



## The Affirmation of Praise

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### TEXT:

*(2 Chronicles 20:15-22), "And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you. And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high. And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten."*

- God is a sovereign God. He has all authority, all power, all knowledge, and all control in this universe. There is nothing that escapes His attention. No event is too great, or too insignificant to avoid His scrutiny. From a supernova occurring a billion light years out in the cosmos, to a single hair that falls from your head, He knows all, sees all, and is in control of all.
- God answers to no one but Himself. There is no one to whom He is accountable. There is no authority with which we He must consult. He has no equal, no counterpart, and not even an exact opposite. He is the only self-existing one. When men swear, they call upon something greater than themselves as a witness to their word.
  - But (*Hebrews 6:13*), "...when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself. "
- God does not make mistakes.
  - (*Psalms 18:30*), "As for God, his way is perfect;" (*Matthew 5:48*), "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."
- He has all things in perfect control; His will is being carried out. Even when it appears that evil is triumphing, the reality is God's ultimate plan is being consummated. Because all is in His control, and He makes no mistakes, God cannot be coerced. While it is true that intercession may cause God to show mercy, we cannot force God to act outside His will or His word. We cannot stockpile favor with God and so obligate Him to act on our behalf.
- The scriptures enjoin us to pray, to study, and to fast. We are encouraged to worship, sing, and praise. Yet all the prayer, the studying, the fasting, the worshipping, the singing, and the praising will not move God from His sovereign purpose. There are those who would teach us to demand of God whatsoever we desired. Their "name it and claim it" theology has left many disillusioned and disappointed. Those who have bought their ideas and not received what they expected have been left feeling they had insufficient faith; or worse, that God was no longer in the miracle working business.
- I preach to you this morning that neither statement is true. When we judge our faith solely on the results that we can quantify, we set ourselves up for much disappointment. Paul would have thought his faith was insufficient had he based his rational on his "thorn in the flesh". He understood that his faith was not weak, even in the face of physical infirmity. He also understood that God is still a miracle worker! God is immutable. He does not change. There has never been a time when He could not transcend the laws of this natural realm to do a supernatural work. And if there never has been a time, there never will be a time when God cannot do the miraculous!

- *(Malachi 3:6a), "For I am the LORD, I change not."*
- The key to seeing the handiwork of God is not in coercion, but in affirming and agreeing with His word and His will. When we learn to apply the promises of scripture, with the proper motivations and attitudes, we will see results. God is not Santa Claus.
- He is the loving Father who desires to (Matthew 7:11b), "...give good things to them that ask him."
- The gifts do not come because we deserve them or have earned them. He is not looking to see if you've been "naughty or nice." They come from the benevolence of the Father.
- We read the familiar account of Jehoshaphat's battle with Moab, Ammon and Mt. Seir. The enemy was described as a "great multitude." There was fear in the camp of Judah.
  - *(2 Chronicles 20:3), "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." In the time of adversity the best place to be is on your knees! We have already said that we don't buy influence with our righteous efforts. But prayer and fasting are much more than buying influence. They are acts of obedience. It is through prayer and fasting that we align our will with the will of God. It is the submitting of flesh to the Spirit as Jesus did in Gethsemane. When faced with the impossible, Jehoshaphat turned his face toward God.*
  - *(Deuteronomy 4:29), "But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."*
- Was God gone? Was He hiding? No! He was always there waiting for someone willing to seek Him. So God answered Jehoshaphat with a promise of victory. But it is Judah's response and Jehoshaphat's subsequent action that I bring to your attention. Upon hearing God's promise of victory, they began to praise the LORD! Moab was still waiting in the trenches. Ammon was preparing for the battle. Mt. Seir was sharpening their swords. The battle plans were drawn. Alliances had been made. The enemy was just as real, and just as ready to fight. The only difference was Judah now had a promise. And the proper response to a promise is an affirmation of praise to the one who gave the promise!
- Jehoshaphat understood what so many people fail to see today. All it takes is a word from the Lord or a promise from His book, and we can praise for the victory! Jehoshaphat then appointed singers to "praise the beauty of holiness." He placed the praisers ahead of the warriors. This is the proper order. Before we do battle, before we face the trial, before we engage the enemy, we must affirm the promises with praise.
- We must understand that praise was not a prerequisite to victory. Nowhere did God tell Jehoshaphat to put the singers first. The victory was not contingent on their praise. The victory came because they had sought God with prayer and fasting, and because God had given a promise. They were not praising to get victory; they were praising because victory had already been promised. They were not trying to coerce God with songs of praise. They were thanking Him by faith for victory not yet realized. Their praise was an affirmation that they believed God would do what He said.
- Maybe you are facing a difficulty today. Perhaps you do not know this God we have been worshipping this morning. You have sought Him, but you don't know if He has heard your cry. Don't base your experience on what you may think, or what you feel. Do not look at what may have transpired in the past. You must look to His word. It is in the pages of this book that you will find the answer you are looking for. Faith comes by the word of God. Praise is the activating element that brings the promise to life. God had promised the victory to Judah. It was as good as done. But it was not until the praises were started that the victory was consummated.
- To some this book is nothing more than fiction. To others it is an accurate history of what God use to do. But for those who appropriate its promise to their lives, it is the power of God! Paul said (2 Corinthians 3:6b), "...the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The spirit is what brings this book and its promises to life. And there is no better way to engage the Spirit of God, than to praise.
  - *(Psalms 22:3), "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."*
- Praise is the dynamic force that brings the immutable promises of God in contact with the quickening Spirit.
- Praise is not coercion; it is a catalyst. A catalyst is an agent that causes a reaction between two or more forces, and yet remains unaltered when the reaction is finished. The affirmation of praise is the same both before and after the victory is won! You can praise God today for what He has promised, and you can praise Him tomorrow for what He has accomplished. The praise does not change! Why not begin affirming the promise with praise today!