

Call on God in the Day of Trouble

2 Chronicles 20

On New Year's Eve day, I was listening to an interview with Bill de Blasio, the mayor of New York City. He was talking about the celebration later that night in New York and how exciting it would be to ring in the new year. He was so ready to see 2020 over that he said he might even push the button to start the count-down clock a little early.

We all share this sentiment, right? We were all ready to turn the page to 2021 in hope that this will be a much better year. I feel this. I hope the same thing. I hope this pandemic ends this year. I hope we can return to a more normal approach to life. I hope schooling can return to normal. I hope that we will all gather here again sometime this year. There are a lot of hopes I have for this new year.

But here's the thing, if our hope is simply in a new year, we will be disappointed. Because even if we can get this pandemic under control, hard and difficult things are still likely to be right around the corner for most of us. This is life in a broken world. And so, yes it is a new year, but you still have a child heading down a wrong path. Or you might still be facing financial pressures or difficulties at work. You might experience mental or physical health issues. Your marriage might still be struggling. Trouble is part of life. We need a better hope than just a new year.

In Psalm 86, a psalm where King David pours out his heart over his own troubles, he prays this:

*⁷ In the day of my trouble I shall call upon You,
For You will answer me.*

This is our better hope – that we have a God to whom we can call upon in our day of trouble who will answer us. What I want to say this morning is nothing new. Rather, I want to remind all of us of our better hope – we can **call on God in our day of trouble and He will answer us.**

We are going to spend most of our time looking at 2 Chronicles 20, where we see this truth illustrated. And then we will look briefly at a passage in the New Testament that directly invites us to call upon God in our time of need. And so, let's begin by looking at 2 Chronicles 20.

Let me give you a little background. Jehoshaphat was king of Judah in the 9th century BC. He was not a perfect king, but the author of Chronicles casts him in a very favorable light. In 2 Chronicles 17 it says that the Lord was with him because he followed the example of David. He sought God and followed his commands. He was a king that expressed his love for God and God's law by sending officials to teach the book of the law in all the cities of Judah. He was a strong king with a strong army and a nation with fortified cities.

As we come to chapter 20, however, his day of trouble shows up. I want to look at this passage and see how Jehoshaphat responds, because this narrative presents a great example for each of us to follow in our own situations. Let's start in verse one.

¹ 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. ² 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)."

The Moabites and the Ammonites have formed a coalition with the Meunites to make war against Jehoshaphat. They are described as a *great multitude* coming against Jehoshaphat from beyond the sea. It is reported that they are now in Engedi, which about 30 miles away from Jerusalem.

Likely, Jehoshaphat viewed this situation as discipline from God because back in chapter 18, he had made an alliance with Ahab, the ungodly king of Israel, of which God disapproved. In 19:2, the prophet, Jehu, confronts Jehoshaphat over this action. And so, Jehoshaphat likely believes that his day of trouble had come due to his sin.

Some of you find yourself in a situation today because of your own actions. You've made unwise decisions. You've gone against the counsel of God's word and you are in a day of trouble because of it. Others of you, however, find yourself in a day of trouble not because of anything you've done; it is simply the situation that life has presented to you. Regardless of why you are facing trouble, Jehoshaphat's response is instructive. Verse 3.

³ Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ So Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD.

Whether the threat of invading armies was because of Jehoshaphat's sin or not, he responds by **seeking the LORD**. He proclaims a fast throughout all Judah. And all Judah comes together to seek help from the Lord. As the people are gathered in Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat prays in verse 6.

⁶ and he said, "O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You.

Jehoshaphat **begins by focusing on God, not his problem**. So often when I'm faced with a problem I focus mostly on the problem. But Jehoshaphat begins by setting his eyes on God and who He is. He describes God as the One who is *in the heavens*. In other words, God is the One who rules in sovereignty. And His rule is *over all the kingdoms of the nations*, including Moab and Ammon. Jehoshaphat prays, *Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You*.

Whatever difficulty that you are facing or will face this year, choose to focus on God. That's where your hope lies. Remind yourself of what you know to be true of Him. He is great. He rules in sovereignty and power. He loves you. This is what Jehoshaphat does.

Jehoshaphat then **remembers how God had worked in the past as well as the promises that God had made.** Verse 7:

⁷ “Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? ⁸ “They have lived in it, and have built You a sanctuary there for Your name, saying, ⁹ ‘Should evil come upon us, the sword, or judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before You (for Your name is in this house) and cry to You in our distress, and You will hear and deliver us.’

Jehoshaphat rehearses the history of how God had driven out the inhabitants from the land that He had promised as part of the covenant that God had made with Abraham. As well, in verse 8 he recalls how when Solomon and the people had built the temple, that at the dedication, Solomon had prayed that if the nation came under the sword, or judgment or pestilence or famine that if the people would cry out to God before the temple that God would *hear and deliver* them (2 Chron. 6:40; 7:12-13). Jehoshaphat remembers how God had worked in the past as well as the promises that God has made.

Finally, as we come to verse 10, Jehoshaphat **calls out to God for help.**

¹⁰ “Now behold, the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You did not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt (they turned aside from them and did not destroy them), ¹¹ see how they are rewarding us by coming to drive us out from Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance.¹² “O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You.”

“God, do something! They are coming to take away the land that You Yourself gave to us. They are coming in opposition to your will. Judge them. Work! Do something!”

And at the very end there you see that his prayer ends with an **expression of dependence.** “We are powerless before this great multitude. We don't know what to do, but our eyes are on You.” It is striking that Jehoshaphat would say, *we are powerless*, because back in chapter 17 it made it clear that Judah's military might was great. But Jehoshaphat does not place his trust in his might, he places it in God.

So often we depend on our own strength, our experience, our wisdom, our own ability to work our way out of our trouble. We might ask God to help, but we continue to think we're the ones that have to make something happen. As we face whatever challenge or trouble or concern, we

need our eyes on God. We need to trust Him and not ourselves. That's what Jehoshaphat does. He turns his attention to seek God. He prays in view of God's character and His promises. He asks God to intervene and then they wait in dependence upon God.

How does God answer his prayer? We are told that the Spirit of God comes upon a Levite named Jahaziel (v. 14), who says in verse 15:

¹⁵ and he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's.

Verse 17:

¹⁷ 'You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the LORD is with you."

God tells them that they should not be afraid; that the battle is His; that He will with them. They are to go out and station themselves, but they will not need to fight. Obviously, God didn't always work this way. Sometimes the nation had to go into battle. But in this case, they would not have to lift the sword. In response, in verse 18, we are told that Jehoshaphat and all of Judah falls down and worships God. This is a response of faith. They had not yet seen God's deliverance, but they had God's word that He would deliver them, and they respond in faith. They worship.

We then read about how God delivered them. Verse 20:

²⁰ They rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the LORD your God and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed."²¹ When he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the LORD, for His lovingkindness is everlasting."²² When they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed.

The text goes on to describe how God sends confusion among the invading armies and they destroy one another. This episode is then summarized in verses 29-30:

²⁹ And the dread of God was on all the kingdoms of the lands when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. ³⁰ So the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God gave him rest on all sides.

Call on God in your day of trouble and He will answer you. That's the example we see here. Jehoshaphat sets his eyes on God. He remembers His character and His promises. He boldly asks God for deliverance and then he walks in dependence on Him. This is our better hope that we have a God in heaven to whom we can turn!

I want to be clear that as you call upon God in your day of trouble, His answer might not always mean deliverance like we see here. In His perfect wisdom, sometimes God's answer is to allow the trouble to remain, but to give us courage, or endurance, or strength, or faith or whatever we need in the midst of the situation. God always has a bigger purpose than just to remove us from difficulties. But He will always answer when we call out to Him.

What is illustrated in the life of King Jehoshaphat, is stated this way by the writer of Hebrews. He says this in 4:14-16.

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

When we find ourselves in our day of trouble, our *time of need*, we can draw near to the *throne of grace*. There is no trouble too big nor too small to take to Him. Even if we find ourselves in a situation because of our own sin or unwise actions, we can come to him. It is a throne of grace. Because of Jesus, the door to the very throne room of God has been open wide and we can come into the very presence of God to find the mercy and grace that we need.

Call on God in the day of trouble and He will answer you. Our hope is not in a new year, but that in this new year, regardless of what it will bring, we have the same faithful God who always answers us and extends mercy and grace to us in our time of need. Call on God in the day of trouble and he will answer you.