, they responded quickly. Interestingly, they did not reposition their troops. They did not fight back-to-back. They did not attempt to breach the battle lines. Instead, they cried out to the Lord, and the priests blew the trumpets. Then, as one voice, the men of Judah shouted a blood-curdling battle cry. God violently smote Jeroboam and all Israel (II Chronicles 13:15). They turned to flee, but were caught by the armies of Judah. Jeroboam lost five hundred thousand warriors that day—more than half of his fighting force.

» *How have you learned to depend on the Lord during difficult situations?*

C. God Will Give Victory to Those Who Rely on Him

Being humble before the Lord will pave the way for Him to bring you victory in the battles you face. Second Chronicles 13:18 gives the following insight: “Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers.”

Relying on God tells Him you do not trust yourself to fight your battles. It is letting Him know you are humbling yourself in His presence and need Him to be at work in your life. You are leaning on Him and not on yourself.

III. GOD’S PROMISE TO SOLOMON

Several years before the biblical account of this lesson, God spoke to Solomon while he was the king of Israel. His instructions to Solomon contain a timeless formula for us concerning living our lives in such a way that God will fight for us and deliver us.

In II Chronicles 7:14, the Lord told Solomon, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

A. If My People

We need to realize identity matters to God. He created us to be in relationship with Him. His desire is for us to be His people and for Him to be our God. In a world where the term *Christian* has become so broadly defined, we need to be sure we are truly His by being born again and having His name applied to our lives.

B. Humble Themselves and Pray

We cannot expect identity alone to be some magical formula for victory in our lives. The battle with ego and pride will constantly be with us. These two enemies will give us ideas for how to wage war; they will speak words of false bravado into our ears that can cause us to be destroyed.

The Lord told Solomon that His people needed to “humble themselves and pray.” In other words, He was calling them to go beyond the flesh and walk in the Spirit. We must not wait for life to humble us. We must not wait for circumstances to humble us. We must not wait for God to humble us. It is far better to learn to humble ourselves and pray, choosing to rely completely upon the Lord.

» *How can we humble ourselves?*

C. God Is Faithful to Those Who Turn to Him in Humility and Prayer

When you turn to the Lord in humility and prayer, you can have full confidence that God will respond. As He informed Solomon, humbling yourself and praying will get the attention of Heaven: “Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chronicles 7:14).

God could choose to move at any moment on your behalf. In fact, He could keep the battle from ever coming your way. However, He often chooses not to do so. Instead, He waits to see what your response will be when the struggle comes. He waits to see what role pride will play when you are confronted with the blessings He sends your way.

He will resist you if you allow pride and arrogance to lead you. But if you willingly choose to humble yourself and pray, He will be faithful to you and deliver you.

»» INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

The outcome of our life is determined by how we live moment by moment. The Word instructs us on every aspect of our lives. Yet some instructions serve as foundational principles on which to build our lives.

First Peter 5:5 says, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth

the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” Take a moment and pay particular attention to the words “and be clothed with humility.”

Every morning, we look in our closet to decide what we are going to wear for the day. Often, our mood can determine which garment we choose. Sometimes the activities of the day will dictate the decision for us. Regardless, we choose our outfit for the day and then display it for everyone to see.

We also have a spiritual closet we enter into at the beginning of each day. The choices are laid out before us, and we decide how we will adorn our spirits for that day. James tells us we should be clothed with humility. Let it be the humility of mind, heart, and spirit that is put on display for all the world to see. By doing so, we are ensuring that God is on our side and will faithfully fight our battles for us.