

**LET US DRAW NEAR - Biblical Worship and the Warming of the Soul - Part seven**

Teaching #2082 - Sunday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 10:00 a.m.

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**WORSHIP - RECOVERING STRENGTH FOR THE PRACTICAL STRUGGLES OF LIFE**

**2 Chronicles 20:1-30** - "After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. [2] Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi). [3] Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. [4] And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. [5] And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, [6] and said, "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. [7] Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? [8] And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, [9] 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you— for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.' [10] And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy— [11] behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. [12] 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." [13] Meanwhile all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. [14] And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. [15] 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. [16] Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. [17] 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." [18] Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. [19] And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. [20] And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. 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." [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.' [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. [24] 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. [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." [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. [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. [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."

Whenever the subject of worship is studied there are certain mental attitudes - certain *pre-sets* in our thinking - that must be identified and broken down before the real power and truth of worship can take hold in our lives and in our church. False ideas must be *unlearned* before truth can be *embraced*.

We know how difficult the process of *learning something new* can be. You have probably experienced the challenge of trying to teach someone a certain idea. It's far easier to teach a totally *ignorant* person than it is to teach a person *who thinks he already knows* what you're trying to teach, but is mistaken.

Here's where I'm going with all of this. Many Christians, however devout and sincere, are mistaken in their conception of the nature and outward practice of passionate worship. They have grown up with the idea, or have been taught, that ***the expression of worship is more appropriate for believers who are naturally more emotionally inclined and outgoing in the first place.***

This is not usually said outright. And certainly there is usually no ***disdaining*** those who are more fervent in worship. But, little by little, the expression of worship is made a ***less mandatory*** component of the average Christian's experience. While not ***discredited*** outwardly in any way, it is reduced more to the role of ***icing*** in Christian experience, rather than the actual ***cake***. It's good for some emotional charismatic groups, mystics, and people who are just naturally a little more gushy in life.

But, so the thinking goes, what's ***really*** important is to be rooted in the ***Word***. Which, when you think it through, is taken to mean how you ***worship*** has nothing to do with being obedient to the ***Word*** because the Bible just tells us how to be holy and doctrinally sound. It has nothing binding to say about worship, except, perhaps, that it should be with a pure heart. This is how the false logic develops.

Today's text is important because, like last week's text, it deals with the ***practical value*** of worshiping the Lord. Worship has to do with the ***battles of life***. More specifically, it has to do with ***winning*** the battles of life in the strength of the Lord. And the central point is worship brings ***strength***. Worship brings ***victory over enemies***.

All of us recognize ***some*** of the sources of power and strength in the Christian walk. We all know the power that comes from ***prayer, Bible study, moral purity and obedience, the inward power of the Holy Spirit, and the fellowship of the saints***. It's just that many Christians don't put ***worship*** into that category of spiritually fortifying activities.

That's why this whole story of Jehoshaphat is so important:

#### 1) **THE BATTLE JEHOSEPHAT FACES WILL DETERMINE THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS FUTURE EXISTENCE**

***2 Chronicles 20:1-2 - "After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. [2] Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi)."***

The text emphasizes the ***sheer size*** of opposition Jehoshaphat faces. The ***Moabites, Ammonites***, and many of the ***Edomites*** have banded together against Judah. Any ***one*** of these would have been a sizable opponent. Together they represented an ***impossible*** obstacle to remove. This is the ***nature*** of the dilemma Judah faces: ***"You may not be here tomorrow! This enemy means business. There is no human solution to this problem. You are finished."***

Some problems are in a class of their own. Some problems are ***big*** problems. Some problems leave you reeling in shock and disbelief. There are people in this church who face those kinds of problems. A ***physical diagnosis*** that brings news of a serious problem in your body - something that ***threatens your very future on earth***. Sometimes ***financial disaster*** comes. It drowns out all hope for a strong future. Things that were once options are suddenly cut off. There is nothing else you can do to turn things around.

Or suddenly your ***marriage*** seems to be falling apart. You thought that only happened to ***other*** people. But there seems to be no common ground in the relationship anymore. The counseling isn't doing any good. There is nothing but ***coldness and indifference*** where there was once warmth and concern. You can't find any way of bringing back what once was. ***"If something doesn't turn around in two weeks, it's going to be all over."***

Those are real battles. I'm talking about the kinds of things that ***march on your life - that carve up your hope and your future***. I'm talking about problems that, by their sheer ***size***, make you feel ***small*** and ***impotent***. That's what this text is all about. That's what Jehoshaphat was facing.

And here's the point: As we're going to see very clearly in a moment, ***the worship of God has to do with those kinds of things***. Worship (properly understood) plays a role in bringing the life and power of God into those kinds of situations.

And remember, you and I are free to ***treat*** worship as though it's on God's optional elective list. Like Judah was free to leave the ark of the Lord at the house of Abinadab for twenty years. But a whole generation grew up learning to think of life ***without reference to the presence of God***. You don't ***have*** to treat the worship of God with seriousness. You don't have to go to church all that regularly. You don't have to honor God proportionately with your

wealth. But remember, it's much easier to **unlearn** God's ways than to **learn** them. What takes years to build only takes weeks to unlearn.

## 2) THE IMPENDING SITUATION FILLED GODLY JEHOShAPHAT WITH FEAR AND ALARM

**2 Chronicles 20:3** - "Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah."

"**Jehoshaphat was afraid...**" Don't you love reading stuff like that in the Bible? I want to stand up and shout, "**Jehoshaphat, you're my kind of guy!**" There's an attitude that still floats around in the body of Christ that if you're a person of faith you will never experience fear. You should always just be riding high, shouting, "Praise the Lord!", and never experience an ounce of fear or doubt in any situation.

Remember, no matter what you may hear to the contrary, **fear does not disqualify you as either a person of faith, or a person of worship**. You don't have to put on some kind of plastic, phoney spiritual mask when disaster threatens: "**All my kids have to get braces! Praise the Lord. I'm just so thrilled!**"

Faith isn't make-believe. You can express your honest fear. You can be a human being and still be spiritual. Just don't let your fears **take your eyes off the Lord - 1 Chronicles 20:12** - "...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."

Instead, make Jehoshaphat your model:

## 3) JEHOShAPHAT DETERMINED TO SEEK THE LORD WITH ALL HIS HEART

**2 Chronicles 20:3** - "Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah."

Be afraid, but **seek the Lord**. Because many of us have heard this story since we were kids in Sunday School, there's a detail that perhaps doesn't stand out as much as it should. **Jehoshaphat is a professional soldier. He's a military leader from the ground up**. All of his natural instincts would have taken him in a different direction than fasting and prayer:

**"Get the men dressed and ready for battle! Put some sandbags up against the gates. Hide the women and children. Collect all the gold you can find - perhaps we can buy off the enemy if things get totally hopeless. Sound the alarm! Round up the horses and chariots!"**

That's what a **soldier** does under attack. The **first** response is the **natural trained** response. Usually, in our fast paced day, the first response is the **organizational** response, the **administrative** response. But it's almost always the **human** response.

Jehoshaphat gives marvelous demonstration of **seeking God's Kingdom first**. He pushes natural instincts aside. He **faces** this crisis situation. But his response is not **dictated** by the situation. He knows what to do **first**. This is not a matter of Jehoshaphat making all the appropriate military decisions and then asking God to bless his efforts and plans. He is laying the issue at God's feet **first**. He is reigning in his reflexes and training his natural instincts to **seek God first**.

Nothing shows how a life is oriented, or what it's basically all about, like what I do **first** when confronted by crisis. All of this relates to the next point:

## 4) IN ADDITION TO SEEKING THE LORD PERSONALLY, JEHOShAPHAT UNITED THE PEOPLE TO SEEK THE LORD CORPORATELY

**2 Chronicles 20:3-4** - "Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. [4] And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord."

a) **First, he proclaimed a fast - 2 Chronicles 20:3b** - "Then Jehoshaphat....set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah."

This is a very important step for Jehoshaphat. The declaration of the fast relates directly to the previous

point. The **visible** battle was a **military** battle. The armies of the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Edomites were the **visible manifestation of the battle**. But the battle wasn't going to be fought or won on the human battlefield.

Fasting is not superstition. **Fasting** is the way God has ordained to teach His people the true **nature** of the problem they're facing. The threat against them was **physical**. Their recourse against the enemy **wasn't** physical. Their recourse - their weaponry against this **physical** enemy was **spiritual** in nature. In calling the people to fasting, Jehoshaphat is saying to the whole nation, **"Let's fight the real battle first in this situation. Let's get our attention fixed on the resources that count most for victory."**

Fasting is God's tool to teach a soldier to not rely on physical strength. Fasting isn't **magic** or **superstition**. I discipline myself in the pursuits of the **material** realm so I can focus my attention on the **spiritual** - **Ephesians 6:12** - **"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."**

Like the rest of us, Judah's soldiers would have a hard time remembering the real enemy wasn't the visible one. Their tendency would be to fight a visible enemy with the weapons they had at hand and were the most used to handling. So do preachers, teachers, accountants, mechanics, business men, and homemakers. Fasting is one of God's teachers to materially minded people like us. It strips our souls of the blindness material concerns can bring. It **aims our lives** at God.

- b) **Jehoshaphat called the people to united prayer - 2 Chronicles 20:4 - "And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord."**

Notice the great effort expended to **bring the people all to one place**. Why not just have each one seek God right where he or she was? Why go to all the trouble to come **together**?

Jesus stressed the great value of agreement **together** in prayer. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost when they were all **together** - **"in one accord"** says the old KJV. That's a definition of people **seeking the same thing, in the same place, in the same way, at the same time, with the same voice**.

We've lost sight of this in most churches. **When does the church pray together like she worships together**? Are we raising a generation of believers who knows a great deal about the music of **Hillsong**, but almost nothing about corporately **waiting on God**?

This is why we do **prayer-groups** Sunday night. A lot of people don't like them. But ask yourself, **when do you seek the Lord with the body of Christ**? People need to **unite their faith** around one situation or several situations. Prayer is like perfume. It's more precious when highly **concentrated**. Everyone carries part of the same load. The strong encourage the weak. Faith gains momentum. God does great things.

More on this great text next Sunday.