Victory Ahead sermon for 8-13-16

**The fight for the faith is the fight we are in.**

* We are not in a fight against the Devil directly; although our fight will come into contention with his work in the world. Satan is defeated!
* We are not in a fight with the world; we are simply not of this world. We are on our way home.

**Ephesians 4:11-13**

**11**And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, **12**for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, **13**till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

* Our task in the church is to
  + Equip the saints to do the work of the ministry
  + Edify the body of Christ
    - Build up
    - Encourage
    - Repair
* Our goal in the church is to
  + Come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God
  + Become perfect to the extent that Christ was perfect

**Jude 1:3**

**3**Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

* Jude tells us that he meant to write to us about salvation; but was then diverted from his original intent because he realized that the greatest threat was not to the knowledge of the Son of God, but to our unity of the faith. And insidiously, this threat was not coming from without the church but from *within*.
* This threat of doubt, skepticism, and carnality is still threatening the church from within. It hasn’t gone away! We must still contend for the faith!
  + We must not give in to false doctrines and heresy
    - We must not give in to the notion that any one of us are saved by works.
    - Transversely, we must not give into the notion that because we are saved we are given a pass to sin.
  + We must never give into doubt or fear. This is the fight we are called to.

.…Today I’m going to tell you how we are going to win this fight for the faith….

**2 Chronicles 19-20** (NLT)

**19**

**4**Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, but he went out among the people, traveling from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, encouraging the people to return to the Lord, the God of their ancestors. **5**He appointed judges throughout the nation in all the fortified towns, **6**and he said to them, “Always think carefully before pronouncing judgment. Remember that you do not judge to please people but to please the Lord. He will be with you when you render the verdict in each case. **7**Fear the Lord and judge with integrity, for the Lord our God does not tolerate perverted justice, partiality, or the taking of bribes.”

**11**“Amariah the high priest will have final say in all cases involving the Lord. Zebadiah son of Ishmael, a leader from the tribe of Judah, will have final say in all civil cases. The Levites will assist you in making sure that justice is served. Take courage as you fulfill your duties, and may the Lord be with those who do what is right.”

# **Create Community**

**To win the fight for the faith, intentionally create community around the faith in both religious and “everyday life” affairs.**

* Winning the fight for the faith means all of us coming into agreement to believe God no matter how difficult life gets, and that is not accomplished by being in the right. It is accomplished by being in relationship.
* Notice that King Jehoshaphat created community by appointing leaders to govern the affairs of the church and the civic life. Sounds like the 5 fold leaders in Ephesians 4, right?
  + After the structure was set in place, the community grew and came into unity of the faith.
  + This is the only way to disciple a nation! Pro-faith community must be created by leaders.
* Notice that King Jehoshaphat created community before calamity.

**20**After this, the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites declared war on Jehoshaphat. **2**Messengers came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army from Edom is marching against you from beyond the Dead Sea. They are already at Hazazon-tamar.” (This was another name for En-gedi.)

**3**Jehoshaphat was terrified by this news and begged the Lord for guidance. He also ordered everyone in Judah to begin fasting. **4**So people from all the towns of Judah came to Jerusalem to seek the Lord’s help.

**5**Jehoshaphat stood before the community of Judah and Jerusalem in front of the new courtyard at the Temple of the Lord.

* Jehoshaphat created the community while things were good, and when calamity came, the community was there for him.
* **Do not wait until calamity to create community!**

**6**He prayed, “O Lord, God of our ancestors, you alone are the God who is in heaven. You are ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth. You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against you! **7**O our God, did you not drive out those who lived in this land when your people Israel arrived? And did you not give this land forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? **8**Your people settled here and built this Temple to honor your name. **9**They said, ‘Whenever we are faced with any calamity such as war, plague, or famine, we can come to stand in your presence before this Temple where your name is honored. We can cry out to you to save us, and you will hear us and rescue us.’

**12**O our God, won’t you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help.”

**13**As all the men of Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones, wives, and children, **14**the Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the men standing there. His name was Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite who was a descendant of Asaph.

**15**He said, “Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Listen, King Jehoshaphat! This is what the Lord says: Do not be afraid! Don’t be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God’s. **16**Tomorrow, march out against them. You will find them coming up through the ascent of Ziz at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel. **17**But you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the Lord’s victory. He is with you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out against them tomorrow, for the Lord is with you!”

# **Contend For the Faith**

**To win the fight of faith, you yourself must decide to get up and fight.**

* This is how we fight
  + **Choose to believe that we have access to a God who cares, loves, and saves!**
  + **Choose to rest even when trial is all around.** 
    - Stand still in belief that the Holy Spirit is changing things for your good.
* To decide that you can’t or won’t do these things is to decide to fight some other fight than the fight of faith.

**18**Then King Jehoshaphat bowed low with his face to the ground. And all the people of Judah and Jerusalem did the same, worshiping the Lord. **19**Then the Levites from the clans of Kohath and Korah stood to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud shout.

**20**Early the next morning the army of Judah went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. On the way Jehoshaphat stopped and said, “Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Believe in his prophets, and you will succeed.”

**21**After consulting the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang:

“Give thanks to the Lord;

    his faithful love endures forever!”

**22**At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. **23**The armies of Moab and Ammon turned against their allies from Mount Seir and killed every one of them. After they had destroyed the army of Seir, they began attacking each other. **24**So when the army of Judah arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, all they saw were dead bodies lying on the ground as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped.

**25**King Jehoshaphat and his men went out to gather the plunder. They found vast amounts of equipment, clothing, and other valuables—more than they could carry. There was so much plunder that it took them three days just to collect it all! **26**On the fourth day they gathered in the Valley of Blessing, which got its name that day because the people praised and thanked the Lord there. It is still called the Valley of Blessing today.

**27**Then all the men returned to Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat leading them, overjoyed that the Lord had given them victory over their enemies. **28**They marched into Jerusalem to the music of harps, lyres, and trumpets, and they proceeded to the Temple of the Lord.

**29**When all the surrounding kingdoms heard that the Lord himself had fought against the enemies of Israel, the fear of God came over them. **30**So Jehoshaphat’s kingdom was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

# **Worship Through**

**To win the fight of faith, always worship God for His goodness and splendor.**

* **Worship is spiritual warfare.**
* Verse 21 says that they gave thanks to the Lord. We have an even more effective way to give thanks now that the Holy Spirit has come and we can be baptized in the Holy Spirit.
  + **1 Corinthians 14:15-17**

What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. **16**Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? **17**For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

* **Worship in your understanding and worship in tongues a lot!**
* **Worshiping together in faith—not in fear—will cause the enemies of the Lord and His church to fear the Awesome God that we serve!**

Through the strength of Jesus Christ we will create community between the believers in the church and outside the church, we will contend for the faith in our own lives, and we will worship through every circumstance with all faith.