

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

Teaching #2084 - Sunday, November 11th, 2018, 10:00 a.m.

Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

WORSHIP - RECOVERING STRENGTH FOR THE PRACTICAL STRUGGLES OF LIFE (Part 2)

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."

Last week we pulled four lessons from this great text. Very quickly, they are as follows. **First**, we studied the **devastating battle facing Jehoshaphat**. Not just **one** enemy, but **three** were combining forces against Judah, and the future looked bleak indeed. Jehoshaphat is called with specific instructions to worship because worship has to do with **battles** not **feelings**.

Second, Jehoshaphat was **filled to the brim with fear** as the odds of the battle stacked against him. Fear doesn't **disqualify** you as a person of praise, faith, or victory.

Third, in spite of his fear Jehoshaphat determined to **seek the Lord** with all his might. **Fourth**, Jehoshaphat called all the people of God **together** to unite their faith in **prayer** and **fasting**.

Steps three and four set the stage for the power of praise and song as we study today. Worship isn't **just** lifting up empty voices. And it isn't **just** singing cool melodies. Worship stacks itself up on a foundation of sustained personal and corporate prayer and waiting on God. Without that, worship is just religious karaoke - an emotional binge.

Today we launch into four more lessons from this text:

5) **JEHOSHAPHAT FILLS THE PEOPLE'S MINDS WITH THE MIGHT AND POWER OF GOD**

2 Chronicles 20:5-7 - "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?**"

Those questions posed in this text are not asked to **find out** whether or not God is like that - "**God, are you the one who rules heaven and earth, or is that someone else?**" This is not Jehoshaphat expressing his doubts.

And this is not just some official way of starting off the prayer time with some preachy sounding, pious, religious pre-ambles. This is Jehoshaphat's way of saying before all the people, "**God, You are the One who rules heaven and earth. You are the one who presides over all the nations of the earth. You have given precious promise of help to Your covenant people. And that means that You are my God. And you are still God in this desperate situation!**"

And faith begins to rise among the people:

2 Chronicles 20:7 - "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?"

This is so instructive. See how Biblical passionate worship **feeds** faith. Worship isn't just some locker pep talk or catharsis for the people. Worship should lift people's minds into the **past works** of God. It should focus on the **present promise** of God. It should lead the people to celebrate, with understanding, the **future help and power of God**. These three tenses are all lined mindfully together in Biblical worship.

6) **GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE PROPHET JAHAZIEL**

2 Chronicles 20:14-17 - "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."

Just in passing, notice all those names in **verse 14**. That is God's way of establishing the **credentials** of His prophetic voice. This shows the **identity** of the prophetic background of this man, Jahaziel, so the people would **put their trust** in the message.

Worship can be greatly enhanced by Biblically regulated prophecy in the church. God **wants** to encourage the church with the gifts of the Spirit - **1 Corinthians 14:26** - "**What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.**"

But the gift of prophecy won't function properly when people just splash around from congregation to congregation with their prophetic words. We don't function that way in our church. People need the Scriptural right to **discern** prophetic utterances. They need to be able to **trust** the gift of prophecy. So God graciously **frames** the prophetic word with the background of the prophet so the people will have an easier time embracing the message.

7) JEHOSHAPHAT TAKES THE TIME TO REINFORCE THE FAITH OF THE PEOPLE

2 Chronicles 20:20 - "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.**"

There's a big difference between the way a crowd can feel Sunday at church, and the way they can feel Monday morning facing the battle. Jehoshaphat reminds them of all God had promised ***the day before. He encourages them not to lose the ground they gained as they prayed and worshiped earlier.***

And then, very significantly, the people sense the ***resource*** of worship to face the battle that day - **2 Chronicles 20:21** - "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.**'"

There is no passage in the Bible more clearly proving the ***sheer power of song*** before the Lord. The power of ***song*** is key to the health of worship. True, worship is more than just ***praise***. But it is never ***less***.

This has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not you are a good singer. It has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not you like music, or have an ear for it, or the church uses the particular style and volume of music you relate to. It has to do with ***Biblical instruction*** regarding ***how*** God calls us to worship Him (remember the importance of knowing the ***instructions*** for approaching God in the lesson of Uzzah and the ark of the covenant!)

God in heaven does not leave your engagement in song in His church up to your preference and decision. The Bible ***commands*** God be approached with singing:

1 Chronicles 16:23 - "Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day."

Psalms 9:11 - "Sing praises to the Lord, who sits enthroned in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds!"

Psalms 21:13 - "Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength! We will sing and praise your power."

Psalms 33:1-3 - "Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. [2] Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! [3] Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts."

Psalms 47:6-7 - "Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! [7] For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!"

Psalms 105:2-4 - "Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! [3] Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice! [4] Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!"

Ephesians 5:18-19 - "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart...."

Please notice what we just did with that last reference. It's important to trace the ***transition*** of worship instruction and practice from ***old covenant*** to ***new covenant***. What we are looking for is a ***reiteration*** - a ***reinforcement*** - of the teaching to show it has valid application to the church today. We're going to give one whole teaching to this point later on in this series.

This is a very important principle of Biblical interpretation because not ***all*** Old Testament practices are meant to carry over into the New. We don't butcher sheep, burn incense, wash our hands and feet as we come into the sanctuary. We don't do lots of things that were specifically commanded of God's people under the Old Covenant.

But ***some*** practices are meant to be binding and permanent. And God has not left us in the dark as to what those practices are. ***Singing is to abound in the church.*** It's to be held up as ***important*** and ***vital*** in our worship of Jesus. So settle this point in your understanding right now. You simply ***must*** approach God in song with the

congregation because God **commands** it.

Paul explains **why** this is so in the passage in Ephesians. Singing is **one** of the ways we keep our lives filled with the Spirit. That's how important singing is. It's not optional in worship. It's no more optional than giving, or praying, or studying God's Word.

Let me press this point. Refuse to allow yourself, whatever your musical talent or background, to live in the disobedience of mumbling your way through the worship time. Nothing will quench the Spirit faster in your heart. Don't allow your personal tastes in music to breed indifference to the plain summons of the Holy Spirit to worship the Lord in song. Your obedience is more important to the Lord and to your spiritual health than your musical ability or taste.

8) THE VICTORY POSSESSED BY THE WORSHIPING HEART

2 Chronicles 20:22-30 - "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.

{26} Then on the fourth day they assembled in the valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the LORD. Therefore they have named that place "The Valley of Beracah" until today. {27} Every man of Judah and Jerusalem returned with Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. {28} They came to Jerusalem with harps, lyres and trumpets to the house of the LORD. {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."

I know we've taken a lot of time reading these texts, but please look again carefully at **verses 23-24** - "**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.**"

The people had done nothing but worship the Lord. And the very things that once looked so organized and invincible were reduced to rubble before the power of praise. God **fought** as the people **worshipped**. There is something in all of us children of the new millennium that almost mocks the possibility that God can work like that today. We are so used to relying on our own strength.

I know this isn't the **only** story of divine victory in the Bible. But it is **one** of them. And it's recorded for a reason. God seems to use a story like this to remind me I can **struggle** through life, or I can learn to **worship** through life. Worship will win battles I never can on my own. Worship is **not** an emotional tickle. It's a source of spiritual power the church can never afford to live without. Never let your pride sell the rest of your life short. Enter in, and worship the Lord with understanding and holiness. Let Him enter into the battles of your life.