

We are going to deviate from our sermon series in 2 Corinthians this week for a message on spiritual warfare and the need to trust in God. This goes along with our passage in 2 Corinthians chapter 1:8ⁱ where Paul tells us the trial he endured was so heavy that he despaired of life. News of the devastation in Florida and of the threat of nuclear weapons from Russia, interpersonal strife, and inflation all seem to be the enemy working overtime to discourage and hinder our walk with the Lord. You should always remember, you and the Lord are always a majority, and the Lamb always wins. There is good news in the world as well, including many souls coming to Christ. (Read 2Chronicles 20:1-26.)

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. 2 Chronicles 20:2-4 What do we do when we are faced with the impossible, when all hope seems to be lost? Jehoshaphat did the right thing. He did not go to his counselors, but instead set his face to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout the nation. The people gathered with their king at the temple to seek the Lord. Together they asked the Lord what to do.

I believe we can learn how to deal with insurmountable odds by learning from this prayer of Jehoshaphat. *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.’* 2 Chronicles 20:5-9 Jehoshaphat went back in history to declare in prayer to declare faithfulness of God and His promises. We must always stand on the Word. Our emotions can be a mess, our thinking unclear because of the chaos in our world, our flesh can be raging to take over and do things our way, but if we want a place of stability, we must go to the unshakable truth of God’s Word.

God had promised verse 9 to Israel when the temple was completed. That is why so many go to pray at the Western Wall of the temple. They still claim this promise in our day. But where should we turn. Jesus is the temple, the House of Prayer for all nations. Remember when He said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it” (John 2:19ⁱⁱ)? He is where we turn, and He is the Word made flesh (John 1:14ⁱⁱⁱ). Go to the rock (Psalm 40:2^{iv}). Stand on the words of Jesus and the words the Holy Spirit spoke through the Apostles. *⁷ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.* Matthew 7:7

Jehoshaphat pulled a request from Solomon’s prayer of dedication for the temple. It was not an exact quote, but the idea is found earlier in this same book, 2 Chronicles 6:28-30^v. We know God heard Solomon’s prayer for as soon as he finished praying fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice and the glory of the Lord filled the temple

(2 Chronicles 7:1^{vi}). King Jehoshaphat knew his prayer would be heard and accepted because God accepted his ancestor's prayer along these same lines. They were doing exactly what Solomon prayed by all coming to the temple to seek God's help in the situation they faced.

Let me ask again, where is the temple today? Jesus is the One we go to. Remember when he told the Samaritan woman that a time was coming when it was neither Gerizim or Jerusalem where we would worship, but rather in spirit and in truth (John 4:23,24^{vii}). The temple is not a building today, it is the living stones that make up the church with Jesus as our chief cornerstone. We pray together to the God who hears, and we seek His face. That means we seek to have his eyes and ears toward us, not to do our own will, but to pray His will into the earth. He invites us to come to Him and present our requests and give Him our burdens (Psalm 55:22^{viii}). He commands us not to be anxious about anything but to come in prayer to ask for His help (Philippians 4:6^{ix}). That is what the people of Judah were doing.

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. 2 Chronicles 20:10-11 In these verses Jehoshaphat was appealing to the justice of God. His ancestors obeyed God and did not war against these groups of people when they were on their way to the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 2:19^x). So, it was unjust that now they come to make war with Judah. Jehoshaphat knew the attributes of God could be counted on. God did not need to be reminded about their history, but it was brought up to reassure the people that God's testimony is at stake in this conflict.

Even though Rehoboam, Solomon's son, had turned from God and the nation split, and evil kings had reigned at different times in Judah, Jehoshaphat claimed the original promise when the house of the Lord was built by Solomon. He believed God would not fail to keep His promises even if the people went astray at times. He was doing all he could to live up to the covenant and therefore believed he could trust God's promises.

We live under the New Covenant and though we stumble and are unfaithful at times, if our heart is set on the Lord and we sincerely seek His direction, the promises of the New Covenant are ours to claim before God (2 Timothy 2:13^{xi}). We can pray, "Lord, you have said in your Word..." and then quote the promise.

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." 2 Chronicles 20:12 We need to admit how powerless we are against the forces of evil. We must rely completely on God's direction with our eyes fixed on Jesus. It is when we are weak that we are strong which is exactly what we are learning in 2 Corinthians. Our eyes should not be on ourselves and our limitations, but upon God and His almighty power. When we cry out to God acknowledging our weakness, we invite God's strength.

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. 2 Chronicles 20:13-15 (ESV) There

they all are, even the children, standing before the temple and waiting for God to speak to them. See them waiting and looking toward the Holy Place. And suddenly one of the prophets spoke in what must have been a booming voice.

In the Old Testament times, God's Spirit would come upon someone, and they would speak out what God was saying. You could write it down as Scripture. But today, the Holy Spirit is always with us. He speaks to our hearts as well. And since all believers have the Holy Spirit, we can discern when the words are from God or man. We do not add the words to our Bibles, but we do consider the words someone is inspired to speak (1 Corinthians 14:29^{xii}). In prayer and ask God for the application to our own lives.

God's instructions through the prophet were according to the prayer of Solomon. God promised to hear when they all stood and prayed toward the temple for that was where the visible presence of God resided in the Most Holy Place. The battle belongs to the Lord. Do not fear or be dismayed is a command from God. **Trust in God casts out fear.** The righteous are as bold as a lion (Proverbs 28:1^{xiii}), because we know power belongs to the Lord and we are not subject to the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14,15^{xiv}).

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." 2 Chronicles 20:17 *The substance of the oracle is restated in v. 17 with a quotation from Exodus 14:13^{xv}. The God who had parted the Red Sea had not changed in hundreds of years, and he is still the same today (cf. Isaiah 52:10^{xvi}; Zechariah 9:9^{xvii}). The assurance of God's presence was more than a theological statement; it was to be a source of strength.*^{xviii} This is God's battle tactic. Let Him fight for you. Just stand in faith and watch what God does for us.

God had to say again, "Do not fear or be dismayed." That is because that is a lack of faith, and it is faith that pleases God (Hebrews 11:6^{xix}; 2 Timothy 1:7^{xx}). God decides the outcome of all battles. Before we were born, He decided when each person involved whatever situation you face would live and die. If God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31^{xxi})!

We should remember the powerful account of Job. It seemed like God had utterly forsaken Job. But it was just the opposite. God let Satan do his worst, and Job came out victorious, closer to God, humbler, and more blessed by the grace of God. He had it worse than any of us will ever face, but he declared that even if God killed him, he would still trust in God (Job 13:15^{xxii}). But when we quote that verse, we leave off the last half of the verse. He went on to say, "Yet I will argue my ways to His face." He did not understand why God would allow those calamities to befall him, at least not until he got to the other side and came out victorious. He learned that we know so little that our questioning God's goodness and righteousness is vanity. We just need to trust and know that the day will come when we will understand.

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. 2 Chronicles 20:18,19 When we are assured of the promises of God on our behalf, we too should fall and worship the Lord and sing praises to His holy name, because we know it is as good as done! Our faith is evident when our cry of desperation turns into songs of praise.

I think it is important to see that God had not told them what He would do or how He would do it. It was a truly a “trust me, I got this” promise. They had to believe that somehow God would take care of it without knowing the means. I think that is what He often requires of us. Remember that when Abraham left Ur it was simply, “Go to a land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1^{xxiii}). God did not yet tell him then where that land was or that his descendants would not possess it for 400 years. He just instructs and expects us to believe in His all-powerful ability and His love for us (Jeremiah 29:11^{xxiv}).

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.”* 2 Chronicles 20:20 Believe the Word of the Lord and you will be established and succeed! Today we would say the same. Believe in Jesus our Messiah and you will be established. Believe what His apostles conveyed to us of the life and teachings of Jesus, His death and resurrection on our behalf and you will succeed. The great difference is they were fighting a physical battle. But our battle is much greater. We do not fight against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12^{xxv}; 2 Corinthians 10:4^{xxvi}). We are not fighting for a piece of land promised to us but for the spiritual kingdom of God, the souls of men, the living stones of new Jerusalem. We conquer with the love of God, the word of our testimony, and the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11^{xxvii}).

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.”* 2 Chronicles 20:21 The people and their king had such faith that they put the Levitical singers in front of the army as they marched out to the battle site. Now that makes absolutely no sense to the carnal mind. What if God wanted to use their army like Gideon, where a few men defeated and chased an army ten times their size. But if you have total faith in the details of what God said, then you would *stand still and see the salvation of God*. So in total faith they were just going to have the choir start praising God for what they were convinced that God would do.

They sang the national anthem of Israel as a declaration of that faith. They believed God and His prophets and so they sang, “Give thanks to the Lord, for His steadfast love endures forever.” (Perhaps that was the title of the song of David in 1 Chronicles 16:8-36.) He loves us! And therefore, we can trust Him to preserve us until our time on earth is done. While the world threatens and taunts us, we can believe the details of His promises to us, and rest assured in His all-powerful hands.

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.* 2 Chronicles 20:22,23 Please take note of the fact that it was when they began to sing and praise the Lord that He set an ambush against their enemies. Our faith is demonstrated by our songs and praise to the Lord even before our prayers are answered. Faith moves the hand of God. You have heard me say many times that when we are fighting doubt and discouragement we should sing praise. Now you know why. It is the voice of faith. It shifts our focus from our problems to the Lord who

delivers us. It turns our eyes to Him and away from the world, from the transient to the eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18^{xxviii}).

Battles of that time were often to subjugate a people, take their wealth, and make them pay tribute in the future. God may have had the two larger groups decide they did not want to share the spoils of war with the smaller group. They may have seen the singers out front and thought the battle would be easy and they did not need the Meunites so they thought, “Me does not unite!” But then greed took over even more so and the two larger forces fought each other. In the end they destroyed one another to a man.

I have made it all sound somewhat natural, but usually when an army is losing too many soldiers they will retreat. This is obviously miraculous for they fought to the last two men, and they killed each other. That had to be supernatural. When God fights for you, the enemy will not even realize what hit them until it is too late, like the army of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, watching the walls of water collapse on them (Exodus 14:27^{xxix}).

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. 2 Chronicles 20:25 What the enemy meant for evil against Israel turned out to be a blessing for them. The spoils would include weapons, clothing, supplies, and coinage. There was so much it took three days to collect it all. Mark this verse to remind yourself that when God is for you what the enemy means to do for you will probably be turned on their own heads and end up blessing you. We sent a couple of young men on a yearlong mission to Kenya. They said the witch doctors told them they would not curse Christians because the curse would come back upon them. It may be a long time coming, but righteousness will always prevail. Be patient and trust God.

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. 2 Chronicles 20:26 This is thought to be a valley somewhere between Jerusalem and Hebron, possibly the Valley of Baca. If it is the Valley of Baca where pilgrims traveled to the feasts in Jerusalem, we have an interesting play on words. Baca can mean weeping. So, if it is the same valley, the place of weeping was turned into a valley of blessing. Or as the psalmist wrote, *¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;* Psalm 30:11a That is what the Lord often does to the believer who clings to Him. In time, we see that the trial led to a great victory and abundant blessing.

But the story ends with a warning. Even after this miraculous protection by God, verse 33^{xxx} tells us the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their fathers. When we see such miraculous intervention, we are even more accountable to put our full faith in God alone. And many of us have seen God intervene in our lives in amazing ways. Joy, praise, and worship soon faded, and the people went back to their compromising worship of other gods. May it never be so with us, by the grace of God.

What an amazing account! What an example they set at that time! What will we do with it? Will we believe in the Lord our God and be established or will we fear? Will we believe the promises of God and act in faith praising God? And even if we do, will we persevere? We will by grace through faith, with our eyes fixed on Jesus, for He has already won the victory! Never slack off. Keep pressing forward. Keep seeking the Lord and trusting in Him. *Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established! Believe his prophets (Word), and you will succeed.*

Questions:

- 1 How impossible was the situation? Your situation?
- 2 How did the king deal with it?
- 3 What gave him faith?
- 4 What words from the Lord did the king speak to the people?
- 5 How did the king invoke the character of God?
- 6 How did the king declare humility?
- 7 What did the prophet declare? Can we say the same?
- 8 What were they to do? Not do?
- 9 How did they express faith as they approached the battle?
- 10 What is the warning that followed a great victory?

ⁱ **2 Corinthians 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

ⁱⁱ **John 2:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

ⁱⁱⁱ **John 1:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

^{iv} **Psalms 40:2 (ESV)**

²He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

^v **2 Chronicles 6:28-30 (ESV)**

²⁸"If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemies besiege them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, ²⁹whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing his own affliction and his own sorrow and stretching out his hands toward this house, ³⁰then hear from heaven your dwelling place and forgive and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways, for you, you only, know the hearts of the children of mankind,

^{vi} **2 Chronicles 7:1 (ESV)**

¹As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

^{vii} **John 4:23-24 (ESV)**

²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

^{viii} **Psalms 55:22 (ESV)**

²²Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

^{ix} **Philippians 4:6 (ESV)**

⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

^x **Deuteronomy 2:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹And when you approach the territory of the people of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession.'

^{xi} **2 Timothy 2:13 (ESV)**

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

^{xii} **1 Corinthians 14:29 (ESV)**

²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.

^{xiii} **Proverbs 28:1 (ESV)**

¹The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.

^{xiv} **Hebrews 2:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

^{xv} **Exodus 14:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

^{xvi} **Isaiah 52:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

^{xvii} **Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)**

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

^{xviii} J. A. Thompson, *1-2 Chronicles*, vol. 9, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 294.

^{xix} **Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

^{xx} **2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)**

⁷ For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

^{xxi} **Romans 8:31 (ESV)**

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

^{xxii} **Job 13:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face.

^{xxiii} **Genesis 12:1 (ESV)**

¹ Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

^{xxiv} **Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

^{xxv} **Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)**

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.

^{xxvi} **2 Corinthians 10:4 (ESV)**

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

^{xxvii} **Revelation 12:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

^{xxviii} **2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

^{xxix} **Exodus 14:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea.

^{xxx} **2 Chronicles 20:33 (ESV)**

³³ The high places, however, were not taken away; the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their fathers.