

"The Power of Praise" • 2 Chronicles 20

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *No That Good*

1. One Sunday morning after the service, a woman came up to the pastor and thanked him for the encouraging sermon he had preached
2. In response he said, "Why, don't thank me, thank the Lord."
3. She said, "Well, I thought of that, but it wasn't quite *that* good."

B. *Our Study*

1. We're going to be taking a look at the power of praise today
2. Last week we considered the power of God that is resident in His Word
3. Today we will see how His power is released in His praise
4. And once again, we consider the life and leadership of the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat

II. TEXT

A. *Set The Scene*

1. Jehoshaphat was a good and godly king - in fact, he is likened to David in his whole hearted loyalty to the Lord
2. And as a result of this loyalty, God honored and bless both him and the nation during his reign
3. Yet, in the midst of this blessing, a challenge was set before them
4. The people of three bordering nations united in an assault on Judah
5. Moab, Ammon, and Edom formed an alliance against the Jews and came up out of their lands to the south east
6. Though Jehoshaphat had raised a vast and powerful army, his forces were overwhelmed by the size of the invading army
7. So Jehoshaphat called or all the leaders of the nation to meet with him at the temple in Jerusalem
8. Once there, he called out to the Lord for help
9. The answer to his prayer begins at v. 14

B. *Vs. 14-17*

{14} Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly.

{15} And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle *is* not yours, but God's.

{16} 'Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel.

{17} 'You will not *need* to fight in this *battle*. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear

or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you."

1. God heard Jehoshaphat's cry for help, and promised to deliver His people from their enemies
2. What's notably different about this incident, is that the armies of Israel won't even have to fight
 - a. when they had cried out to God in other battles, when He promised to help them, they still had to fight
 - b. God fought *with* them and gave them the victory
 - c. this battle would be different in that they wouldn't even have to fight
 - d. God would somehow fight *for* them ALONE!
3. But note that God still called them to position themselves as *though* they were going in to battle
4. They were still to take their positions on the field and be ready
5. For the past few weeks now, both on Wednesday evening and on Sunday mornings, we've been repeatedly challenged with the need to trust completely in God and not ourselves
 - a. it seems the main lesson 2 Chronicles has to teach us is a call to undivided loyalty to Jesus
 - b. this is the consistent theme to be gleaned from the lives of the kings of Judah
6. And while that is again the theme of this passage, we also see the call to do our part
7. We must trust God, YES
 - a. we must yield to Him, COMPLETELY
 - b. we must look to Him in all things
 - c. but that doesn't mean that we then sit back and do nothing
 - d. we don't *just* pray -
 - e. we must also then *yield ourselves* to be used as the answer for what we have prayed
 - f. God does His part - And we must do ours
 - g. our part is to diligently follow Him
8. We see a perfect example of this in the gospels where Jesus told the disciples to pray that the Father would compel laborers to enter in to the harvest of lost souls
 - a. then, just days later he sent them out to preach in the cities and villages of Galilee
 - b. they became the answer to their own prayers
9. When we pray and ask the Lord to do something, we must be willing to become the answer to that prayer
10. And if we aren't, then our prayer is insincere, and the best place to start our prayer, is with a request that God would change our hearts
11. God promised Jehoshaphat and the people victory - But they would need to present themselves so that they might *witness* that victory
12. God would answer their prayer all right - but He wanted them to KNOW He was answering their prayer
 - a. in this way, their faith would be strengthened
 - b. and their love for and appreciation of Him would deepen

C. Vs. 18-21

{18} And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

{19} Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high.

{20} So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

{21} And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, For His mercy *endures* forever."

1. As the next day dawns, the people depart from Jerusalem and begin the trek eastward to the place God had told them they would meet the enemy
2. As they set out, Jehoshaphat met with the elders and together they decided that since God had promised to fight for them, they might as well go ahead and begin to thank Him for the victory, even though they hadn't entered into battle yet
3. There's an old adage that says, "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched."
4. That just doesn't apply to the promises of God
5. If God says the chicken will hatch, then forget *counting*, you can get start heating up the frying pan
6. When do you praise God? When do you lift your thanksgiving to Him?
 - a. do you wait till you see the answer?
 - b. or do you begin to thank Him and praise Him even before the answer comes because you rest confidently in His goodness and grace?
7. Most of us probably wait to thank God till after He answers - but let's face it, that isn't faith
8. It's *good* to thank God and praise Him after He has intervened and blessed us
9. Appreciation is a virtue and one we all need to cultivate
 - a. can I say as an aside . . .
 - b. I'm becoming a bit troubled at the lack of thankfulness I'm seeing in young people today
 - c. it seems it's rare to hear the words "Thank You" from children and teens
 - d. and it doesn't count when parents *have to remind* their children to say "thank you"
 - e. an attitude of appreciation and thanks should be an inner trait we cultivate and nurture in our children
10. But as Christians, we live by faith; And faith demands that we give thanks and praise to God for His goodness BEFORE we see it
11. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not yet seen [Hebrew 11:1]
12. In Philippians 4, Paul wrote,

{6} Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

{7} and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- a. our requests, directed to God, should be coupled together with an instant attitude of thanksgiving
 - b. why? because we know that no matter HOW God answers our prayers, it will be the absolute best for us
 - c. He may answer with a "Yes, No," or "Wait"
 - d. but whatever it is, it will be perfect, because He is perfect and everything He does He does perfectly
13. What other response can we give but one of praise and thanksgiving?

D. Vs. 22-24

{22} Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.

{23} For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy *them*. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

{24} So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped.

1. This three nation alliance never even made it to the battle against the people of Judah
2. They fell to fighting with one another
3. In fact, they wiped each other out
4. When Jehoshaphat and the people finally arrived at the place where the enemy camped, they were all dead!
5. The critical moment is found in v. 22

{22} Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the [enemy]

- a. it was when the people of God began to lift the praises of God that the power of God was released to defeat the enemies of God
 - b. what precisely went on behind the scene, we aren't told
 - c. we read that God set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Seir
 - d. just what these ambushes were we don't know
 - e. but I think we can venture a good guess
6. You see, we know that God's favor and blessing was with Judah and their king Jehoshaphat because they were loyal to Him
7. So that means this ungodly alliance that came against Judah had to be inspired by the enemies of God, namely the demonic realm
- a. the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites were not normally allies,
 - b. they were bitter enemies who hated each other
 - c. yet they combined to attack God's people
 - d. it often happens that the ungodly who hate one another will unite to

- oppose God
- e. we see it in the gospels when the enemies, Pilate and Herod, became friends on Good Friday
- f. indeed, demons were at work to inspire this alliance to oppose God by opposing His people
- 8. But the moment the faithful began to praise the Lord, the demonic element of the alliance was weakened
- 9. You see, it seems that the devil hates it when God is praised
 - a. it reminds him of his failed bid at rebelling against God
 - b. Satan had deluded himself in his pride at thinking he could put himself on the throne of heaven and receive the praises of the angelic realm
 - c. he was wrong, and was defeated in his attempt to wrest the throne from God
 - d. now when he hears God praised, it reminds him of his failure and the loss of his once majestic position in heaven [Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28]
 - e. and he is still so twisted by pride he cannot abide the reminder of his defeat
 - f. he is like the woman who went around her house and broke all the mirrors because she didn't want to be reminded that she was aging
 - g. he can't stand praise to God, he is allergic to it
 - h. so as soon as he gets a whiff, he jams!
- 10. When the Jews began to lift their voices in praise and thanksgiving, the demonic influence was weakened as they either fled or tried to stop their ears
- 11. Then the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites reverted to their true form and began to fight one another until they were all dead

E. Vs. 25-30

{25} When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on the dead bodies, and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil because there was so much.

{26} And on the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the LORD; therefore the name of that place was called The Valley of Berachah until this day.

{27} Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies.

{28} So they came to Jerusalem, with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets, to the house of the LORD.

{29} And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.

{30} Then the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

1. What the enemy meant for destruction, God turned to good
2. Why? Because all things work together for good, for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose [Romans 8:28]
3. God is the Master at turning dark and seemingly impossible situations around and making them a blessing to His people

4. He did it supremely at the Cross and He will do it in all the affairs and events of our lives - if we will invite Him to take control and yield ourselves in submission to Him

III. CONCLUSION

A. Like Jehoshaphat

1. Therefore, like Jehoshaphat, I want to ask you . . .
2. In light of God's great love and promise to protect and take care of us
3. What other response can we give than to praise and thank Him?
4. And we don't have to wait to see the answer - we can praise Him even before the answer comes
5. Because God cannot lie - what He has said, He will do

B. The Power of Praise

1. Friends, there is real power in praise
2. When God's people praise Him, our spiritual foes flee,
 - a. their grip is weakened
 - b. their strategies are thwarted
 - c. their counsels are confused
 - d. and their attack is blunted
3. As well, there is power in praise because it helps us to remember where our real power lies
4. You see, when we praise God, we actively turn ourselves around and re-orient our lives with Him at the center
 - a. the proud person doesn't worship or praise God
 - b. because genuine praise demands that we recognize and declare someone *greater* than ourselves
 - c. I like the way one man put it; praise de-centralizes self
 - d. praise enthrones God in one's life
 - e. maybe that's why we read in Psalm 22:3 that God is Enthroned on the praises of His people
 - f. think of that: when you and I meet here to worship and praise God, in effect, we are erecting a throne upon which God comes to sit
 - g. and when God takes His throne, His perfect rule is made manifest

C. Praise Him!

1. I'd like to close this morning with a simple word of encouragement
2. But it's directed at two groups of people;
 - a. to those who are *reluctant* to praise God
 - b. and to those who are *critical of others* because *they* aren't worshipping as exuberantly as they think they should
3. First of all, for those of us who are *reluctant* to give expression of our praise God, and you know who you are
 - a. you just don't get in to the worship time
 - b. truth be told; you *endure* the song service -- you don't *enjoy* it

- c. and if asked, you'd probably say something like, "I'm praising God. I just keep it to myself."
 - d. I wonder - when you watch a football game, and you see Jerry Rice outrun a triple team, and a hail Mary pass is thrown past him, but he reaches up, body fully extended, and the ball just grazes his middle finger, then tips and the point of the ball falls into his palm and his fingers wrap around it, then he pulls it back in toward his body while one after another those three defenders throw themselves at his legs, but he shakes them loose, and breaks the goal line as he falls forward from them grasping at his shoes
 - e. do you sit quietly on the couch without a word?
 - f. no!!!!!!
 - 1) you get up and mimic the victory dance of some of the players
 - 2) you hoot, you holler
 - 3) you call everyone in the house to come in to the room to watch the replay
4. Praise is a natural and necessary response to something good and when praise is rendered, it actually increases the enjoyment of what is being praised
 5. If you don't believe that, try watching a foot ball game without expressing yourself at all
 6. Your enjoyment of the game will be greatly diminished
 7. Praise is a natural and healthy response to excellence -
 8. And who is more excellent than God?
 9. If your spiritual life seems a bit flat and without much joy, maybe what you need to do is let loose a bit and open up to a greater expression of praise and worship
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10. And now a word to those who are really in to praise and end up being critical of others because they aren't as demonstrative in their worship
 - a. everyone is not like you!
 - b. we are all different and we are all at different places in our spiritual growth and experience
 - c. and the fact is, you have no idea if what you are doing in praising God is any more pleasing or acceptable to Him than the person next to you or in front of you
 - d. God looks on the heart - you only see the outward appearance
 - e. and friend, if in the middle of worship, you look at your neighbor and see them quietly just singing without their hands raised while yours are, and waving back and forth and you are singing at the top of your lungs, but you're thinking about how bound this poor fellow is while you are so much more right on in your *form* or worship, while in fact, he is singing quietly because he is thinking about the words "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord" and he's repenting of his sin and pride and is having a profound time in the Spirit, then guess who is really worshipping the Lord? Guess who is delighting the heart of God more
 - f. who are you to judge another's servant?

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11. Calvary Chapel has come to a sweet and precious place in our worship and praise to God
 - a. we have every reason to be thankful for Peter Garcia and Pastor Darren for their leadership in this area of our fellowship
 - b. our worship is sincere and sound
 - c. no, it's not as exuberant and excited as some places
 - d. and it is not as professional sounding as a few other places
 - e. but it is sincere and sound
 12. We occasionally get criticism from people who visit who say they'd like to attend here but want a different worship style
 - a. on the same day we may have one person tell us we are too charismatic
 - b. and the very next person will say that we aren't charismatic enough
 13. What I learned from Pastor Chuck is that when you are getting jabs from each side, that means you've probably found a healthy balance
 14. Don't worry who's around you or beside you - Don't worry about what they are or aren't doing - You = PRAISE HIM!
 15. Psa 47:6-8

{6} 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 understanding.

{8} God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.