

*“Worshipping Our Way Through Crisis”*

2 Chronicles 20

May 17, 2020

This week I would encourage you to memorize the first part of 2 Chronicles 16:9:

***“The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may stand in strong support of those whose hearts are completely His...” (2 Chronicles 16:9a).***

My friends, God is on the lookout, He’s searching for those He can fully stand behind with all His favor, those whose hearts are completely devoted to Him. Unfortunately, there is more to these words spoken to king Asa of Judah. The prophet went on to say to Asa, “But you have acted foolishly in this,” meaning you have forfeited God’s favor and blessing by your sinful choice. Oh, may we not act foolishly in forfeiting the favor of God. Today we are going to discover that ***because God stands in full support of those who trust Him with a whole heart, the best response to a crisis is a worshipping heart of faith.***

We are going to see this is the life of Asa’s son, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Both Asa and Jehoshaphat were imperfect but good kings of the southern kingdom of Judah. They reigned at the same time that Ahab was reigning over the northern kingdom of Israel. While Ahab was corrupting Israel with idolatry in the worst degree, Asa and Jehoshaphat were leading Judah into a spiritual reformation. In **chapter 17** we are told that **[vs. 3-4, 6]** The text goes on to say that Jehoshaphat not only cleansed the land of idol worship, he also sent his officials along with the Levites and priests into all the cities of Judah to teach the word of God.

Jehoshaphat was a great leader. In addition to spiritual reform, He led the nation to great political and military strength. He had over a million soldiers and the dread of the Lord was on his enemies. He had economic surplus and led justice reform (19:5-11). He’s the kind of leader we’d love to have over our nation. But the key to Jehoshaphat’s success is that He walked in the favor of God because he devoted his heart to the ways of the Lord.

Jehoshaphat did have some significant errors in judgment along the way, like when he made an alliance with king Ahab to fight a battle in chapter 18. But when the Lord’s prophet confronted him, in chapter 19, he responded with sincere repentance. He set his heart to seek God and led the nation back to the Lord (19:1-4). So when we come to chapter 20 where Jehoshaphat finds himself facing a great coalition of nations against him, it is not because of God’s discipline but rather a test of faith.

***20:1-3: “Now it came about after this that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat. Then some came and reported to Jehoshaphat, saying, ‘A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi).’ And Jehoshaphat was afraid...”*** He was afraid not because he wasn’t prepared, not because he didn’t have great military strength, but because he was facing the most intimidating military campaign of his life. He’s facing allied forces of enemy nations.

What is fear? ***Fear is a God-given natural response to danger that is meant to serve you but not enslave you.*** Fear itself is not sinful but your response to it can be. If you allow fear to enslave you so that you fail to trust the Lord, you have allowed fear to lead you into sin.

So its quite natural that Jehoshaphat would be afraid given the threat before him, but the defining factor will be how he responds to his fear. **[vs. 3-4]** Jehoshaphat led the nation to cry out to God for help not only with prayer but also with fasting which highlights the desperation of their need. They are saying, “Lord, we need you deliver us more than our bodies need food!” So the first point of our text is that...

**1. The best first-response to a crisis is to seek the Lord (1-13).**

Listen carefully now to the details of Jehoshaphat’s prayer in **[vs. 5-13]**.

- A. *He acknowledges God’s supremacy, unrivaled power, and sovereign authority [6].* What a faith-building place to begin!
- B. *He Appeals to God’s decrees and covenant faithfulness [7].* He’s asking God to be faithful to what He’s already established in his covenant with Abraham.

- C. *He appeals to God's presence and promise [8-9].* The sanctuary represents God's presence. When Solomon dedicated the temple in 2Chron 6, He asked that when they went to battle and prayed toward the sanctuary that God would hear and answer (2Ch 7:34-35) to which God promised He would (2Ch 7:15).
- D. *He appeals to God's righteousness and justice [10-12a].* In Dt 2:5, God strictly commanded Israel to not to provoke the fearful sons of Esau or to take even a footstep of their land because God had given Mt. Seir to Esau. So they are appealing to God's righteousness that upheld his promise to Esau and calling His justice against those who have returned good with evil.
- E. *He humbly acknowledges his dependence on God (12:b).* "We are powerless...and we don't know what to do." It's not that Jehoshaphat doesn't have a great military, but he's not trusting in his own strength or wisdom.
- F. *He expresses his faith in God (12c).* "But our eyes are on you!" Jehoshaphat is looking to the Lord, not to his military strength, not to neighboring allies. Jehoshaphat knows that his only hope is to stand in the favor of God. *Beloved, we must value the favor of God more than any other resource in life. This means that a life of faith and obedience is absolutely essential.*

Jehoshaphat's prayer is a great model for us! Notice that as he builds his case before God, he begins not with the details of his circumstances, but rather with the ways and character of God. Jehoshaphat is more focused on the *God* to whom He is praying than the *crisis* about which he is concerned. *Oh, that our prayers would be more about God than they are about us.* This is what praying in faith looks like. It sees an attribute of God that correlates to our situation and leans on it!

God answers Jehoshaphat's prayer in vs. 13-19 by speaking through a prophet and one of the things we are about to see is that...

- 2. **Times of crisis are a call to listen to God's word with a responsive heart (14-19)**

**[14-19]** Twice God says to Jehoshaphat, "Do not fear or be dismayed" (15, 17). God knows that the human heart (Jehoshaphat's included) is tempted to let fear gain control. But the emotion of fear was never meant to enslave you, it was meant to serve you by alerting you to danger and your need to trust in God. The most important thing in regard to fear and worry is not the initial emotion but what you do with your mind and heart next. Will you magnify the *fear* or will you turn to magnify *God* as sovereign over your situation?

The NT teaches us that we are not to be mastered by anything but God (Rom 6:14; 1Cor 6:12). Furthermore, Rom 14:23 says that "whatever is not from faith is sin." So you have to engage in the battle of the soul to take hold of faith and trust in God when fear threatens to take you captive. Remember, the message of the Bible is to fear God and God alone.

God gives Jehoshaphat two reasons to not fear or be dismayed. First, God will do the fighting on Judah's behalf (15). This is a beautiful picture of grace: "stand and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf" (17). God is saying, "I'm going to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. I will do the work and you will get the benefit simply for trusting in Me." This is how 2Chron 20 foreshadows the gospel. The message of the cross is, "stand and see the salvation for the Lord on your behalf." Jesus does the work and we get the rescue from our sin for no other reason than trusting in Christ.

The second reason for Jehoshaphat to not fear is that "God is with them" (17). If you are in Christ, this second reason is one that you always have to not fear. Heb 13:5 gives us the promise that God is with us and He will never leave us or forsake us.

Now take note of how Jehoshaphat responds to this incredible word from the Lord in vs. 18-19. He doesn't doubt, argue, or ask for signs. He takes God at His word and prostrates himself with humble gratitude and worship before the Lord. What a marvelous picture! The whole nation bows in worship along with Jehoshaphat and the only ones left standing are the Levites, Israel's worship leaders, who stand to praise the Lord "with a very loud voice" (19).

Note that this praise is not a response to the outcome of their situation—it hasn't taken place yet—but a response of faith and gratitude for God's word of promise. Yes, it's possible to have a heart of praise in the midst of a crisis when you meet God there! The next thing I want you to see is that...

**3. Times of crisis are an opportunity to put our faith into action in response to God's word (16-17, 20-25).**

Don't miss this essential detail, that though God said, "I've got this one, you stand and watch," that doesn't mean Judah can sit back cowering in their camp. No, they must put their faith into action. In vs. 16, God says, "tomorrow go down against them" and again in vs. 17, "go...face them." They need to act on what God has said so that in seeing God work, their faith will be strengthened. And this is precisely what Jehoshaphat will do in one of the most confident displays of faith among the kings.

**[20]** He's not saying trust in man, but trust in God's word through the prophets. Their success will be based on their obedient trust in God. *Faith is displayed through obedience* (not just to what God has said we should do, but also to who God has said that He is).

**[21-24]** What a beautiful display of confident faith! Jehoshaphat sent the worship team out ahead of the green berets, singing a song of thanksgiving to their faithful, promise-keeping, covenant-keeping, God who was going before them.

And mark this in vs. 22, "when they began singing and praising" the Lord enacted His deliverance by sending confusion upon the enemy. God delights in worshipping hearts—even when it comes from a heart of white-knuckled faith (struggling to hold on but fighting to believe)! This points to another major theme in this passage which we must not overlook....

**4. The best place for our hearts as we walk through crisis is a posture of unrelenting worship (3-4, 18-19, 21-22, 27).**

We see the seeds of worship in vs. 3 when Jehoshaphat turns to seek the Lord in the face of adversity. We see him bow in worship when God speaks

His message of hope and deliverance through the prophet in vs. 18. We see God acting in response to Judah's worship as the leaders of praise go before the army proclaiming that their hope is not in the strength of man, but in the Lord. Jehoshaphat and Judah are *worshipping their way through* this crisis! And notice how their confidence grows as they keep their eyes on God. They are living out Jehoshaphat's prayer in vs. 12: "...our eyes are on You!"

It may not always be obviously clear as to how to put our faith into action during a crisis, but praise and worship is a good place to start because worship *is* an expression of faith. Worship is saying what is true about God. The first thing you need to tell yourself in a crisis is who God is!

Our hearts are vulnerable in times of fear. The best way to protect our hearts through trials is to worship our way through them. This won't come naturally to us, but the Spirit will help us do it. Let me urge you to ***determine ahead of time that your response to God will be one of worship at the end of the road, regardless of its unknown destination.***

- "God, I don't know whether I will have a job or not at the end of this month, but regardless of the outcome, I will not turn my heart from worshipping You!
- God, I don't know where I will be at the end of this sickness, but I will not turn away from giving You praise!
- God, I don't know what life will be like as a result of this pandemic, but I will not relent from hoping in you! ***In the end, regardless of what you give or take away, I will bless Your name*** (Job 1:21)!

This was the most important point in the journey of my heart when I didn't know, if God would deliver my little girl or if she would have a handicap and chronic pain for the rest of her life. I stood over her hospital bed and prayed, "*Lord, I believe you have the power to heal her, but even if you don't, I will not turn my heart from worshipping you, regardless of what you do!*" I'm not hero. It took weeks of struggling with my heart to get to that point. But when we get to that point, we have victory regardless of how the circumstances turn out.

**Life Principle:** As we entrust ourselves to God, only He can determine the final outcome of the situation but we can choose the manner in which we will walk through it and the posture of our heart in the end (with fear or faith, whining or worship).

This is so important because the reality is that while God may deliver us *out* of our circumstances (like He did for Micah and Jehoshaphat), He often deliver us *through* our circumstances. That is, He walks through the fire with us, revealing the sufficiency of His grace and the power of His presence.

If there's one take-away from 2Chronicles 20, learn to *worship your way through adversity*. And when we come to the other side, having kept our eyes on the Lord, we will be able to transform our pain into praise.

5. **The only right response to God's deliverance and faithfulness is the testimony of praise (26-30).**

Now having seen God's hand of deliverance, once again Judah rejoices in God. **[26-30]** We need to celebrate God's provision, God's faithfulness, and God's deliverance (even when it comes through the strength to persevere). I want to encourage you to approach this season and whatever trials you must walk through in the days ahead as an opportunity to testify to God's faithfulness in your life. Use our Facebook group, use social media to make a name for the Lord and encourage others to trust in Him.

Even the best examples of faith in the Bible are not flawless and they leave us with a longing something better, a longing for heaven. Though Jehoshaphat brought about remarkable spiritual reform in Judah, vs. 33 says some of the high places of idol worship remained because not all of the people had yet directed their hearts to God. There was still idolatry in the hidden places of people's hearts. And though Jehoshaphat was good king, chapter 20 closes with another error of judgment, allying himself to then next godless king of Israel.

6. **The faith we need in times of crisis, is also the faith we need to persevere to the end (31-37).**

Let me conclude with a personal word to our church family. Just as Jehoshaphat made some errors in judgment, so we too are prone to making errors in judgment in every season of life. And so we need to be alert, especially in the season ahead.

As we anticipate resuming some form of public worship in the near future, there's a risk beyond the potential spread of sickness that we need to be acutely alert to. And that is making misjudgments about how we relate to each other regarding differing perspectives on what changes should or should not be implemented.

The decisions that our leadership team must make in the coming days aren't all black and white issues. There can be good reasons behind differing perspectives. And while we want to serve everyone, we won't be able to honor everyone's preferences. It's a given. And we may likely make some mistakes along the way in this learning curve.

But we can decide ahead of time how we are going to walk through this next season as a church family. Can we decide now that we will walk through this awkward, inconvenient season with our eyes on the Lord? Let's determine now, today, that when we get to the end of this time of transition, we will have our hands lifted to God in praise and our arms open to one another with love, humility, and a servant's heart. Let's not let relatively small irritants (that seem big) distract us from trusting God and loving each other.

It's okay for us to disagree. In fact, voicing our differing perspectives can help us sharpen our wisdom, and listening to understand each other can deepen our compassion. But *how* we go about it is absolutely essential—seeking to honor God and honor one another.

So I urge you to pray for our church leaders and the unity of body. Perhaps our prayer challenge this week should be applied not only to our personal trials but also to the days of transition we are coming upon as a church family. Here it is, a prayer of both dependence and faith:

**Prayer Challenge:** *"Lord, we are powerless and we don't know what to do, but our eyes are on You!"* (2 Chronicles 20:12)

Let's sing this closing song as the starting point of worshipping our way through...