

## How God Meets Our Deepest Needs: Safety – 2 Chronicles 20

Have you ever had one of those days? Do you ever feel like everybody is ganging up against you? That everyone is conspiring to make it a bad day or week or month or life?

Today I want us to look at how we can handle “one of those days”. What do you do when you're facing insurmountable, overwhelming problems?

One of the names of God in Hebrews is Yahwah-Nissi which means “I am the God who defends you.” I am the God who protects you. Literally, “I am your banner. I defend you when the odds are against you.”

One of the great examples of this is 2 Chronicles 20, turn with me there. This is one of the coolest stories in the Bible. The story is about a king named Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat started out as a priest who traveled with the Ark of the Covenant. His task was to blow a trumpet proclaiming God is here. He was a recorder in the administration of King Solomon and King David. And eventually, Jehoshaphat became King of Judah, at the age of 35 and reigned for 25 years. His career was marked with many triumphs, recorded in the Books of 1 and 2 Kings and in Chronicles. The greatest of these triumphs must have been ending the warfare that had gone on continuously between Israel and Judah since the death of Solomon. He proved to be an able ruler. He succeeded in bringing Edom under his control. He had a mighty army for his vast lands. He was feared and held in the highest regard by all surrounding nations. Philistines and Arabs, alike, brought him tributes and gifts.

The story goes that three enemy nations of Israel decided to team up and go to war against Israel at the same time. They were planning on tag-teaming Israel into submission. Jehoshaphat was in trouble. Jehoshaphat was having “one of those days.” He's got three countries coming at him and his odds of dying are three to one. You would think this would be a story of defeat and devastation but in the true ending, Jehoshaphat wins. He beats the odds because Jehoshaphat trusted God. It's a wonderful story that explains the truth of Proverbs 18:10 (NLT) - *The name of the Lord is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe.*

God doesn't put stories like this in the Bible just to teach us history. God wants to reveal His character and how we can follow Him in these stories. There are principles that we can discover when we read the Old Testament. The thing is God put this story in here to show us how to handle overwhelming odds, how to handle when you're in a battle of life.

Some of you are in a financial battle. Some of you are in a relationship battle. Some

of you are in a battle with your health. These principles found in this story apply to the battles of life you're going to face. It might seem like you're going under for the last time. What do you do?

## 1. TURN TO GOD FIRST

Before you do anything else, go directly to God. You don't pass "Go", you don't "Collect \$200". You go straight to God and say, "God, I am overwhelmed!" You ask, "God, what do You think about this situation?" and you try to get God's perspective on the problem.

The reason why is because our perspective is limited while God's perspective is eternal. He can see the beginning and the end. He can see past, present and future all at once. So you need to get a larger picture of what the problem really is that seems so overwhelming to you right now.

Jehoshaphat could have been overwhelmed. He could have believed that he had messed up with God and God would not have answered his prayers. In chapter 18, the Bible tells us that Jehoshaphat made an alliance with evil people and this made God mad. In fact, turn with me to 2 Chronicles 19:2.

Jehoshaphat could have believed that he had messed up too much and that turning to God wouldn't do anything for him. Some of us might feel the same thing. We have to remember that God does not abandon His people just because they are sinful. God is faithful even when we are not.

Jehoshaphat turned to God first, before anything else. Too often we see prayer as a last resort rather than as our first action. People will say, "I guess all we can do now is pray!" like that's the last thing – you've tried all the major things that should work. Now all we can do is pray. Your friends might ask you, "Has it come to that?!?! Is it so hopeless that all we can do is pray?"

Prayer should be your first choice, not your last resort. If you want God to help you overcome the odds in any area of your life you have to turn to Him first.

After Jehoshaphat heard about these great armies coming at him, listen to what 2 Chronicles 20:3 says. READ

Notice the king's first reaction. It says he was fearful, he was afraid.

When you're afraid in a situation, do you let that fear de-motivate you, destabilize you, depress you, discourage you? Does it cause you to want to throw in the towel and say "I give up!" even before the battle starts? You want to say, "I can't make this work.

Why should I even try? Why put forth the effort? Why even go into battle because I'm going to lose? I give up. The odds are stacked. I'm not even going to try.”

Never let an impossible situation intimidate you. Let it motivate you.

Let it motivate you to pray more. Let it motivate you to trust more. Let it motivate you to expect more from God. Let it motivate you to depend more on God. Let it motivate you to get your priorities right, to decide what's not important and worth doing. Let it motivate you to seek God first.

Jesus said the same thing. Listen to Matthew 6:32 & 33 – *Your heavenly Father knows what you need. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Jehoshaphat sought God in his stress. He headed straight to God.

When we turn to God first, we then need to:

## 2. TELL GOD THE SPECIFICS

There is no problem that is too big and there is no problem that is too small for you to pray about. God wants to be in the details of your life and want you to talk to Him about it.

It's important when the odds are stacked against you there is a certain way you need to pray that is different from the way you normally pray. Jehoshaphat gives us a model example of the three things you need to pray when you feel overwhelmed.

2 Chronicles 20:5-6

The first thing you do is **Praise God for who He is**. Why? Because we need to remind ourselves of God's greatness.

Before I talk to God about the problem, before I focus on the stress, I need to focus on God. I need to remind myself that God is bigger than the problem I am facing. Say, “God, You're all powerful. Nothing is too hard for You. With You, God, all things are possible. You rule over all kingdoms and nations.” The king here realizes that three enemy nations are coming at him yet he stops and says, “You're bigger than all the nations. I want to keep that in mind. You are bigger than anything I will ever face.” We need to praise God for Who He is.

The second thing to do in my prayer is **Recall what God has done in the past**. Look at 2 Chronicles 20:7-9

I need to recall the times when God has helped me. I need to remember the miracles that He's already done in my life and the way He's helped me. Jehoshaphat mentions three kinds of calamities: war, plagues, and famine. He says, "None of this is too hard for You. You've helped us in the past, so I know You can do it again!"

Jehoshaphat lays it all out before God and then the prayer climaxes in verse 12. Jehoshaphat basically says, "Lord, you have done great things in the past for us, do it again!" He asks God for help right now. This is the third step for us as well: we need to **Ask God for help now**. "*O God, won't You stop them?*" How about an instant replay, Lord? A repeat performance?

His prayer is actually built around three questions: Are You not? Did You not? Will You not?

"Are You not God? You're in charge." Yes, You're in charge and You're big enough to handle it.

"Did You not help us in the past?" Yes. You did help us in the past.

"Will You not do it again?" Yes, You'll do it again.

That's the way you need to pray when you're overwhelmed. No matter what the situation is praise God for who He is, recall what He's done, and ask God to do it again.

You see, Jehoshaphat shows us that we need to turn to God first, then tell God the specifics, then...

### **3. TELL GOD EXACTLY HOW YOU FEEL**

I need to confess my inability and my inadequacy and I need to be honest if I'm afraid or scared. There are times when I need to tell God exactly how I feel.

Look at Jehoshaphat in the second part of verse 12

Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever felt powerless, like there was a problem in your marriage, your career, or somewhere in your life that you thought was overwhelming? There's no way to succeed in this. You start the beginning of the week thinking maybe you can handle it, but about Wednesday you're out of power. And by Friday you're thinking, "I don't know if I can face another week of this."

Tragedies come, lives fall apart. What often remains is stress. Over commitment. Deadlines. Unrealized expectations. People problems. And bills, who can forget

bills? It often becomes too much. Just when you thought that was the worst, something else happens.

We have all been there. We have all done that. Life. It can become stressful and stress can produce fractures in our soul.

There was an article in Sports Illustrated that talks about a recurring phenomenon in athletes: stress fractures. “A stress fracture begins when the shocks and strain of playing a game create microscopic cracks in the outer layers of bone – usually in the legs and feet. If the pounding continues and those crevices, which often go undetected, aren’t allowed to heal, they can enlarge. When the cracks become large enough to cause pain, they are stress fractures.”

Did you catch that? If healing does not take place the stress fractures can enlarge. That is exactly what I am talking about. If life’s pains go unhealed they will enlarge.

Stress fractures are not just something athletes are susceptible to. The cracks are not limited to bones. The worst stress fracture can be that of a stress-fractured spirit.

Some treat their stress fractures with alcohol and drugs, extramarital affairs, pornography, or hyperactive lifestyles. One pastor said, “That’s no treatment ... it’s more like pouring a jug of gasoline on a match. There has to be a better way.”

Jehoshaphat was stressed. In the face of this stress, he poured himself out to God for healing. Jehoshaphat told God exactly how deep his pain was. He proclaimed that he had no power and that he was totally at his wits end. He didn’t know what to do. He needed God!

That's where we come to the next step.

I must turn to God first  
I tell Him the details  
I tell Him how I exactly feel and then...

#### 4. I TRUST GOD TO HELP ME

“...But our eyes are on You.” That is how Jehoshaphat ends his prayer. He is showing his utmost trust in God in a dark situation.

When we're overwhelmed all we tend to see is the problem. We don't look to God. We don't put our eyes on God. We put our eyes on the problem. Most people, when asked will say, “I'm doing ok, under the circumstances.” *Under the circumstances?* What are you doing under the circumstances? Who put you there? Why don't you get on top of the circumstances? Circumstances are like a mattress on your bed. You get on top of them and you'll rest easy. You get underneath them and you're going to suffocate. What are you doing under the circumstances? You put yourself there. It's what you focus on.

Corrie Ten Boom once said, "If you look at the world, you will be distressed. If you look within, you will be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you will be at rest." It all depends on what you have your eyes on.

What are you focusing on right now? If you're discouraged, it's not God. You can't be discouraged and focus on God at the same time. You know who He is and You know what He's done and He can help you again. When Jehoshaphat totally trusted God, look how God responds:

2 Chronicles 20:14-17

“The battles is not yours but God’s”. God says “Relax and trust Me to help you.”

A little boy was spending his Saturday morning playing in his sandbox. In the process of creating roads and tunnels for his toy cars, he discovered a large rock in the middle of the sandbox. The boy dug around the rock, managing to dislodge it from the dirt. He pushed and nudged the rock across the sandbox by using his feet. He was a very small boy and this was a very large rock. When he got it to the edge of the sandbox, however, he found that he couldn't roll it up and over the little wall.

Determined the little boy pushed, shoved and pried but every time he thought he had made progress the rock fell back into the sandbox. Again the little boy pushed and shoved until he smashed his chubby fingers and burst into tears of frustration.

All this time the boy's father watched from the living room window as the drama unfolded. At the moment the tear fell, a large shadow fell across the boy and the sandbox. It was the boy's father. Gently but firmly he said, “Son, why didn't you use all the strength you had available?”

Defeated the boy sobbed back, “But I did, daddy, I did. I used all the strength I had!”

“No, son,” corrected the father kindly. “You didn’t use all the strength you had. You didn’t ask me.”

And then the father reached down, picked up the rock and removed it from the sandbox.

God brought some of you here this morning so He could say this to you – I hope you're listening – “The battle is not yours but God's.”

Some of you came here this morning saying, “God, I'm so tired! I can't do this. It is too hard. It is too much. It requires too much emotional and physical and spiritual energy. I cannot keep up. I quit!” God says, “I am here.” God says, “You give up? Good. I’ve been waiting for this for years. Are you going to start letting Me take over?”

What does God want you to do if He doesn’t want you to fight in the battle? What are you supposed to do when you’re facing an overwhelming situation?

Two words: “*Stand strong*”. What does it mean to stand strong? It is a mental attitude. It’s an attitude of quiet confidence. I’m not going to get ahead of God but I’m not backing up either. I’m going to stay put and watch God work. I am going to stand strong. I’m not going to turn tail and run.

It is perhaps the most quotable quote of all time. The great FDR telling a troubled nation, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” FDR is partly right. Perhaps it is not the only thing, but we should not fear fear. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of life’s stresses.

God says, “When you come to me for help, remember that the battle is no longer yours, it belongs to me.” Do not fear. Do not tremble. Stand firm. Keep your mind on things above, not of things on earth. God speaks to us continuously throughout scripture about our need to overcome fear. There is no threat that God cannot handle.

What do I stand firm on? Christ!

Romans 5:1-2 - *We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace **in which we now stand**. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

### **Jesus is:**

The Son of Man

The First and the Last

The Living One Who Died

The Son of God

The Faithful and True Witness

Creator

The Lion of the Tribe of Judah

The Root of David

The Lamb

The Shepherd

Christ, the Anointed One  
Faithful and True  
The Word of God  
King of Kings

Lord of Lords  
Alpha and Omega  
The Beginning and End  
The Bright and Morning Star

...and these are just from one book in the New Testament, Revelation!

We need to trust in the name of Jesus!

Proverbs 18:10 (NLT) - *The name of the Lord is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe.*

God wants to help you, all you have to do is put your faith in His son, Jesus Christ.

Do you believe...?