

What do you do when faced with adversity? Part 2

One thing I absolutely love about the Word of God is that there are many examples of people faced with dire circumstances and we get to witness how they made it through, what decisions they made, and in a lot of cases, a commentary of God's perspective is included. Remember, the best commentary about the Bible is the Bible itself. All other commentary is just a human perspective which leads to differences of opinion and ultimately to greater doctrinal differences which are seen in the many denominations that we have today.

The Church, aka the Body of Christ, can be united, but only when His followers focus only on what they agree on, which is the Scriptures, instead of what they disagree on. Can I get an amen?

Another thing I love about the Bible is finding obscure, tiny passages that pack a huge message. For example:

***1 Chronicles 5: 18** There were 44,760 capable warriors in the armies of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. They were all skilled in combat and armed with shields, swords, and bows. **19** They waged war against the Hagarites, the Jeturites, the Naphishites, and the Nodabites. **20** They cried out to God during the battle, and he answered their prayer because they trusted in him. So the Hagarites and all their allies were defeated.*

Verses 18 and 19 are included just for context, the real excitement is found in verse 20. Keep in mind that this verse is found in the midst of a lengthy list of genealogies. I consider these finds "gems in the rough". What caught my attention with this verse is the phrase "during the battle".

It seems that the warriors of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh forgot to call on God prior to the war. We don't know this for sure, but I think it is implied here.

What we can learn is that it is NEVER too late to call on God. We are all in the middle of our own trials and challenges and even when we find ourselves in the middle of things and realize that we haven't been putting God first, it is never too late to cry out to Him for help. God is good; He answers our prayers because we trust in Him.

Jehoshaphat found himself in an ominous situation and we're going to analyze what he and the people of Judah did in the face of it.

King Jehoshaphat was the son of King Asa and the father of King Jehoram. Overall, King Jehoshaphat was a good king. He had his faults as most other kings, but he clearly had a heart for God. Consider these opening words describing his reign:

2 Chronicles 17: 3 The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father's early years and did not worship the images of Baal. 4 He sought his father's God and obeyed his commands instead of following the evil practices of the kingdom of Israel. 5 So the Lord established Jehoshaphat's control over the kingdom of Judah. All the people of Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so he became very wealthy and highly esteemed. 6 He was deeply committed to the ways of the Lord. He removed the pagan shrines and Asherah poles from Judah.

His heart was in the right place and by reading about the man, I have a hope of meeting him someday. I'd love to hear about his days fighting alongside king Ahab, I'll bet he has some great stories to tell.

Did you know that Jehoshaphat personally lead a revival of sorts in the southern kingdom? Here is a revealing passage

about that time:

2 Chronicles 19: 4 Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, but he went out among the people, traveling from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, encouraging the people to return to the Lord, the God of their ancestors.

Now that's a pretty cool king, eh? We can call him king Jehoshaphat, the evangelist!

The event I'd like to focus on, however, happens later in his reign, after king Ahab's death and seemingly soon after his preaching excursions.

The story picks up in 2 Chronicles 20 and it gets right into it:

2 Chronicles 20: 1 After this, the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites declared war on Jehoshaphat. 2 Messengers came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army from Edom is marching against you from beyond the Dead Sea. They are already at Hazazon-tamar." (This was another name for En-gedi.)

It's really bad news. Three armies, vast, said the messengers, and not only that, they're already on the way!

Can you relate? Getting bad news about something that's in the works or imminent? It's a sick feeling and we can't begin to imagine what went through his mind at the time. He's the responsible one, and in all of Judah, he is the decision maker. What does he do?

3 Jehoshaphat was terrified by this news and begged the Lord for guidance. He also ordered everyone in Judah to begin fasting. 4 So people from all the towns of Judah came to Jerusalem to seek the Lord's help.

We can learn a lot about this man of faith just from verse 3. It should not surprise us to see that he is terrified, but he doesn't allow his fear to paralyze him from turning to the Lord for help. Then being the spiritual leader that he is, he orders everyone to begin fasting. This is similar to Esther when she agrees to go before the king, knowing full well that her life was in danger.

Esther 4: 15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die."

It is in these similar passages (Esther 4:16 and 2 Chronicles 20:3) that you learn what godly leaders do when faced with a challenge. Fasting for yourself is one thing, but when a body of people are in peril it takes courage and true leadership to call everyone to fast.

Let's read on...

5 Jehoshaphat stood before the community of Judah and Jerusalem in front of the new courtyard at the Temple of the Lord. 6 He prayed, "O Lord, God of our ancestors, you alone are the God who is in heaven. You are ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth. You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against you!"

Then Jehoshaphat assembles the people together for prayer. He makes a plea to God before the people; this is a great sign of humility and sets a wonderful example to all those present.

It is a wonderful, heart-wrenching prayer, we pick it up at verse 10:

10 "And now see what the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir are doing. You would not let our ancestors invade those

nations when Israel left Egypt, so they went around them and did not destroy them. 11 Now see how they reward us! For they have come to throw us out of your land, which you gave us as an inheritance. 12 O our God, won't you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help."

It's a straightforward plea, telling the Lord about the situation. He is refreshingly honest, explaining to God that they are "powerless against this mighty army". Can you imagine a king sharing that with the commoners? I believe it was clearly the Holy Spirit that directed this prayer, for their sake and for us to learn from today. And then my favorite part is the next sentence: "We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help." He's the king and he doesn't know what to do? Isn't that incredible to read? I think he was right where the Lord wanted him.

Jehoshaphat didn't know what to do. He didn't call on the prophets of Baal, he didn't call on Egypt, Israel (Northern Kingdom) or Syria for help (like his father Asa did). The only thing he knew to do was to look to God for help. Have you ever been in that kind of situation? Have you ever said to God "I don't know what to do."?

He purposely leads us into adversity for several reasons.

The trial alone causes us to grow, He tests us when there is seemingly no hope to see which way we'll turn, and when we're on the other side, it is a beautiful testimony to all those that hear about how you trusted in God and saw His hand of providence in your life when you called on His name. These stories, or testimonies of God's love and power, are what leads most people to Christ. We cannot underestimate the power of personal testimony.

In verse twenty we read that the Holy Spirit got involved and spoke through Jahaziel:

13 As all the men of Judah stood before the Lord with their little ones, wives, and children, 14 the Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the men standing there. His name was Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite who was a descendant of Asaph.

*15 He said, "Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Listen, King Jehoshaphat! This is what the Lord says: **Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's.** 16 Tomorrow, march out against them. You will find them coming up through the ascent of Ziz at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel. 17 But you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the Lord's victory. He is with you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out against them tomorrow, for the Lord is with you!"*

How's that for a great word from God? What a soothing message. God makes it clear "for the battle is not yours, but God's." God fights our battles for us, this is so He can get the glory, and it is His desire to rescue us:

Psalms 50:

*14 Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God,
and keep the vows you made to the Most High.*

*15 Then call on me when you are in trouble,
and I will rescue you,
and you will give me glory."*

He doesn't always keep us from trouble, as most of you know. On the contrary He allows us to get into trouble, so that our character grows and we continue to learn how to trust in Him.

So how does this battle play out? God tells them to go up against them, what happens next?

20 Early the next morning the army of Judah went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. On the way Jehoshaphat stopped and said, "Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Believe in his prophets, and you will succeed."

21 After consulting the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang:

*"Give thanks to the Lord;
his faithful love endures forever!"*

What a great spiritual leader he is as he rallies the people in verse 20. Then what does he do, did I read that correctly? What? He puts singers ahead of the army??? Wow! I see a similar trend as we saw last week. Remember what Daniel did after hearing the news about the "Anti-Jewish" law they passed? He goes on to give thanks to God in prayer. And what do we see Jehoshaphat doing? He has the singers lined up in front of the army, giving thanks! Talk about thanks in advance! What faith that man had. Do you get it, by this time he was no longer worried, he had so much peace that he confidently put the singers out in front. He called on the Lord's help and he received God's Word from the Holy Spirit. As a result, he was encouraged.

And now for the finale, the moment we've all been waiting for:

22 At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. 23 The armies of Moab and Ammon turned against their allies from Mount Seir and killed every one of them. After they had destroyed the army of Seir, they began attacking each other. 24 So when the army of Judah

arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, all they saw were dead bodies lying on the ground as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped.

So there you have it. Did you expect anything different? The Lord caused them to fight each other and that was it, another victory for the Lord.

Are you letting God fight your battles?

“Dear Lord, it is you in whom I place my trust. You are my savior and deliverer. You created me so that I might come to know you and have fellowship with you. These battles help me learn how to trust you more so that I might know you more closely and through this, other people might come to know you. Lord, use me. Draw others to you through me. For you are so good and my flesh is so weak. I need your help daily that I might live according to your ways. Thank you for drawing me close and showing me such wonderful things in your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen!”

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