
Sermon Notes

September 20, 2015

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

The Way Forward: When You're Shaking in Your Boots

2 Chronicles 20:1-26

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.

Paralyzing Fear

- ❖ Saying "no" to fear (Paul, King, Parks, Yousafzai)
- ❖ Our fears and phobias often hold us back and block us from fulfilling God's plans and purposes for us
- ❖ Putting our fears into a proper perspective
 - an account that moves from danger, fear and trouble to joy, peace, praise, quiet, and rest
 - an account that shows how prayer and praise are two great WEAPONS which God puts in our arsenals
- ❖ an account that shows how prayer and praise are gifts from God and responses to God

A Threat

- ❖ When Jehoshaphat hears the news of an impending attack, he responds by seeking the Lord (20:2-3)
 - Jehoshaphat was "shaking in his boots", but he knew he had a God to take his fears to
 - Jehoshaphat offers a heartfelt, intentional, intense, Spirit led response to his fear
- ❖ Jehoshaphat *sets his face to seek the LORD* and calls the people to attend a national prayer meeting

Jehoshaphat's Prayer (20:5-13)

- ❖ Jehoshaphat appeals to God for help on the basis of His OMNIPOTENT power and His UNFAILING promises

- he realizes the desperation of his own weakness & need
- he confesses that God has all power and might
- he confesses that God alone can save
- ❖ Jehoshaphat's prayer reminds us of our own weakness and susceptibility to the world, the flesh, and the devil
 - we rarely pray with this kind of desperation
 - we urgently need the Holy Spirit to convict us of our need and to cause us to be more realistic about ourselves and our circumstances
 - we must repent of self-sufficiency, ego, pride and any thought we have of "standing on our own two legs"

God's Response (20:14-17)

- ❖ *Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed* (20:15)
- ❖ This Spirit inspired response is a massive word of comfort to Jehoshaphat and all Judah
 - the battle is not yours but God's
 - you will not need to fight this battle
 - stand firm, hold your position and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf

A Response of Worship (vv. 18-27)

- ❖ God's answer and the assurance of God's promise propel the people into worship and THANKSGIVING even before God's promise is fulfilled
- ❖ Godly leaders fill God's people's minds and hearts with truth and hope

- the people enter into battle singing: *Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.* (20:21)
- do you enter into your battles singing?
- God responds to their praise and takes action (20:22-23)
- ❖ When all is said and done, the people gather once more for praise and thanksgiving
 - they march out of the Valley of Blessing, singing and praising God
 - they arrive in Jerusalem still singing and praising God for the way *the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies* (20:27)
- ❖ Though we are surrounded by enemies who seek to do us harm, we are more powerfully surrounded by a great and loving God who works all things together for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28, 31)

Personal Application

1. What positive things about Jehoshaphat's response to danger, fear and threat do you most want to remember and incorporate into your own life?
2. Jehoshaphat appeals to God for help on the basis of His omnipotent power and His unfailing promises. What promises of God do you most want to remember and cling to in your own season(s) of distress?
3. How aware are you of your weakness and susceptibility to those enemies that seek to undermine and shipwreck your faith (the world, the flesh, the devil)? Will you pray about your needs, weaknesses, and fears with the same kind of desperation that marked Jehoshaphat's prayer?