

ESF, Lord's Day Service Message
8/10/2014

The Battle Is Not Yours But God's

Text: 2 Chronicles 20:1-22

After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.

² *Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). ³ Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.*

⁴ *The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.*

⁵ *Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard ⁶ and said:*

"LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. ⁷ Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? ⁸ They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, ⁹ 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.'

¹⁰ *"But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. ¹¹ See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. ¹² Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."*

¹³ *All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.*

¹⁴ Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

¹⁵ He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. ¹⁶ Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. ¹⁷ You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’”

¹⁸ Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD.

¹⁹ Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

²⁰ Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.” ²¹ After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying:

“Give thanks to the LORD,
for his love endures forever.”

²² As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

There is a time in our lives when we may face an obstacle or a crisis which we have not prepared to overcome. The obstacle may be too huge, too serious and too strong for us to overcome. We have to overcome it, but we don’t have the power to overcome it. That was the situation king Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah faced in this text.

Three nations made a confederacy to attack Judah. Judah was far outnumbered by the attacking enemy. The attacking enemy's army was in the place called En Gadi. The name of the place means the wood of the palm trees. So it means that the attacking army hid themselves beneath a heavily forested area. The enemy could use the location both for a strong defence and a strong offense. Also that place was not far from Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.

Judah faced a crisis. The situation was severe and critical! There was no way for them to defend themselves against the sudden attack.

But they found the secret to defeat the sudden attack. The secret did not come from any human idea, or any human strength or weapon. The secret was to connect themselves to God's miraculous power. How? Through three "P"s- prayer, peace and praise.

I. Prayer

1. Together

In facing the crisis of his nation, king Jehoshaphat called his people to pray together to seek God's deliverance.. And people followed his leadership: *The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.* And God listened to their prayer and provided a way of deliverance from the sudden attack.

God is pleased to listen to our prayers when we put our hearts together and seek His mercy together. In Matthew 18:19-20, the Lord promises: *...if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*

Are you facing a crisis today? Try to find some believers who can pray with you. Ask them to pray with you. When someone asks you to pray

together, join in a praying group. Is your family facing a crisis? Encourage all your family members to pray together.

2. Confidence

While they were praying together, they prayed with confidence of who God is: *O LORD, .are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.*

They confessed that there was no power that could withstand the almighty power of God. They believed that the gods of the three nations who were attacking them could not withstand over the God of all nations.

Dr. Thomas M. Carter, an ex-convict, tells a thrilling story of his mother who constantly followed him with her prayers. On one occasion while he was in prison, she received a telegram stating that his son was dead. Stunned by the news, she opened her Bible and laid the message beside it. "Oh, God," she said, "I have steadfastly believed that You are a rewarder of them who diligently seek You. I felt sure that I would live to see Tom saved and preaching the Gospel; and now this wire says he is dead. Lord, which is true, this telegram or Your promises to me?" When she rose from her knees, having confidence with the victory, she sent this note to the prison: "You must be wrong. My boy is not dead!" There had been a mistake -- Tom Carter was alive! He was later converted and lived to preach!

In order to pray to receive God's miraculous deliverance, you have to pray with confidence. And you can have confidence when you confess how mighty God is.

3. Dependence

As the leader of a nation, Jehoshaphat must have feared the vast army against his nation. But he feared the almighty Lord more than he feared the enemy's power. Jehoshaphat trusted in God more than trusting in his military resources.

In seeking God's deliverance from the crisis, the king confessed his total dependency to God in verse 12: *O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.* The king confessed that he and his people had no way to overcome the crisis. The king confessed that without God's intervention, he and his people would die. The king confessed his total dependency upon God's mercy.

And God showed mercy on them.

When you seek God's help to overcome a crisis in your life, pray like the king prayed. Confess your total dependence upon God's help.

II. Peace

While they completely depended upon God's mercy, God gave them a word of encouragement through a man of Spirit: *Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. ...Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.*

With these words, God convinced them that He was with them and they did not need to be afraid of anything in this world. God directed them to stand firm and be in peace. He directed them not to be afraid or discouraged. The threat was real but God was in charge! God encouraged them just to march down against the enemy by showing the enemy that they had no fear! *"Don't be afraid of men's power- I will fight against them for you and with you! I am with you and I am in charge of this fighting. Just march down. Fear is not from me but the devil. Just go out and face them! Let them see my power in you."*

When they listened to these words of encouragement, they overcame all fears and their hearts were filled with peace. God brought them peace in their hearts. So, they bowed down before the Lord and worshipped the Lord.

J. O. Sanders once said: "*Peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of God!*"

In all kinds of trouble and crisis, we can be at peace in the presence of God.

Ps 118:6 says, "*With God on my side I do not fear. What can man do to me?*"

When God listens to your prayers, He speaks to you words of encouragement. While you are praying you may still hear some discouraging words. But refuse to listen to discouraging words. Discouraging words are not God's words. Continue praying and wait until you can hear a word of encouragement from the Lord. And put your trust in his word.

With trust in God's word, you will not have to fight the battle. The battle is God's. With trust in God's word, you don't need to collect more ideas or weapons to fight against the enemy. The wisdom and weapons for victory belongs to God! In your trust, your problem now is moved to God's hands. This is the power of God's peace in a crisis.

III. Praise

After Jehoshaphat heard the encouraging words of God, he and all people of Judah fell down in worship before the Lord. And some Levites stood up and lifted up their voices in praise to God. They did not see God's deliverance yet. They did not see victory yet. Then why did they praise? Because God gave peace, courage and hope to them in the midst of crisis. They demonstrated their faith through praise.

Psalm 60:5 says, *God has spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice.*

The next day, as God instructed them to do, they marched forward to the vast enemy's army although their number were still far smaller than the enemy, their weapons were far weaker than the enemy's. They did just as God told them to do.

And God gave them a victory.

Some believers confess their faith but they don't take action with what they confess. Paul said that true spiritual worship should be followed by action.

Jehoshaphat sent out singers to give praise to God on the frontline. In verse 19 when all the people fell down to worship, the choir stood up to sing. Jehoshaphat appointed his frontline troops. But the frontline troops were not charioteers or swordsmen. They were singers. Jehoshaphat demonstrated God's given courage with the praise of singers.

While they were marching forward to the enemy, they sang to the Lord and praised Him. That was their expression of faith in God. God was pleased with such an attitude of living faith. God is pleased with people who demonstrate their faith by praising Him in the midst of crisis and great problems. While they were praising, God brought disaster in the enemy's camp. The enemy was thrown into confusion by the songs of God's people. They were killing each other. When Judah arrived at the camp, they did not need to fight, because all the enemy's soldiers were lying dead.

God accepts our praises as living faith, and releases the power of His Spirit. God has appointed the use of spiritual songs as an effective weapon against his arch enemy Satan.

That is why praise is a powerful weapon against our arch enemy Satan. Ephesians 5:18-19 says, *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,*

The fullness of the Holy Spirit is experienced as a heart filled with singing. So if we fight Satan by the fullness of the Spirit, we fight him with song. Martin Luther gives his testimony like this: *"Praise is a fair*

and lovely gift of God... Praise drives away the Devil. Next after theology I give to praise the highest place and greatest honour.”

In the night when Jesus was preparing for being betrayed by one of his disciples, be arrested, be suffered and be crucified, he sang hymns with his disciples. Jesus used the praise as a powerful weapon to defeat the fear of suffering and the devil.

In the ancient Rome many Christians were martyred for their faith in the Lord Christ. Sometimes they were put in a Colosseum where hungry lions crushed their bodies while thousands spectators were watching. Other times, they were tied on the poles and burned alive. In the midst of such a painful death, they were singing hymns unto the Lord. Many spectators who saw the scene of their death, could see not their painful death, but the Christ's glorious power that overcame the fear of death. And they turned their hearts to the Lord Christ. So when 10 Christians were martyred 100 unbelieving spectators became new Christians.

“Though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but, the more such things happen, the more do others in larger numbers become faithful.” (Justin Martyr)

God is pleased with our praises. God wants to fill the power of His Spirit in us through our praises. Receive the fullness of God's Spirit by praising at all times. Let your battle belong to God by praising Him always.