**The Price of Keeping the Faith (2 Chronicles 11:13-17)**

 Our faith will be tested through various challenges – it is up to us to keep it at any cost. Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters in Christ as we continue the process of acquainting ourselves with the Old Testament by studying 2nd Chronicles (this week). This and First Chronicles were books written later on in Old Testament history and are a summary of the goings on of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Today we just read a passage which paints a picture of the state of affairs after King Solomon’s reign during the kings Jeroboam and Rehoboam. As we already know, the northern kingdom of Israel separated from the rule of the King of Jerusalem with its ten tribes and was ruled by the (effectively) pagan king Jeroboam, who was not even a superficial worshipper of the True God. The southern kingdom with its two tribes had Rehoboam as its king, who was the son of King Solomon. At that time, Rehoboam was living faithfully according to God’s laws. It is interesting that within the northern kingdom, we find believers, Levite priestly families, who did not follow the pagan King Jeroboam. Today’s passage puts in front of us an important truth – that the God-fearing person will sometimes have no choice but to take great and shocking steps to keep the faith. Our faith will be tested through various challenges – it is up to us to keep it at any cost. (Let us speak, then, about keeping the faith.)

 As a believer in Christ, your faith saves you, but the important thing is to keep it at any cost. There was a powerful pagan movement pervading the northern kingdom which rejected the worship directed towards the True God. Jeroboam had devoted his heart to the Baals and other false gods. He was a Jew by name, but an idol-worshipper and demon-worshipper in his heart. He had established priests, pagan clergy, to sacrifice to and thereby worship statues of calves and goats. Despite this sad state of affairs, the Levites in the land had kept their faith toward Yahweh along with some of the general population. These Levites found themselves in front of a major decision to be made. Although they did not have their own specific territory, they had been given lands and property from every portion of the two kingdoms. So, what would the solution be for the ungodly and even antitheistic pressure they were feeling?

We read that the Levites and the priests gathered, along with other believers, towards the only acceptable house of Worship and animal sacrifice, towards the Temple of Jerusalem. They embarked on a journey in order to be able Worship the True God freely. They left everything: lands, fields, wealth, comfort, money, their circles of friends and acquaintances, an established life and a familiar area. All this meant nothing for them if they could not worship the true God in their previous life and location. Along with them, even though they had no such position regarding worship, non-Levite believers joined them on their way (for the same reasons). In one word, believers decided to make a colossal change in their lives, completely relying on God (through and after the process was done). They fled, trusting God, and went to Rehoboam’s Kingdom (of Judah) and settled there, supporting his kingdom. At that time, he still lived in obedience to the Lord just like Solomon and David did (which he would do for 3 years total). They went where the worship of the True God was possible and accepted.

An English judge in India heard that a certain native, who formerly was a wealthy owner of an indigo farm, had confessed Christ, and was cast out of all his possessions. "Let him come to me," said the judge, "and if he is a true Christian, he will not mind working as the attendant-bearer of my little son." So Nordubur came. One evening at household prayers, the judge read from the English New Testament, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, ...or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred­fold." He thought a moment, and said, "Now, none of us has done this except one—Nordubur." He looked straight at the bearer and asked: "Will you tell us? Does this verse speak the truth?" Quietly Nordubur spoke. "I have not much possession now," he confessed, "but I do have a new peace and joy. Christ says He gives a hundredfold. I know He gives a thousand-fold."

The call to us is clear, dearly beloved. God is calling us to live in such a way that our worship-life can continue and grow. Whatever thing, place, situation, or relationship negatively influences our faith, whatever attempts to cripple or to be an obstacle to it must either be resolved, conquered, or changed. Sometimes the solution, if possible, is to change the law of our city or region. Sometimes, if our children come across obstacles within our schools, the solution is to step in and call into question the viewpoint or policy of the school. Sometimes, our friends have lost their way and need to repent, and we need to be careful of straying from or being weakened in our faith as we spend time with them. At times, we need to make huge changes in our lives in order for our faith to grow.

Let us not hesitate to make such changes. Let us not forget that it is our faith that saves us, and that its weakening puts us under spiritual attack and the possibility of a spiritually defeated attitude. As believers, all we are called to do is to keep our faith and express it through the gifts given by God. Let us not forget, however, to take those steps which will facilitate our spiritual growth in worship and sharing the Gospel. God saved us by paying it all. It remains up to us to keep, defend, and to live out that faith at all costs. As a believer in Christ, your faith saves you, but the important thing is to keep it at any cost.

Keep your faith! When you are pressured and persecuted because of your faith, do not hesitate – take steps, no matter how big they are… Our faith will be tested through various challenges – it is up to us to keep it at any cost.