

CRISIS FAITH IS SELDOM LASTING!

II Kings 13: 1-9 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

How many times do both believers and unbelievers call on the Lord, but only when they are in deep trouble, and then they ignore God when things are going well? People who depend on crisis faith for God's help need to remember that God can be trusted to answer us when we call, yet we need to know that promises we make to God in a crisis are often, but not always, but they often are forgotten when God comes to our side to help. Many sick people beg for God's healing and promise to live for Him faithfully if He heals them, but they promptly go back to sinning after God heals them. Sometimes foxhole conversions take, but often foxhole conversions are just that, and no more. The last thing any of us should ever do is to discourage desperate prayers. God does specialize in hearing desperate cries to Him. Asaph, the psalmist in Psalm 50: 15 encourages desperate praying. He wrote, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." Psalm 107 is entirely a psalm of crying out to God in crisis faith. Listen for a moment to this mighty call for crisis faith praying. We read:

"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. Let them thank the LORD for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things. Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. So He bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and (He) burst their bonds apart. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! For He shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron. Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction. They loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He sent out His word and healed them, and (He) delivered them from their destruction. Let them thank the LORD for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and (let them) tell of His deeds in songs of joy! Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; they saw the deeds of

the LORD, His wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted-up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and He brought them to their desired haven. Let them thank the LORD for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! Let them extol Him in the congregation of the people, and (let them) praise Him in the assembly of the elders. He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants. He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. And there He lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in; they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield. By His blessing they multiply greatly, and He does not let their livestock diminish. When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow, He pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes; but He raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. The upright see it, and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth. Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.”

As we come now to our text and watch King Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, we find that it took hitting bottom for him to call out to the Lord. The British historian, William Camden wrote, “Between the stirrup and the ground, Mercy I asked, mercy I found.” Yet I sense God calling me to caution all of us if we are merely crisis faith “pray-ers.” None of us should ever assume that because God hears our prayer in a crisis, and answers us, then we are automatically saved and going to heaven. There are some lessons about crisis faith that God would have us learn today before we share the Lord’s Supper. What are these lessons about crisis faith?

CRISIS FAITH LEADS US TO CARELESSNESS AS WE SIN, TO FOLLOW FAMILY, NATIONAL, AND GENERATIONAL PATTERNS (I.)

Compare II Kings 13: 1-2 with II Kings 10: 29-31 comparing Jehoahaz with his father, Jehu. Then go back another generation to Amaziah, his grandpa in II Kings 8: 27, and go back to his great grandpa, Joram in II Kings 3: 1-3. We can all get caught in sins our parents and our nation tolerate, and which we accept as well. Sins we do as parents in moderation, our children often do in excess. In other words, we learn sin patterns, to accept idolatry in our lives as our nation and our parents have, so that we pray most usually and most earnestly only, or most often – only when we are in desperate trouble. Never forget that America accepted prayer in public schools for two or three months following the crisis of 9/11/01. Then before we knew it, the crisis was over, and we as a nation were right back to

banning prayer in public school. It should come as no surprise that Jehoahaz harked back for his sin patterns to eleven generations earlier to Jereboam the son of Nebat, the founder of the 10 northern tribes of Israel, over 100 years before, who adopted the calf worship of Egypt as his substitute for worshipping the Lord. Listen to the kings, first Jereboam, the son of Nebat, then Nadab, then Baasha, then Elah, then Zimri, then Omri, then Ahab, then Ahaziah, then Joram, then Jehu, and now Jehoahaz. Jehoahaz chose Jereboam as his model, because even his mostly godly father, Jehu, had also tolerated the worship of the golden calves in Bethel in the south of the 10 tribes and in Dan in the north. Why worship the living God when all your relatives and even your nation accept these two substitute gods of the northern kingdom? Yet when Jehoahaz really was in trouble, he knew in his soul, down deep, he knew who to call on, for the longest time, he wouldn't. 2ndly,

CRISIS FAITH LEADS US TO GOD'S ANGRY STERNNESS AS WE FOLLOW FAMILY, NATIONAL, AND GENERATIONAL PATTERNS.

(II.) Notice II Kings 13: 3 “And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He gave them continually into the hand of Hazael, king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad, the son of Hazael. So often people who claim to know and love Jesus, but who refuse to live lives of daily faith in Jesus, complain that God is not good. God does not bless our lives when we dishonor his new covenant with us, that new covenant we celebrate at the Lord's table today. God's people in Israel knew the terms of the covenant God made with them before they ever entered the land of Canaan after their bondage in Egypt. If they obeyed Him, He promised them victory over their enemies, but if they disobeyed, He promised they would fall before their enemies. We read in Leviticus 26: 14-17 is clear. But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.” And in Deuteronomy 28: 25-26 we read, “The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away.” Never be surprised if you only call to God in the most desperate times, if you find yourself often living mostly under His discipline and outside His pleasure. People still believe Satan's original lie to Adam and Eve, in Genesis 3: 4, saying, “You will not surely die.” The enemy says, “Do whatever you desire and whatever you enjoy, because there are no serious

consequences to sinning. Beloved, remember always, that whether God must chasten us or bless us, He will always be true to His Word. Thirdly,

CRISIS FAITH LEADS US TO DESPERATENESS AS WE SIN, TO FOLLOW FAMILY, NATIONAL, AND GENERATIONAL PATTERNS.

(III.) Notice II Kings 13: 4. “Then, and we might add, (finally) Jehoahaz sought the favor of the Lord, and the Lord listened to him, for He saw the oppression of Israel, how the king of Syria oppressed them.” Crisis faith is desperate praying. Never put down desperate praying. How hard it is so often to bring us as we turn away from obeying and following Jesus, as we have turned away from the living God, and from following His Word, to seek the Lord’s face. Jehoahaz had to be pushed and pressed to the last extremity by the enemy and his oppression. He had to be so humiliated before he would call on the Lord. The Hebrew word for sought the favor of the Lord is the Hebrew word **challah**. Challah means to rub, and it is used as a metaphor, to mean, to stroke the face of the Lord, entreating Him. Don’t put down such a desperate seeking of God. This is entreaty with tears, with reaching out to touch the face of God. And notice, God never said, “Forget it, it’s too little too late.” That’s how we turn on each other, beloved, when a spouse or a child is slow to repent. What did God do? We read, “And the Lord listened to him, for He saw the oppression of Israel, how the king of Syria oppressed them.” Oh beloved, learn from Jehoahaz’ desperate entreaty, his prayer, and reaching out to stroke the face of the Lord, that God is always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and that though He answers the cry of those in distress, He does not mistake distress for repentance. The land of Israel was not going to be totally relieved from the Syrian menace. Their land was still held in subjection, and Syria continued to possess the cities it had captured. Yet, God heard this pleading king, who for once was on his knees in desperation. Fourthly,

CRISIS FAITH LEADS US TO GOD’S SWEET GOODNESS AS WE SIN, TO FOLLOW FAMILY, NATIONAL, AND GENERATIONAL PATTERNS.

(IV.) Notice II Kings 13: 5-6. “Therefore, the Lord gave Israel a savior/deliverer, so that they escaped from the hand of the Syrians, and the people of Israel lived in their homes as formerly. (But it was short-lived) “Nevertheless, they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jereboam, which he made Israel to sin, (worshipping the two golden calves in place of the living God) but walked in them; and the Asherah also remained in Samaria.” Notice, the word for savior is **yasha**. Yasha means deliverer or savior. God, who knows all things, knew that Jehoahaz had not turned from his sinful way. Why would God bring His sweet goodness of deliverance and saving to Jehoahaz, when He knew it was crisis faith praying without repentance? I don’t know but he often does just that. He did it for years with Israel. Go all the way back to Judges 2: 11-23, back in 1425 BC, 600 years before Jehoahaz. There we read, “And the people of Israel did what was evil in the

sight of the LORD and served the Baals. And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and (they) bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. So, the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress. Then the LORD raised up judges, who **yasha saved them** out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so. Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and He **yasha saved them** from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He said, "Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not." So the LORD left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua." Beloved, how often does God save us from death, from trials, from disobedience, knowing full well, we have not yet repented? 5thly,

CRISIS FAITH LEADS US TO POWERLESSNESS AS WE SIN, TO FOLLOW FAMILY, NATIONAL, AND GENERATIONAL PATTERNS.

(V.) Notice II Kings 13: 7, "For there was not left to Jehoahaz an army of more than fifty horsemen and ten chariots and ten thousand footmen, for the king of Syria had destroyed them like the dust by threshing." It shouldn't surprise us that God became more and more intolerant of this worship of the two golden calves over Himself. The longer the sin continued, and the more obstinately the sin continued, the more severe God's judgment became. Notice that Jehoahaz' standing army became virtually powerless. This is in stark contrast with 800,000 soldiers in the days of King David, and when King Amaziah of Judah wanted extra soldiers, he hired 100,000 soldiers, just from the Ephaimites, to help him fight Edom. Jehoahaz could offer no army to stop King Hazael of Syria from having the rule of his 10 tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel. Jehoahaz was a mere vassal

of his brutal neighbor to the north in Damascus. If you resort to crying out to God only in times of crisis, don't ever expect to have power with men and power with God. This powerlessness came cruelly for we read Syria destroyed Israel's soldiers by threshing them like the dust. This was the use of literal threshing instruments in the execution of prisoners who were tied down and they took their threshing implements of that time to kill them, running over their backs and grinding them into the dust. We know this because Amos the prophet in Amos 1: 3 declared, "Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus (that's Syria) and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they had threshed Gilead, that's the Israelites with threshing sledges of iron." Jehoahaz had watched his scores of soldiers die before his eyes, threshed because Jehoahaz went his own way, away from God, even after the Lord brought a savior. We don't know the name of the savior Jehoahaz was sent in his day, but he is well known in Israel. It may have been warnings from Elisha, or a deliverer that beat Syria back for a short time.

To live with answers to prayer that reveal the glory of God for a moment, but then we rob God of His given glory to go back to false worship and crisis praying alone is tragic. Charles Spurgeon said, of Jehoahaz, "Israel's repentance was only half-hearted; they repented because they suffered. They repented because of their suffering rather than because of their sin. They went back to the sin, after they escaped from the sorrow. As God promises in our taking of communion to make us weak if we take the bread and the cup unworthily, (I Corinthians 11: 30) God so made Jehoahaz weak—pitifully weak. He died one of the weakest kings of all Israel ever. Look at verses 8-9. He died without a legacy, because only once did he seek the face of God in prayer, and that one-time God brought salvation and deliverance, but the king spurned it and went back to his idolatry. I warn us before we share the Lord's Supper, Crisis praying only is dangerous, for though it reaps results, those results are seldom lasting. May God heal us of futile crisis praying without living lives of daily prayer. Let's bow our heads.