

Text: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30

Theme: The battle belongs to the Lord; His ways are past finding out.

Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi at the Healing and Anointing Service on 30/01/2011 at 10.30am.

As a Christian, what do you do when life is coming down on you very hard? When there seems to be no way out? When your relationship with God is being affected? When you are worried or afraid? When you are in distress? What do you do when you are facing such monumental obstacles? How do you resist temptation, flee from evil, or believe beyond your ability to understand how your problems can be solved? The answer lies in the Word of God.

It is God's intention that difficult situations draw His people closer to Him. Satan of course wants to use the same circumstances to turn us away from God. If we closely read our Bibles, we will see this same situation occur again and again. God wants us to learn this lesson because it directly impacts our lives. You cannot be considered a strong believer until you know it. Why? Simply because, without it, Satan will ensnare you.

Jehoshaphat was a man like us. His first response to the news of a conglomerate of foes was fear. **We should point out here that fear in its initial stage is not sin. Fear is a God-given alarm that calls us to pay special attention to something that threatens us.** Our body starts generating special chemicals that cause us physically and otherwise to be totally alert. As in King Jehoshaphat's case, the alarm is sufficient that it finally draws his attention to what is most important. **Fears become sin when they persist in your life.** If fears do not lead to trust, then physical and emotional problems occur. Long-term fears always betray a lack of trust in God. If you have unresolved fears, then be alarmed at this and call out to God as king Jehoshaphat did. Let fears have their impact on your life by leading you to the Lord.

“Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah” (2 Chron. 20:3). This was a good leader. **A good leader doesn't always have the answers but he does always lead us to where the answer can be found.** It is a shame that many of our political leaders look to budgets to solve our problems. If we turn to other nations for help (other gods of our making), or to war, or to trickery as we have been, we will be lost as a people. And so it would have been if the people of God here did not turn to God.

Prayers based on faith (20:5-9)

What type of prayer did Jehoshaphat offer? I am amazed at how many prayers not borne of faith arise from our lips. By this I mean prayers that aren't real prayers; prayers that we just say. We are not sure if anyone is listening. We are not sure if our prayers will make any difference. We might read a prayer or make up one, but the distinguishing factor of many prayers is that they lack faith. We don't really believe we are talking to God or that God is listening. Let's contrast this with Jehoshaphat's prayer:

“LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations...” (2 Chron. 20:5-9).

He was speaking to God. We note this by the 'You' he uses to address God. We can also sense his faith when he wrestles with God. He called to mind his knowledge of God:

*“The Almighty who arrests the mighty,
who pitches his tent against the battle and owns the crown of victory.
He captivates the mighty and suppresses the oppressors.
He owns the earth and the depths below.
He rejoices in battles and never runs away from any.
He is the first and last at the battle ground.
He is the great deliverer, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”*

Prayers based on the promises of God (20:5-9)

Looking at the same verses we see the king declaring what the scriptures state. He states what God has done. Look in the book of Judges. We see that in 2 Chronicles 20:8, he is referring to Solomon’s prayer in 2 Chronicles 6-7. He has confidence that God will hear because He knows God’s Word.

So many of us neglect serious reading of God’s Word, and when we run into trouble, we turn to the scriptures. That is fine of course but **the scriptures need to be in you before the testing**, otherwise Satan brings doubts into your mind: *‘If God really cared for me, He wouldn’t...’* Did you ever have those thoughts enter your mind? That is a temptation the evil one would cause his spiritual troops to whisper in your ear. Another one might be, *‘You’re a fool. God doesn’t really exist anyway.’* Can you see how these thoughts would hold you back from crying out to God? In the king’s case he already established his faith and knowledge of the living God. He knows the scriptures, and is able to use the words of God to pray.

Prayers concerned with the will of God (20:10-13)

Jesus led His disciples to pray, *“Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...”* (Matt. 6:10). Those that come to God in genuine prayer must realize that they really want God’s will. **Witchcraft is when we use different devices, including prayers, to get something from God against His will** - when we try to manipulate God to get our will done. True prayers really want God’s will done. **We can only do this when we come to the cross. It is here that we can truly meet God and trust in His love.** We see our foolish resistance to His will and purpose for our lives. We confess our sins and ask Him to forgive us in Christ’s Name. We find our purpose in doing His will for this is the reason we were made.

“Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel... as he stood in the assembly. He said: ‘Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. Tomorrow march down against them... You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem...’” (2 Chron. 20:14-17).

What we read here is an Old Testament way of saying that God is at work because not everyone had the Spirit of God like we do. Nowadays, God speaks directly to our hearts. But in the Old Testament, He sent a prophet to tell someone what God thought they needed to hear. As all the people were seeking the Lord, the prophet spoke to everyone. His message is very interesting. He first communicated His care about them and told them not to worry and then told them how He was going to deliver them. **The key here is that God did speak. The great thing about a crisis is that the need and the answer are both rather urgent. One can see how one connects to the other.**

God comforts His people (20:15)

God's words of comfort are always so meaningful. Once we hear them, they are like a healing stream poured out into our troubled hearts. We are desperate, so vulnerable. We have no solution. We have nowhere to go. We are seeking God. We hope He hears us. But then we hear His Words. **They can come in any number of different ways but often it is right through our devotional times with Him. What did this people hear?** *“Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army, for the battle is not yours but God's.”*

Am I speaking to someone this morning, the word of the Lord? God looks at your battle over pain, dwindling finances, work instability, worries at home, concerns over children, marriage, parents, personal health, church growth and finances and He says, The battle is not yours but mine. Say 'Amen'.

God simply told them that they need not fear or be upset. He understood how this great multitude had great aims at eliminating Judah as a people. But He has seen to it that it would not happen. *‘The battle is not yours but God's.’* When God stated that He is going to take care of a problem, we can trust Him. Now we can't tell Him how He is to do that. We would simply want the problem to vanish. But God wants us to establish a deeper relationship with Him. He wants to build up our faith and trust in Him so that in such times as this we can trust Him.

The Call to Action (20:16-19)

This is the instruction that calls for faith. It is our opportunity to trust God. What is it that God asked them to do? Not much really, simply, “Go out to face them tomorrow,…” (v17). But hold on. Are these enemies not a great multitude that will wipe out the children of Israel? Sure. Is God advising them to commit suicide? That is how the evil one would tempt God's people at such a time. If he cannot dissuade us earlier on, he comes at us again and again. He says, *‘There is always a time to disbelieve God's Word. When one is desperate, what does one have to lose?’* This is why I believe it is safer to wholly trust God in dire circumstances and why self-reliance, the modern evil, is so devilish.

God went on and said more though. Usually God speaks just as loud and clear as needed. Pay attention to everything that He has said. **If you don't understand something, ask Him right away. But don't ask with doubt about God's capability or purpose, but only on clarification as to what you need to do.** This is because in times of crisis we literally cannot do much. The generals probably didn't like hearing this but what did it matter? The key here is that even though they were not to fight, they were still to respond. Pay attention very closely to what God wants you to do. Don't do more or less than He asks of you. He will give you everything you need to do your part.

In this case, they were only to go and watch. They were not to fight. But the point is that they still needed to go. They still needed to respond to God. By responding we say with our actions that we believe what we heard. If they didn't believe God, do you think they would have obeyed God? Certainly not. Even if it was easy, it was too easy.

It is surprising that a number of people turn away from saving faith because believing in Jesus is too easy. Easy for us but it was not easy for the Lord. Jesus suffered for us. When religionists focus on their own good works, they believe that it is only through tough measures that they can find hope for salvation. They just reject anything that appears too easy.

The matter of the fact is that they could not accomplish it on their own. If they could, then Jesus would not need to have come.

“Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.” Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD.” (2 Chron. 20:17-18).

Have you ever scoffed at God’s easy way? Will you now believe? Will you now obey? Tell the Lord no matter what He asks, you will do it. Then do it! As you can see, God had already done great things for the Hebrew people. He has already done great things for you as well... and more.

1. He has delivered you from the enemy called sin, by redeeming you through His Son.
2. He has brought you out of the land of the Valley of the Shadows of Death and given you a place to rest, and caused you to lie down on green pastures.
3. He has taken your heart, at one time from the home of evil, and delivered it into the hands of His Son, Jesus.

The cross is the only reason you have for any hope of deliverance from any conflict, problem, battle, or worry. The cross is the absolute guarantee of God's commitment to you that you will never be forsaken, that you will not be forgotten by God. They were delivered from the mere threat of mortal death just as you have been delivered from the threat of eternal death. They were delivered from an enemy that sought to kill them just as you have been delivered from an enemy that has sought to have you damned. The cross, the blood, the pain, the humiliation of Jesus 2000 years ago has bought you peace, safety, and security in the land of promise: eternal life with God.

This battle so long ago was not only an attempt by Satan to destroy God's people then, but it was also an attempt to destroy you now. If there was no Messianic line, there would have been no Messiah and there would be no salvation. Then we would all be lost. The God who gave you salvation through the death of his son, will He do any less for you when you face difficulties in your life? Will He let you be destroyed? No! How do you handle sin, sickness, heartbreak, pain, uncertainty, etc... Do you trust God or do you doubt? Hasn't He fed you, clothed you, and warmed you?

God has called you not that He might forsake you, but that He might sanctify you, make you holy, and that you might enjoy Him forever. You should trust in the Lord and not fear, not only because of who He is and what He has already done, but also because of what He will do. The people of Judah did not know what would happen but they trusted in the Lord.

Conclusion

Is God any different now? Are His words of Promise any less true? Jesus said,

- Come to Me all who are heavy laden and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).
- “I am with you always, even to the ends of the earth” (Matt. 28:20).
- He said that His words will not pass away (Mark 13:31).

Will you trust Him? How much will you trust Him? How much will you rest in Him? It’s up to you.