



Worship is Warfare

Message by Pastor Andrew Kulasingham 28th June 2020

Scripture Reading: 2 Chronicles 20: 1-22

The Context

2 Chronicles 20:1-3a gives us the context of the story.

2 Chronicles 20:1-2 (NKJV) It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat. 2 Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, “A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar” (which is En Gedi). And Jehoshaphat feared...

The nation Israel was facing a life and death crisis. King Jehoshaphat had to make a decision either to take his troops to battle and into an almost certain death or to surrender and be enslaved. Through this story, we are able to learn some amazing spiritual truths on how to respond when faced with a crisis.

Responding to a crisis: Lessons from Jehoshaphat

There are five things we can learn and apply in our own lives by observing how Jehoshaphat responded to this national crisis:

1. He intensely sought the Lord (vs 3)

2 Chronicles 20:3 (NKJV)

And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

The passage tells us that the first thing Jehoshaphat did was to “set himself to seek the Lord”. We see that he did two specific things when seeking the Lord:

- He set himself to seek the Lord – Jehoshaphat was intentional about it.
- He proclaimed a fast – Not only was he intentional about seeking the Lord, he intensified his pursuit of God by calling for a fast. He was earnest about seeking the Lord.

Let's look at Isaiah 55:6-7 and learn from the prophet.

Isaiah 55:6-7 (NKJV) Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

At first glance it seems that the prophet is suggesting that there may be a window of opportunity to find God. He seems to suggest that we should seek the Lord "while" He may be found, before we miss the opportunity and it is too late. I find that hard to believe. The entire Old Testament documents a God who keeps on seeking after His people even when Israel was unfaithful to Him. In Luke chapter 15, Jesus spoke of God as a shepherd who went after one lost sheep, a woman who would turn the entire house upside down to look for her lost coins, and a father who waited patiently and expectantly for his lost son to return.

It isn't God drifts away from us. It is we who have a tendency to drift away from God. Isaiah suggests that our wicked ways and our unrighteous thoughts cause us to come to a place where we have distance ourselves from God to a point where we no longer can find Him or sense his nearness. God is a lighthouse. We are the ships that tend to drift away. God is constant and immovable. We constantly change and shift with the tide.

Jehoshaphat knew the human tendency, more so during a crisis. So he intentionally and intensely sought the Lord. It is worth remembering this when in crisis:

- God can always be found. God is always near.
- It is our ways and our thoughts that drift us away from the Lord.
- The need to "return to the Lord" is proof of that. He went nowhere, we did.

WHEN IN CRISIS REMEMBER – GOD CAN BE FOUND, HE IS NEAR. WE HAVE A TENDENCY TO DRIFT AWAY. TAKE STOCK ON YOUR ACTIONS AND YOUR THOUGHTS. THEY TEND TO CAUSE US TO DRIFT AWAY DURING A CRISIS.

2. He gathered others and asked help from the Lord (vs 4)

2 Chronicles 20:4 (NKJV)

So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

The second thing Jehoshaphat did was to gather others so that they would seek the Lord together. I always say this and will say it again - you cannot do Christianity alone. Our faith is rooted in community life. The language of our prayers and the doctrines of our faith are communal in nature. Jesus taught us to pray "our Father". Paul speaks of the church in terms of the body (singular) of Christ. The Hebrews author makes it very clear.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NKJV)

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

The apostle to the Hebrews speaks of the need for Christians “not to forsake assembling together” because of its importance – to stir up love, to stir up good works in order to exhort one another. Our gathering together spurs one another to live our Christian faith. The danger of having an individualistic faith is when crisis comes, you end up doing hope alone.

CRISIS REQUIRES COMMUNITY. A GODLY COMMUNITY HAS THESE INGREDIENTS - LOVE, GOOD WORKS, EXHORTATION, AND A SENSE OF URGENCY FOR CHRIST’S RETURN

3. He prayed according to Scriptures (vs 9)

READ 2 Chronicles 20: 5-9

Observe carefully the prayer of the King. His entire prayer was based on Scriptures. Jehoshaphat was language-ing his prayers using ideas from Genesis (Abraham and the patriarchs), stories from Exodus, language of the psalms and the prophets and an entire passage quoting Solomon’s prayer during the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8.

When in crisis, the most difficult thing to do is finding language to pray. It is crucial during those times to pray Biblical prayers. Crisis tends to shake our very foundations. When praying prayers based on the Word of God, we are certain we are standing on solid ground. Look at the mindset of Joshua towards God’s word. The last recorded words of Joshua were these:

Joshua 23:14 (NKJV) “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed.

He was certain – he knew and so did all the people of Israel – that God had not failed in His promises. The only way to know that is to have walked in it. He stood on God’s word his entire career as a leader of the nation. That’s why he was convinced – “not a word” had failed. The Hebrews author exhorts us to live the same life.

Hebrews 10:23 (NKJV)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

CRISIS SHAKES OUR FOUNDATIONS. UNLESS WE ARE STANDING ON GOD’S WORD, WE WILL BE SHAKEN WHEN FACED WITH A CRISIS. GOD’S WORD CANNOT BE SHAKEN.

4. He embraced the prophetic word (vs 14-17)

READ 2 Chronicles 20:14-17

The fourth thing we see Jehoshaphat doing was he embraced the prophetic word that came to them. The passage records a prophet bringing a word in season for the nation during the crisis. Jehoshaphat responds by embracing the word and reminding the army to do the same.

2 Chronicles 20:20 (NKJV)

So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.”

One of the most important things to remember during a crisis is that God longs for us to hear His way of getting us out of the crisis. Many a times he uses other faithful believers to bring a word in season that gives us encouragement and strength. It is crucial for those of us seeking to support someone in crisis, that we not drown them with our negativity. Speak a word from the Lord or don't speak at all. Let us be mindful that we do not turn out to be one of Job's friends who spoke out of turn and caused great anguish to that man of God. Hear these words of Isaiah.

Isaiah 50:4 (NLT)

The Sovereign Lord has given me his words of wisdom, so that I know how to comfort the weary. Morning by morning he wakens me and opens my understanding to his will.

When in crisis, take time to wait in expectation for God to speak to you a word in season.

CRISIS HAS A DEAFENING SOUND. A RHEMA WORD (A WORD IN SEASON) FROM THE LORD SILENCES THE NOISE CREATED BY A CRISIS.

5. He made worship his front line (vs 21-22)

The final and most important thing we see in the Kings response was to position worshippers in the front line of the battle field.

2 Chronicles 20:21-22 (NKJV)

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: “Praise the Lord, For His mercy endures forever.” Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.

The biggest error we have embraced in modern christianity is the belief that a dichotomy exists between the secular and the sacred. Sunday is the day of worship. Monday to Saturday we spend our time in the “secular” world. The reality is the Gospel must be lived out all day, all week. It is actually quite easy to put worship at the forefront of our Sunday lives because that is what “church” is about. But church has to continue on Monday. When we go out and face our challenges on Monday, we need to ensure that worship is still in the front line of our battle field.

In a crisis, worship is the strongest arsenal we have. Make sure it is in the forefront when you are closest to your conflict.

Doing crisis with a song

The story of Paul and Silas in Acts 16 is an amazing one. Paul heals a slave girl who was possessed with a spirit of divination, which gets him in trouble with the owner who loses his source of income. He accuses Paul and Silas of a trumped up charge and they are thrown in prison. And then this happens:

Acts 16:25-26 (NLT)

Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!

What an amazing testimony. For them to be worshipping when faced with this crisis, tells us that this was probably something that they did habitually. When faced with a crisis, they positioned worship on the front line of their battle, trusting God to do the rest. Picture doors opening and chains falling off – isn't that what we long for when faced with a crisis? It is also important to note that the passage tells us the other prisoners, who were in a similar crisis, were listening to them worshipping. REMEMBER YOUR BREAKTHROUGH HAS AN EFFECT ON OTHERS.

Let me close with Habakkuk 3: 17-19

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (NKJV)

Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills.

To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.

The prophet encourages us not to look at the circumstances around us, but to burst into song. "Yet I will rejoice" he says. In spite of having no reason to do so, I will do it anyway. His rejoicing is not about his situation. Not even about how God will deliver him. He rejoices about who God is and how God was going to strengthen Him and enable Him. He also directs us to put some music to the prayer. In other words – DO CRISIS WITH A SONG.

ARE YOU IN A CRISIS? REMEMBER THIS:

- **GOD IS NEAR YOU. SEEK HIM, DON'T DRIFT AWAY.**
- **DON'T FACE IT ALONE. DO HOPE WITH OTHERS.**
- **STAND ON GOD'S WORD. IT IS YOUR SURE FOUNDATION.**
- **TUNE IN WITH EXPECTATION TO HEAR A WORD IN SEASON FROM THE LORD IN THE MIDST OF THE DEAFENING SOUNDS IN A CRISIS.**
- **FACE YOUR CRISIS WITH WORSHIP GOING BEFORE YOU.**