

Prayer of Dependence Upon God
2 Chronicles 20:12-21
July 31, 2011

Usually when we hear stories about heroes from the Old Testament the stories are about Noah and the Ark, Abraham and his faithfulness to leave his home land and follow God, Moses parting the Red Sea and David against Goliath. Very few know about a king who came long after David and Solomon and his name was Jehoshaphat. He was a very good king. He was a king that attempted to do things based on God's word and guidance. He was a king that sought to protect his people and lead them in faithfulness to God. There also was a man named Jahaziel. He was like a prophet and an source of encouragement. 2 Chronicles chapter 20 contains their story. It tells of a time when word was brought to King Jehoshaphat that three different armies were going to attack Jehoshaphat's kingdom. It was a bleak picture of an unfair fight, three against one, attacks from all directions.

Hang around long enough in this life and we'll all face times like Jehoshaphat when it can seem like adversity may be hitting us from all sides and angles. On top of all that, throw in our own tendency we have to shoot ourselves in the foot and add to our own misery. We're going to look at how King Jehoshaphat and Jazhaiel sought God's help. For me it's a great story that tells us what our lives look like when our prayers are really dependent upon God for help. It reminds us as well that just because we are dependent we are not to be passive. This may be a prayer for you when you feel like life is hitting you hard from many directions.

Read Scripture 2 Chronicles 20:12-21

Pray – dependency on God prays first: v.12

Verse 12 describes that because of this national and military crisis the king responded with prayer. He prayed, **“O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For we are powerless against the great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” 20:12**

The key words from Jehoshaphat were, **“we do not know what to do but our eyes are upon you.”** Jehoshaphat shows he was a leader of deep faith. He was a man of spiritual strength who knew where his real source of power lie. Old Testament scholar Michael Wilcox said, “King Jehoshaphat threw himself on the mercy of God at “wits end corner” (The Message of the Chroniclers, Michael Wilcox, p.197) Maybe you been to wits end corner a time or two?

The king’s first response was not to call in the leaders of the military and see if they could pull off some type of war plan. He doesn’t send messengers running with money to other friendly kingdoms that might be willing to help him defend his nation. The first thing he did was go to the Lord in prayer.

When Jehoshaphat said, Our eyes are upon only you, that also meant he wasn’t looking anywhere else for help. It means at least before they would look anywhere else they were going to start out by seeking God’s help and guidance.

It doesn’t matter how we’re coming under attack, whether it’s about personal failings, spiritual questions, or external forces hindering us, we can borrow a prayer like Jehoshaphat’s to fix our eyes on God. Fixing our eyes on the Lord means we are looking to him first before we’ll do anything else. Perhaps this is the opposite of the way you may have been handling your adversity. You may have acted first out of your own sense of right and wrong, your personal resourcefulness; when what you really needed to do was first get your eyes on God and godly teachings.

But once we get our prayerful focus it doesn't mean we just sit and wait. Because as we read on in this story we find **to be dependent on God through prayer doesn't mean we're passive doing nothing.**

Praise - continue to worship God: v. 18-19

Following encouraging words from the prophet Jahaziel, King Jehoshaphat led the people in bowing down and worshipping God. It said something about the spiritual integrity of the King to lead his people in honoring God at a time when it would have been easy to blame God.

It said they were people who believed in the **sovereignty** of God even in the darkest hour. Many when surrounded by threat and opposition quickly discount the reality of God and doubt God is really involved in this life.

Martin Selman is an Old Testament scholar and writes that the word worship can mean **“to discover God’s will. King Jehoshaphat and his people were doing more than just singing hymns, they were honoring God and seeking him.**

- **Worshipful prayer that is really dependent on God will honor God in spite of what were going through.**
- **Worshipful prayer that is honoring God seeks to discover what God is doing in the challenging moments or what God would have us to do.**
- **Worship** helps us avoid slipping into the mentality that ask, “God what have you done for me lately?” It’s understandable why the Apostle Paul often said things like, “in all seasons give thanks.” If we do we are putting our prayerful dependence to God in motion and then God can strengthen us.

Illustration: During the church festival last Sunday with the heat being what it was, I began to question a bit soon after the festival

began, that it was a mistake to have the outside events in the afternoon and the concert inside toward the evening when it was suppose to be cooler. My confidence and hope were getting attacked from all directions by my own second guessing. But in spite of the heat, we had decent attendance, the kids rode horses and bounced in the bouncer, people ate the food that was grilled outside and just about the time the outside activities were scheduled to wind down anyway, the sky got dark with thunder clouds. We moved everything inside just before the rain came. Then the rain just poured, and I thought, “we were right along to have the outside activities during the hottest part of the afternoon before the evening thunderstorms came through.” I have to admit there were moments when I was more worried how things might not go well; then just giving God praise for the opportunity we were taking to serve and reach out to people and seek to discover God’s will in us through this festival.

Position – Watch to see what God will do: vs. 17 &20

This story also reminds us that when we are praying with true dependency on God we’ll seek to be in a position to see what God will do or how God will answer.

In verse 17, the prophet, Jahaziel told the king and all his people, **“The battle is not for you to fight, take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf.”** His words gave assurance that God was going to defend his people somehow. What they were unable to do for themselves, some how, some way God was going to get in the fight and bring the victory.

This portion of the story ought to remind us even when a situation is out of our control and we wait for God, we need to watch and see how God is fighting for us and where God is bringing a victory. We need to be in position to see what God does.

In verse 20 we read how King Jehoshaphat and some of his people rose early the next day to go out near the place where the armies would be attacking. King Jehoshaphat told them **“Believe in the Lord, your God and you will be established.”**

See both spiritual leaders in sense were saying listen, praying is not going to do any good if we don't position ourselves to stop and see how God is working, not how you want God to work, but how God will be working.

You know if during this crisis King Jehoshaphat and his people would have each person played it safe and just ran for the hills, ran for cover, they wouldn't have never been in the position to see what God would do.

J. G. McConville writes concerning these verses, “There is no excuse for Christian hopelessness. The Christian's response in the blackest hour must be, “our eyes are upon you.” p.194

His words are challenging. I don't always measure up to that statement but he is right.

To often our eyes are not on the Lord they are on the threat and fear. We're not in position to see what God is doing only how life isn't working.

I came across a story about the historical general, Alexander the Great. On one occasion when his army was in full retreat from a larger army, he gave orders to his men to construct oversized breastplates and helmets that would fit men 7 or 8 feet tall. As his army would retreat, he would leave these items for the pursuing army to discover. When the enemy would find the oversized gear, they would be demoralized by the thought of fighting such giant soldiers, and they would abandon their pursuit. (Preachingtoday.com, 2011)

We're like the soldiers finding the gear fit for a giant. Situations demoralize us, defeat us because the eyes of our hearts aren't

looking to God and aren't in the right position.

Keep reading in this chapter and the Bible tells us they went out to the very place where the enemy would drawl near and in fact they would find that the three armies had attacked each other and all were defeated. King Jehoshaphat and his people would have been slow in learning the good news if they had never been in the right position to see God's help and answers.

A step some may need to take today is get close to your spiritual battle. Look for how God is moving; but be open to how God may answer you in an unconventional way. If God would have told King Jehoshaphat, I am going to allow all three armies to attack but don't worry they will all attack each other so bad all will be defeated, I'm sure the King would have had his doubts. Certainly one army would prevail.

Get your prayers honoring God and put your self in the right position to see God by considering even the unconventional, the something you have never considered before that God just might be working through.

Proactive - Be realistic about the need for prayer: v.33

We really need to do more than borrow a prayer of dependency upon God it needs to be the way we live daily. There is a very telling statement about King Jehoshaphat at the end of his reign. In verse 33 from this same chapter it states that when even a good king like Jehoshaphat died, there still remained the **“high places.”** The high places were the places where worship with false idols took place to worship false gods. Even though Jehoshaphat was a good king, a king who sought to be obediently faithful to the Lord and lead his people in the ways of God, he left behind some unfinished business, false gods, wrong spiritual practices. And he was a good king. He stuck his neck out for the Lord. He sought to

uphold the teaching of God's word. He was no slouch of a spiritual leader especially when times were challenging.

A prayer of dependence upon God is a lifestyle not just for the crisis of the moment. **Dwight L. Moody once said we are to live in such a way that we are “Careful for nothing, prayerful for everything, thankful for anything.”** (Dwight L. Moody, quotegarden.com)