

2 Chronicles 17

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Date: 18 May 2025

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[0 : 00] Good to see you this evening. Hope that you've had a good day. Take your Bibles, go into the book of 2 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles chapter 17. 2 Chronicles chapter 17 is our text this evening. 2 Chronicles chapter 17 is where we will spend our time. We'll look at that chapter in its entirety. It is not a long chapter, just 19 verses.

But it begins a rather lengthy section of 2 Chronicles as we are just making our way through the history of God's people through the lens of the chronicler.

We're not 100% sure who that is, but we're seeing it through his lens. So let's pray, and then we'll get right into the text together. Let's pray. Father, thank you so much.

I just praise you for this day you've given us and praise you for the opportunity we have of gathering together. Thank you for, again, the grand privilege of opening up your word and pray that you would lead and guide us as we do so.

[1 : 11] Lord, as we read the history of your people and your interactions with your people and the way you move through them, we pray that we would see not just the individuals, but we would see the character of God in this.

We would see the admonition and the encouragement to live according to your purposes for your glory. We pray that you would give us understanding and that you would give us certainty as the truth that it contains.

And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're about to enter into a portion of Scripture really that clarifies the history that we have already read.

Hopefully here in just a moment you'll understand why. As recorded for us in the book of 1 Kings. 1 Kings ends during the reign of the individual we'll see tonight, but not very much is disclosed about this individual.

Most of the information that we get about this particular king we find actually from the book of 2 Chronicles. Now that's unique. And it's unique in that most of our information we gather from the events that lead up to the captivity, we don't see many in hindsight of coming out of captivity.

[2 : 24] Usually it's just a repetition. We are not seeing much quote-unquote new material as we study the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, but this is one of those instances in which we do. And it's actually one of those instances in which we have to rejoice and be thankful that we have this retelling of the history because it gives us a little bit more clarification, actually quite a bit more clarification, of what was going on during that time.

It is really an extended period because it goes for the next several chapters as we see time during his reign. We are introduced to some things that happen. When we get to the 18th chapter, that will be one parallel account which we have read before.

It is something that is recorded for us in the book of 1 Kings and almost verbatim. So it will be kind of a rereading, but it will be worth rereading. But we also see things in a different light by the time we get to the 20th chapter and we see that this is the king that wins a battle simply by leading a procession of praise.

If you were with us at this past year's fall retreat and we had skits that we were acting out and one of the skits that we were acting out and if you were not there, then you missed Brother Barnett Payne acting out this king as being the king who is leading a group of people singing praises to the Lord and they won the battle simply because they were praising.

And it is one of those odd stories that we find in scripture, but it is this king. And it is the man Jehoshaphat. And we will see that kind of later on, but we want to introduce him here in the 17th chapter.

[4 : 01] And I want you to see, and I'll show you why in just a moment, really with a little bit more clarity. I want you to see the mighty influence of a good king. Just the mighty influence of a good king.

Now, understandably, the chronicler writes, we have to say this carefully, with an interpretive view of history. And that is, he doesn't give us all the details, and he intentionally doesn't give us all the details because he is not writing so that we would understand the history of the individuals. He is writing so that we would understand the history of how God preserved his people and maintained his covenant. It does not mean it is wrong. It just means he is writing for the purpose so that our focus would be on God's preservation of his covenant promises rather than the deeds of the individuals.

Okay? He's not retelling history. He's not rewriting history. But he doesn't paint things better than they are because we'll see even some things that this king does wrong.

We'll understand that. But the focus and the force of his writing is so that we would see what God is doing, not necessarily what man is doing.

[5 : 18] Because the Bible is a history book, and it records not the full history of mankind, but the full recorded history of God's interaction with mankind.

So we can coincide that with history, sure. But what we're seeing is how God uses this man to influence his people. And that influence ultimately is the extending and preservation of his covenant promises that he made with David, but also further along we see the influence that the good king, ultimately who is Christ, has upon the people around him.

So let's read here in 2 Chronicles chapter 17. We are coming upon the heels of the king of Asa. Asa, who, if you remember, began his reign doing right, and began his reign praising the Lord before the battle, began an ultimate dependence upon the Lord, but ended his reign turning towards men rather than turning towards the Lord, entering into covenants with the king of Aram, and therefore not allowing the Lord.

That, by the way, is really important for us as we get a little further along into Jehoshaphat's story, but really turns to a covenant relationship with Aram and doesn't really depend upon the Lord to deliver him from this king of Israel.

And then we see that by the time Asa dies, God has put him in disciplinary hands of judgment, and he's got this disease in his feet, and rather than repenting, he keeps seeking the help of man, doesn't seek the Lord, ultimately dies.

[6 : 47] They celebrate his reign. He had 41 years of reign. He was ultimately a good king as far as the land was concerned, but there was this fault that he did not search out the Lord.

And so we're introduced here in chapter 17, verse 1, and Jehoshaphat, his son, then became king in his place and made his position over Israel firm. He placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah and set garrisons in the land of Judah and the cities of Ephraim, which Asa, his father, had captured.

And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father David's earlier days and did not seek the bells. But saw the God of his father, followed his commandments, and did not act as Israel did.

So the Lord established the kingdom in his control, and all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor, and he took great pride in the ways of the Lord and again removed the high places and the ashram from Judah.

Then in the third year of his reign, he sent his officials, Ben-Hel, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nathanael, Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. And with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nathaniah, Zebediah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobajiah, and Tobadonijah, and Nazaiah, the Levites, and with them Elishamah and Jehoram, the priest.

[8 : 07] They taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the Lord with them, and they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught among the people. Now the dread of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of the lands which were around Judah so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.

Some of the Philistines brought gifts and silver as tribute to Jehoshaphat. The Arabians also brought in flocks, 7,700 rams and 7,700 male goats.

So Jehoshaphat grew greater and greater and he built fortresses and store cities in Judah. He had large supplies in the cities of Judah and warriors, valiant men in Jerusalem.

This was their muster according to their father's households of Judah, commanders of thousands. Abna was the commander and with him 300,000 valiant warriors. And next to him was Johanan, the commander, and with him 280,000.

And next to him a Messiah, the son of Zichri, who volunteered for the Lord and with him 200,000 valiant warriors. And of Benjamin, Eliada, a valiant warrior, and with him 200,000 armed with bow and shield.

[9 : 15] And next to him Jehoshaphat, and with him 180,000 equipped for war. These are they who serve the king apart from those whom the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

What you see this evening, the mighty influence of a good king. Now we say this because we need to understand and we would see it when we get into the 18th chapter. And the 18th chapter, as I said, has this direct parallel in the book of 1 Kings.

And we could go back and read it there. And it's really one of the limited things that we have introduced for us as it concerns Jehoshaphat in the book of Kings is the account recorded for us in chapter 18.

Other than that, we have, and I think it's chapter 22, at the end of 1 Kings, where we have just this mention that Jehoshaphat reigned in the place of his father Asa and he did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

Only this, he did not remove the high places. Now when you read that, you say, well, wait a minute, it says right here that he did remove them, right? And when we go in a couple of chapters, we'll find out later, it says he did not remove them. So the question becomes us, did he remove them or did he not remove them?

[10 : 21] It's a good question. Maybe we'll answer that. So really the ultimate reason is is that he did put a decree in that they should be removed. But if you read it, it says, yet the people would not take them down. Because the king can decree it, but the people make the decision, right?

So ultimately, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord is all we have introduced for us in the book of 1 Kings other than the account that we have recorded for us in 18.

And then this one little minor account that we have, and I say minor kind of tongue in cheek because it really is not too minor of an account that we have at the end of his life that we have recorded for us in 2 Chronicles.

But we're not looking at a perfect man, we're looking at the good man, right? And we want to see the influence that this good king has upon his people. We see the influence, if you know the events in the 18th chapter, and really the first time we're introduced to him in the book of 1 Kings, we're introduced in this context of who his contemporary is in the nation of Israel at that time.

The reason we don't have much mentioned of Jehoshaphat in 1 and 2 Kings is because we are spending most of our time looking at the northern kingdom.

[11 : 35] Because the one who is reigning in the north at this time is Ahab. You remember Ahab, right? The man who married a Jezebel and had Elijah, and then later on Elisha, and all this.

So most of our focus in the book of 1 and 2 Kings, again, it is why the nation was led into captivity, is we're looking at Ahab, then we're looking at the ministry of Elijah, we're looking at all the things that happened during the wonderful mission, ministry of Elijah, even the showdown on Mount Carmel, and we see all these things, and there's not much mentioned here.

But while all of that is going on into the north, and if we want to see, really, the deterioration of the northern kingdom under the reign of Ahab, and really the extended deterioration after the reign of Ahab, the influence Ahab had upon the northern kingdom, because that just began its just rapid downward trajectory until its fall to the Assyrian Empire, then we can go read.

But if we look to the south, and we see the influence of this good king, and the influence that he has even during that time. Now, I was going to tell you one of the downfalls he has is he does make an alliance with Ahab, he does it by marriage, we see that in the 18th chapter, he repents of that.

He repents in a very mighty way. Ahab dies in battle, he flees in battle, and God gets his attention that way. But anyway, we're getting ahead of ourselves right now, we just want to see. So even during that period, what a contrast between what's going on to the north and what's happening in the south.

[13 : 07] And really, the difference is between the king who's on the throne. So let's see why this man has such a great influence, and we will see it as we read over the next few chapters.

The first thing I want you to notice is the search of his heart. The search of his heart. It says that he became king in the place of his father, and he made his position over Israel firm.

Just a little side note here. When I'm reading it, I like to connect it to other things. It's astounding. Again, you want to take it in context. So if you're studying a passage, and this is why I try to give you the information that I do, and I know I'm kind of opening up the water hose to you tonight, but that's okay.

You came thirsty, hopefully. But you want to have it in its context. So we need to know the chapter that precedes it, and we need to know the chapter that follows it. So you want to have it in its proper context.

We see here that he made his position over Israel strong. Now what was Asa's detriment? Asa's detriment was is that Israel was fortifying the cities on the border, and Asa said, well, I don't know if I can withstand Israel's defenses there.

[14:13] So he entered into a covenant with the king of Aram, and had Aram break his covenant with Israel, and therefore, you know, he was scared of Israel. Jehoshaphat comes, and he makes his position strong, he stands strong, and he's over them.

But what's astounding, by the way, just in case we trust in man too much, by the time we get to the 18th chapter, he is making a covenant with that which he was stronger than. He's entering into an agreement with that which he is over in the 17th chapter.

Because we, in our weakness at times, enter into temptations, and we think that we're not now, again, we're not looking at a perfect one, because the perfect king is not found until we get into the New Testament and we find Christ.

But yet we say that he made his position over Israel firm, and he placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah and the garrisons in the land of Judah and the cities of Ephraim that Asa's father had captured. So we see that he's strengthened his words, but where is the great influence, and where does it come from?

It tells us in the third chapter, the Lord was with Jehoshaphat. Now that's astounding, because the Lord was not with Asa at the end of his life, because Asa would not repent and return to the Lord.

[15:20] Remember that repeated refrain that is recorded for us in the 16th chapter, for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth to seek the man whose heart will be steadfast and set upon him, right, that he may prove himself to be with him, that he may desire him.

God says that throughout Scripture. Now we meet one of these men here where the Lord was with Jehoshaphat. Why? Because he followed the example of his father David's earlier days and did not seek the Baals.

Now, admittedly, I try to be honest with you when we get to this, some Bible scholars have a hard time with this introduction of his father David's earlier days, because they say there is no time in David's latter days where he was not faithful to the Lord, for he was a man after God's own heart. Some people believe that here the translation should rather be that followed the example of his father Asa's earlier days, which would be fine, but the text is what it is. He is following the example of his father David's earlier days.

We know that David did make mistakes at the end of his life. We know that one of those grand mistakes is the numbering of God's people that was near the very end of his life. But nonetheless, he is walking after the example of his father David.

[16:30] And he did not seek the Baals, but look at this, but sought the God of his father. So here we begin to see the search of his heart. He is seeking after the Lord God. This again will be a character trait of Jehoshaphat that we see.

When he does wrong, we should go back and look and see, just as David, that when he does wrong and he is confronted with the wrong, rather than doing as Asa did, stiffening his neck to use biblical terms and saying, well, I'm just going to keep searching after man, he begins to search wholeheartedly after the Lord.

He begins to turn back to the Lord and he begins to go after him. He says, but he sought the God of his father, followed his commandments and did not act as Israel. So the Lord established his kingdom in his control.

And all Judah brought their tribute to Jehoshaphat and he had great riches. And look at this wording here. I love this. The literal reading is that his heart was lifted up.

The New American Standard says it like this. He took great pride. Paul would say this. If I'm going to rejoice in anything, I'm going to rejoice in the Lord, right? He took great pride in the ways of the

Lord.

[17 : 42] His heart was raised up with swelling pride, not in the strength of his own might, not in the ability of his soldiers.

We'll get to that in just a minute. Not to the fortification of these cities, but in the ways of the Lord. He says he took great pride in the ways of the Lord and again removed the high places and the ashram from Judah.

So we see here that his influence begins with the search of his heart. His heart was set to know the Lord. His heart took great pride in the ways of the Lord.

In a land and in a time where most people were taking great pride in their own abilities. His own father was taking pride in his own allegiances and alliances.

Ahab to the north was taking great pride in his own scheming and plotting. About this time he gets that vineyard that he wanted, if you remember Naboth's vineyard, and he took all the scheming and plotting there.

[18 : 46] But yet what we find is Jehoshaphat takes great pride and his heart is lifted up, swelling with influence in the ways of the Lord. We see the search of his heart.

And not only was his heart searching, this is probably one of the things, and again, it is something that will be repeated for us in the next couple of chapters, so we pay attention to it. We see the search of his heart, we see the service to his people.

We influence people, by the way, we serve them, right? It says, Then in the third year of his reign he sent his officials and it names his officials and he sent with his officials the Levites and he sent with the Levites the priests.

So he sent out this really entourage of people. You need to understand that what he is doing, the officials are the overseers of what the Levites and the priests are doing.

Okay, so his royal officials aren't there to do the command, his royal officials are there to ensure that the command is followed. Now that's telling because the command, that is the very thing he wants to do for the people, is of such great importance that he doesn't just send out the Levites and the priests.

[19 : 53] Rather, he sends a royal delegate with the Levites and the priests to ensure because this thing is seen as that important before the king. He wants this to be done and what is it that he wants to be done?

He sent them out and they taught in Judah. He sent out the Levites and the priests which, if you remember, we looked at this a couple of weeks ago, the primary role of the priest was to teach. The primary role of the priest was not to offer sacrifices. The sacrifices were to be an illustrative point of the truth that was being taught. It was to teach and to teach the ways of the Lord how one may be at peace with the Lord, how one may be restored in a great fellowship with the Lord. And he teaches the Levites or he tells the Levites and the priests to go teach the people. And he sends this royal grouping of officials with them to ensure that it's being done.

They taught in Judah and it says having the book of the law of the Lord with them. We have this grand privilege of opening up Scripture. And anytime we want to know what the Word of God says, we can take the Word of God and we can open it up.

[21 : 10] I have Bible after Bible after Bible in my office and I can look up different translations, I can look up different copies, I can do word studies, I can go back and forth between all of that. But in this day and time, there was but one copy that was hand copied by another and hand copied by another.

There might have been multiple copies but they were kept in the king's palace. And he sends them with a copy of the Word of God. What is he doing? He is making the Word of God accessible to the people.

He is influencing the people by teaching them the Word, not dictating them the Word. He is empowering them to understand what God has commanded so that when the king says we need to remove the high places, it's not we're just going to do it because the king says we're going to do it. We're going to do it because the king is following what God has declared to us. Right? And we see in the Word of God, it is really an important thing, the great movements we see in the Old Testament among the people of God is when someone stands up and teaches them the Word. Now, let's put ourselves in the context of the chronicler if we want to see this because this isn't recorded for us in the book of Kings but it is recorded here. I know we keep talking about this but we

want to have it in context, right?

[22 : 32] It is written post-Babylonian captivity. It is written more than likely to the grandchildren of those who responded to the decree of King Cyrus as they came out of captivity.

So, things have been established. By the time it is written, there are two books in our Bibles but it is one book in the Jewish scripture or the Hebrew scripture that has already taken place and it is the book Ezra and Nehemiah.

And in the book of Ezra and Nehemiah, I know we have it but in Nehemiah, Ezra is a teacher who sets his heart to know the ways of the Lord so that he may teach the people of the Lord the word of God.

And he joins Nehemiah who is a political leader who deals with the physical abilities and rebuilds the walls but one of the great things that happen is they gather the people together and what do they do?

They teach them the word. Ezra and the scribes have this platform built and for half a day the men and the women and the boys and the girls stand and they hear the word of God being read to them for half a day and then for the second half of the day the Levites go among the people and they instruct the people on what they've just been taught so that they may know the sense they give them the sense the word says.

[23 : 51] And one of the great awakenings that's happening there is that the people are learning the word of God and so it is there the chronicler is retelling this isn't the first time this has happened.

Right? Our recent past what your parents and maybe you maybe you were one of the kids who stood there and heard that that had happened before where God has preserved his covenant through the instruction of his word.

And so Jehoshaphat is sending these people out and he is serving his people by equipping them to understand what God has declared to them. This is why it's so important to get into the word of God is we have these great privileges, right?

It is one thing. I remember when the great convictions that they came to it is one thing for you to set under someone or for me to set under someone and they tell you this is what the Bible says and you need to accept it versus setting among someone who says get into the word of God and see if this is what the word says.

This is a big difference because if we're following the dictative authority of the individual rather than the instructive power of the word, the word of man has very limited ability but the word of God being rightfully taught to the people of God and encouraged by the people of God to get into the word is that which can change the heart and change the mind.

[25 : 14] This is one of the big rocks of my ministry. And so we see this reality that he is serving his people by equipping them and it says and they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.

How did he serve them? He served them by teaching them. This is how he influenced. This is a mighty influence. By the way we'll read this reality again that when the people they reach this crisis moment what does he do?

He sends them out and they teach them again. It is the mighty influence of a good king who teaches the word and it is a wonderful thing.

Number three we see not only the search of his heart the service of his people we see the security that he enjoyed. It says in verse 10 now the dread of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of the lands which were around Judah.

So he's living in this time of security. It says that the dread of the Lord was on all the kingdoms. Notice this we are told when he begins his reign that he fortifies the cities of Judah and all the outposts and he has soldiers there and he puts everything there but it is not the dread of Jehoshaphat that secures their borders.

[26 : 29] It's not the dread of this king who is fortifying cities and everything else. It says it's the dread of the Lord because he knew that the greatest thing that he could do was to draw himself and his people close to the Lord rather than to gain in military advance.

And he trusts that his relationship with the Lord will correspond to the security that he enjoys among the nations. And the dread of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of the lands so they did not make war against him.

The security again rests in the reality of who God is not in his own ability. When Asa was forced with battles he began to rely upon the dread of the king of Aram or the dread of these contracts and covenants that he enters into.

Jehoshaphat's concern is I want my heart to be set towards the Lord God. I want my people to know the word of God. And God grants him grand security there. It tells us some of the Philistines brought gifts that is the enemies of God begin to respond as if they are indebted to them because they're not ruling over the Philistines at this time.

But such dread of the Lord falls on them that some of the Philistines brought gifts and silver as tribute to Jehoshaphat. And the Arabians also said we want to give you gifts so that we can be in your good favor.

[27 : 49] And they began to bring him flocks and rams and goats and all these things which they would in turn turn around and offer to the Lord. We see this reality that Jehoshaphat grew greater and greater and he built fortresses and store cities in Judah.

Why? Because of the security that God granted him. But it wasn't the dread of Jehoshaphat. It was the dread of the Lord.

And the influence that he had upon those around him was not that he was stronger, that the God that he was committed to was stronger. And we have one more. So we see the search of his heart. We see the service of his people. We see the security he enjoyed. Fourth and finally we see the superiority of his men. The superiority of his men.

The extent of our influence is often seen by the impact that it has on those around us. And it's quite often on those closest to us.

[28 : 52] it says he had large supplies in the cities of Judah and warriors. But then it has this wording, valiant men in Jerusalem.

The word valiant men, by the way, is the same phraseology that's used of David's men. They are mighty men. This is the only other time that we have a king who has mighty men other than David. And mighty men is a really unique wording used to describe and define the men that are there. And it is men of great valor, men of great military abilities, men of great strength, men of renown. It is always in a positive light. Not really men of degradation, but rather men of positive impact. He has valiant men, it tells us, or mighty men in Jerusalem.

And this was their muster, and he begins to list these men. Some people, again, look at these numbers and say, oh, this is an impossibility, because if you were to put this together, he is able to call and muster up a force of 1.8 million people.

[29 : 59] And you're saying, there's no way you can't do that. There's just way too many people, but yet we can understand here that God causes the increase. It was the dread of the Lord. Upon him. And people are leaving Israel and coming into Judah at this time.

But we see these men who are leading, it says Abner was the commander, had 300,000 valiant warriors, and next to him was Johanan, the commander, had 208,000. And next to him, I like Amasaiah, the son of Zichari.

Why? Because it says, who volunteered for the Lord. He didn't volunteer for Jehoshaphat. He volunteered for the Lord. See, even his men, the warriors, the ones who are in the cities, the ones who are fighting, the ones who are there to protect, are not doing it because of who he is.

They're volunteering for the Lord. And for who the Lord God is, they are saying, yes, I will fight, or I will be there. And they all served the king, apart from those whom the king put in fortified cities throughout all Judah.

So he had a massive army. We see the superiority of his men because we understand why this alliance, he enters into an alliance with Ahab, we'll get into the 18th chapter.

[31 : 19] Why does Ahab reach out to him? Ahab needs Jehoshaphat and his men. He needs them because Ahab wants to go fight a battle. He knows on his own.

Even though the northern kingdom is quote-unquote larger, he can't do it without the men of Jehoshaphat. He won't do it with them either. We'll read that later because it is decreed of the Lord. But we see the superiority of his men, even of the men around others. And we are reminded of this in this text that no good person of influence literally stands alone because they are standing with those who surround them.

Jehoshaphat here has committed and searched with his heart after the Lord. He has taught the people and served the people. He is living secure, but he is not living isolated.

He is living surrounded, much like David, with mighty and valiant men with others around him who are giving themselves not to him, but giving themselves to the Lord.

[32 : 20] God. And we see this influence of this good king. Will he fail? Sure. The 18th chapter is all about one of his failures, but yet we have restoration.

We have this recommitment. He will fail again at the end of his life, but again we have this response of yes, I did wrong.

And we see not a perfect king, but a good king and the influence it has. Now if that kind of king can have such an influence, how much more of an influence can the perfect king of kings and lord of lords have on our lives and those around us?

And we see it just recorded for us here in 2 Chronicles 17. Let's pray and then we'll be dismissed.

Let's pray and Let's pray and take a break.

Let's pray and take a break. Let's pray and take a break. Let's pray and take a break. Let's pray and take a break. Let's pray and take a break. Let's pray and Let's pray and