

In Your Hand Are Power and Might

Part 2

2 Chronicles 20:1-30

November 27, 2022

Last week we began to learn about King Jehoshaphat of Judah who lived in the 800s B.C. We learned that he was a good and godly king. We are told in Ch. 17 that he walked in the ways of his ancestor, King David, who also was a good and godly person and king most of His life. Not only that, Ch. 17 tells us, Jehoshaphat ...

sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel (17:4).

Added to that, the Chronicler says,

His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD. And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah (17:6).

In Ch. 20 before us this morning, we learn that when Judah was facing a great horde of her enemies who were determined to

destroy them; Jehoshaphat again sought the Lord, and he led all the people of Judah to seek the Lord. He prayed a prayer acknowledging who the Lord was and how He had acted in the past to save Judah. He reminded the Lord of His promise to save His people if, when they had acted wickedly, they confessed their sin. And that's what King Jehoshaphat did. In response, God sent His Spirit on the priest, Jehaziel, who prophesied God was about to act to rescue Judah and what the king and people were to do. Jehoshaphat led the people to obey the Lord.

The next thing Jehoshaphat did was to bow down and worship the Lord, and he led the people to do the same. I'm going to come back to this incredibly important factor as we close today because I want us to see how significant the theme of prayer, worship, and singing were in this whole story as we consider what it means for us as people and a church.

As I said last week, how great a need there is today for godly leaders in the church. There are a lot of leaders in the Body of Christ today, but sadly, many are not godly. I dare say

that without more godly leaders who center people on the truth of the gospel and who uphold the Word of God as inspired by God, there will not likely be true revival in the church in America, although it has happened. The Church needs godly leaders who seek after God, who walk according to His commandments, who do not bow to the idols of our culture, and who are courageous for the Lord.

More important than even Jehoshaphat's example, we began to learn some things about God and how He demonstrated His great power and might on behalf of Jehoshaphat and the kingdom of Judah, or the Israelites. He was YHWH, the name God gave to Moses, the great I AM, the ever existent One. He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the One who had established His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. He was the One who had driven the nations of Canaan out of the Promised Land, the One who had promised His people that if they sinned, and they confessed their sin, He would hear their prayer and rescue them. Jehoshaphat was claiming this promise in His prayer.

We are called to be people of prayer, who acknowledge who God is, and what He has done for us in the past. We are to confess our sins that we commit. We are to seek the Lord and listen, with true hearing, the hearing of our hearts and minds, to His Word. And we must be people who trust and obey what He tells us. These are the things we learned last week.

So, the Lord gave Jehoshaphat and the people His instructions for how they were to proceed. Let's pick up the story at verse 20,

And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa (The city of Tekoa was a defensive outpost for Jerusalem, about ten miles south of Jerusalem). And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed." (Here we see Jehoshaphat again demonstrating his godly leadership as he called upon the people to believe in the LORD and to believe the word of the prophets. If they would do this, he says, they would succeed against their enemies. So believing would have yielded obedience to the LORD's instructions).²¹ And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were

to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say,

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

(The king took “counsel with the people.” I think this just means he reiterated what he had just said and the plan for battle given earlier. And the first part of the battle plan was to appoint singers from among those assigned to lead worship in the Temple. These men were to lead the army of Judah singing, “Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.” This song was a key song in both 1 and 2 Chronicles in several different circumstances. Here we could stop, and I could preach a whole sermon on the everlasting covenant love of YHWH; but we won’t do that today. This battle was the LORD’s battle, and He would act out of His steadfast love for His people.)

²² And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. ²³ For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another (The singers began to sing and praise the LORD. And because the people believed and obeyed, God acted. He brought about an ambush, not an ambush set up by the army of Judah to entrap their enemies. A very unusual ambush instead. The armies of the enemies began to fight

each other. The army of Seir was destroyed and then then the armies of Ammon and Moab fought each other and destroyed one another).

²⁴ When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness (The watchtower was a geographical height in the wilderness), they looked toward the horde, and behold, there were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped. ²⁵ When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much (The LORD's victory on behalf of the people of Judah resulted in total annihilation of the enemy. They all were killed, and so the men of Judah's army saw bodies everywhere. Then they began to take the spoil. It was so much, that it took them three days to collect it all). ²⁶ On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the LORD. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Beracah to this day (The root word בָּרַךְ in Hebrew means "to bless." The men of Juda blessed the LORD, or praised Him so the place was named the Valley of Beracah.) ²⁷ Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. ²⁸ They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD. (So the men of Judah returned back to Jerusalem with King Jehoshaphat still leading them. They returned with Joy because they had rejoiced over

their enemies because the Lord had gained the victory on their behalf. The people were praising with harps and lyres and trumpets. Their rejoicing was great. And notice where they went; they went to the Temple. The Temple is where they first sought the Lord when confronted with the great horde of their enemies, and the temple is where they went to worship him when the victory had been won.) ²⁹ And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. ³⁰ So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around (The impact of this battle was not just victory for the people of Judah, sparing them from destruction and then their subsequent worship; all the surrounding nations feared the LORD. I'm not sure this meant that the nations feared the LORD in the sense that they worshipped Him and trusted Him. Rather, I think they experienced genuine fear. They were afraid of this God who could accomplish this great defeat.)

(The chapter ends with a summary of Jehoshaphat's reign.)

³¹ Thus Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. ³² He walked in the way of Asa his father and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. ³³ The high places, however, were not taken away; the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their fathers (King Jehoshaphat reigned 25 years. He remained faithful to the LORD, unlike some of the other kings

who started off well, but ended being unfaithful to the LORD. Sadly, not even Jehoshaphat was able to root out all the “high places” in Judah--the “high places” being mostly unauthorized places of worship).

³⁴ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Jehu the son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

We have talked about a number of important truths in this chapter over the past two weeks. But perhaps the four that stand out most to me are:

1. The power, might, and faithfulness of the LORD. What else can be said here other than everything must always begin with God and a true knowledge of Him.
2. The fact that King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah sought the LORD through prayer before they did anything else. And their prayer was accompanied by obedience. Oh, how different the history of Israel and Judah would have been if they had always first prayed to the LORD in Him and then trusted and obeyed in Him! And oh, how different our lives would be if we would always seek the LORD first in everything and then trusted in His Word and acted in obedience!
3. Third, the men and people of Judah worshipped the LORD. Notice, they worshipped before the battle, they sang in worship as they moved toward the battle, and

they worshipped musically after the battle. From this I draw the conclusion that singing praise and worshipping are key to victory in the life. There is a NT story that comes to mind here, and you may have already thought about it.

It is in Acts 16. The story took place in Philippi. Paul and Silas were there preaching the gospel. A slave girl started following them around yelling. Paul cast a demon out of her. Her owners realized they had lost their means of profit. So they went to the city leaders and complained and said they were teaching things against Roman customs. The crowd became enraged. Here is where we pick up the story in vs. 22.

²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And

immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open

These stories point to the truth that even in the most dire circumstances, we are to praise and worship the LORD. He is the One who will fight our battles and rescue us. We are, like the people of Judah, to “stand and see the salvation of the LORD on [our] behalf (2 Chron. 20:17).

There is an old Maranatha music song from 1984 we used to sing at Bethlehem Baptist in Minneapolis. It said,

In heavenly armor we'll enter the land,
The battle belongs to the Lord!
No weapon that's fashioned against us will stand,
The battle belongs to the Lord!
We sing glory, honor, power and strength to the Lord!
We sing glory, honor, power and strength to the Lord!

Verse 2

When the power of darkness comes in like a flood,
The battle belongs to the Lord!
He's raised up a standard, the pow'r of His blood,
The battle belongs to the Lord!
We sing glory, honor, power and strength to the Lord!
We sing glory, honor, power and strength to the Lord!

Verse 3

When your enemy presses in hard do not fear
The battle belongs to the Lord!
Take courage my friend your deliverance is near
The battle belongs to the Lord!
We sing glory, honor, power and strength to the Lord!
We sing glory, honor, power and strength to the Lord!

There is another song, more contemporary, which expresses similar themes to 2 Chronicles 20. We sing it in our services. It is by Phil Wickham, who has written several of the songs we sing. The song is called "Battle Belongs."

When all I see is the battle, You see my victory
When all I see is the mountain, You see a mountain moved
And as I walk through the shadow, Your love surrounds me
There's nothing to fear now for I am safe with You

So when I fight, I'll fight on my knees
With my hands lifted high
Oh God, the battle belongs to You
And every fear I lay at Your feet
I'll sing through the night
Oh God, the battle belongs to You

And if You are for me, who can be against me? Yeah
For Jesus, there's nothing impossible for You
When all I see are the ashes, You see the beauty

Thank You God

When all I see is a cross, God, You see the empty tomb

So when I fight, I'll fight on my knees

With my hands lifted high

Oh God, the battle belongs to You

And every fear I lay at Your feet

I'll sing through the night

Oh God, the battle belongs to You

Almighty fortress, You go before us

Nothing can stand against the power of our God

You shine in the shadow, You win every battle

Nothing can stand against the power of our God