

THE PURPOSES OF PRAYER

Title: “Praying About Your Problems”

Series: PRAYER

Introduction:

Everybody I know has some type of problem that they are dealing with. Some of our problems are health-related, some financial, marital, parental, you name it – everybody is dealing with some type of problem at some level. And when it comes to praying about the problem we have, most of us really don’t know how to approach God in a way that both honors Him and brings relief to us. Today I want to try to change that by looking at an example of a man who had a huge problem on his hands, and who dealt with it in a God-honoring way. His name was Jehoshaphat—he was a King who loved God, and he reigned in Judah for 25 years. One day he had a real dilemma on his hands – a vast army that greatly outnumbered his own, was heading his way to destroy his people. I want to read his story to you, and you can follow along. What I want you to notice is the way that Jehoshaphat relied upon God in prayer.

READ 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 (ESV)

From Jehoshaphat we learn two important things that we need to recognize concerning our own problems, and also four steps to take in dealing with them.

RECOGNIZE THAT...

1. GOD CARES ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM

God cares about the problem you’re dealing with right now at least as much as you do – He cares deeply about what you’re going through. Jehoshaphat was well aware of this simple truth, and that’s why he could pray the way that he did.

“O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” – 2 Chronicles 20:12 (ESV)

In other words, “God, I don’t have a clue how to deal with this situation, but I know that You do and that you care about us, and so I’m coming to you for help.”

Do you ever feel that way? Do you ever get to the point where there are really no answers, no solutions, and no way out of your situation?

Pile your troubles on GOD's shoulders— he'll carry your load, he'll help you out. He'll never let good people topple into ruin. – Psalm 55:22 (MSG)

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. – 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

The reason I'm stressing this is because I know that until you accept the fact that God cares about you and your situation, you won't go to Him in prayer, and your problem will remain unresolved. God cares about you – Go to Him like Jehoshaphat did and say "God I don't know what to do, but my eyes are upon you, I trust you for a solution."

2. GOD IS BIGGER THAN YOUR PROBLEM

"O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you." – 2 Chronicles 20:6 (ESV)

Is God all powerful? He is! Is He all knowing? He is! Is He merciful? Yes He is! Has He come into a covenant relationship with us? Yes, He has! Can you think about anything today, any problem, any challenge, any battle, any suffering, or any circumstance under any condition that is too large for God? Is the Creator of heaven and earth too weak to deal with the situation I am facing today? Is the One who parted the Red Sea unable to handle my struggles? Is the God who fulfills prophecy; that gives sight to the blind; that stops the storm on the raging sea; that makes the lame leap for joy; is this God so feeble that He looks the other way when I ask Him for help? Is this One who has conquered death by the power of the resurrection shaking in His boots when faced with my situation? Of course not! God is greater than any circumstances we might find ourselves in today.

What does that mean for us? It means that when we face problems, we face them on the principle that not only is my God interested in my problems, but He is powerful enough to handle them. I need to be reminded that if God is powerful enough to rule the heavens and the earth and nothing or no one can withstand Him, then my problems are not beyond His ability to solve. The way we pray indicates whether or not we believe that God is greater than our problems. Do you believe today that God is greater than your problems, or do you see Him confused and

perplexed by what you're facing? Once you've established the fact that the God you're serving is greater than your problems, your problems are close to being solved.

TAKE THESE STEPS:

I want us to go back to Jehoshaphat's story, because he is a prime example of a person that knows how to pray in a troubling situation.

1. COME TO GOD FIRST

I heard a story recently about a lady that went to the doctor for a problem. The doctor told her that the only thing left to do was pray. With that the woman grabbed her chest and cried out, "O My, Has It Come Down To that?"

What is our first response to a problem? Is it doubt, fear or unbelief? Or is our first response to pray?

Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. – 2 Chronicles 20:3 (ESV)

Now, let's put this in perspective – Jehoshaphat has just been warned that there is a huge army that is coming into town that could totally wipe him and his people out. And how does he immediately respond? He doesn't call his commanding generals together and say, "OK men, we must devise a strategy to defeat the Moabite and the Ammonite armies." The Bible says the first thing Jehoshaphat did was to seek the Lord. He says, "I've got to seek the Lord on this – everybody, fast and pray and seek God's face!" We've got to quit looking to God as our last resort, and start approaching Him as our first line of defense.

2. ENLIST OTHERS TO PRAY FOR YOU

And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. – 2 Chronicles 20:4 (ESV)

Jehoshaphat says "pray" and the people prayed – the people stepped out en masse to petition the Lord's favor on their behalf. Were they embarrassed to pray for each other? Were they afraid to declare their need? No, they understood that they were in this thing together. They were in the kind of situation where there was no hiding the fact that they all needed God's help.

One of the biggest problems in the church today is that too many people are walking around wearing masks trying to make everyone else think that they've got it all together. I know that you know what I'm talking about church – you could be sitting here today with a smile on your face, and a “Praise the Lord” on your lips, while deep inside you're falling apart. Do you know that there are other people sitting here today that feel the same way as you do today? Let's just stop the pretense – let's all just take off our masks and admit that we all deal with some problems on some level and start to let each other know that we need the prayer power of the whole church crying out to God on our behalf. It's nothing to be embarrassed about – we're a family here, and a family that can't unite in prayer when one of our brothers or sisters is in need, isn't much of a family at all.

3. TRUST GOD FOR THE SOLUTION

We need to understand that God's solution may not be the solution we expected. Most of us, when we come to God with a problem, have a solution in mind. But many times the solution God has in mind is a total surprise to us. The best way to bring your problem to God is not to assist Him with a solution. We need to bring Him the problem believing that He has a solution. God's solution may come to you in a way you're not expecting. God may choose to speak to you directly in some fashion. God may choose to give you a solution through another person. Why didn't God speak directly to Jehoshaphat and give him the solution? He was the King, He was a righteous man, and He was seeking to lead the people of God in the right way. But God didn't choose to speak to him directly – He used a man by the name of Jahaziel to give Jehoshaphat His counsel.

And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel...in the midst of the assembly. – 2 Chronicles 20:14 (ESV)

It was through him the people of God received the solution.

And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's.’ – 2 Chronicles 20:15 (ESV)

Write this down in your notes: “The problem is not mine but God's.” This is a lesson every Christian needs to learn. When you invited Christ into your life, God entered into a covenant relationship with you. He promised to work in your life to

bring about a solution to all of your problems and to make you successful in the Christian walk.

“You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.” – 2 Chronicles 20:17 (ESV)

Now if the God who cares about our every need is willing to face the problem with us, why on earth do we continue to insist on facing our problems in our own strength? It just doesn't make sense friends. God is willing to walk with you and He has the power and ability to give you a solution. We all have a tendency to try to help God – but mark this down – God doesn't need our help. He told Jehoshaphat to let the choir lead the way into battle. And when the people of God went into battle praising and trusting Him for the victory, they gained a victory they never had to fight for. Who are you trusting with your problems today? Notice the response of Jehoshaphat and the people to Jahaziel's prophecy:

Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshipping the LORD. – 2 Chronicles 20:18 (ESV)

Why are they worshipping God? He hasn't done anything yet! They are falling down in worship in anticipation of what God will do – that is what I mean by trust.

4. REST IN GOD'S PEACE

Well what did God do in response to the prayers and worship of His people? He not only saved the people from their enemies, he caused the enemy to fight amongst themselves until every single one of them were wiped out.

When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped. – 2 Chronicles 20:24 (ESV)

Without ever lifting a finger, the victory was won – through the prayer, supplication, and praise of God's people, He utterly and completely removed the problem from their midst.

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. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around. – 2 Chronicles 20:29-30 (ESV)

When God solves your problem it's solved. There is no need for you to continue to struggle with it any longer. He will give you peace concerning your problem. I want you to notice that God did not remove the problem, God conquered the problem, and God defeated the problem. That's the way it is with salvation. We don't save ourselves; God saves us as we trust in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we get saved God doesn't remove the sinful nature that you have, He conquers it. He forgives and cleanses us of our sin. And we lift up our hands and sing praises to Him for the wonderful work He has done on our behalf.

Conclusion:

God will handle your problem if you let Him. Don't you think it is time to let go and let God deal with it? Let God give you peace and rest from your problems today.