

A SPECIAL DAY OF PRAYER
2 Chronicles 20:1-13

Intro: In our text for tonight we have the record of a great emergency which faced King Jehoshaphat and the nation of Judah. Three mighty nations had joined together to conquer Judah. They were the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the people of Mount Seir, who were the Edomites.

Their names tell us that they were three nations related to Israel:

- 1) The Moabites were the descendants of Lot by his older daughter.
- 2) The Ammonites were the descendants of Lot by his younger daughter.
- 3) The people of Mount Seir, who are not mentioned until verse 10, were the descendants of Esau. This is confirmed by Gen. 36:9, 20, 21.

We do not know how many there were in the combined army of these three nations, but we do know that it was enough to make Jehoshaphat fear what it could mean for him and for his people. We do know that the combined forces of the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites was so great that it took three days to gather the spoil. And so it truly was a time of great national emergency. How far away the enemy was, we do not know. But we know that they were on their way, and so, whatever Jehoshaphat was going to do, he needed to do as quickly as he could.

He could have sought help from Israel, but the Lord had already dealt with him about his relationship with Israel through the prophet, Jehu. See chapter 19. In verse 12 we are told that he did not know what to do! And so he did a very wise thing: **He called a day of prayer.**

Many people would have thought that it was not an appropriate time to pray. The enemy was coming, and they needed to prepare for war. They might pray at some other time, would have been their argument, but this was hardly time to set everything else aside to pray.

However, the situation was so serious that it seems that Jehoshaphat did not have any opposition from the people when he called this special day of prayer, and so a large group of people from all over Judah came to seek the blessing of the Lord. And it was Jehoshaphat himself who led the prayer meeting, and who did the praying.

We are coming to a day of prayer. We are not faced with a situation like Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah faced. As

far as we know, there is no threat to our physical safety. But we do have an Enemy, a very powerful Enemy, an invisible Enemy. We can also say that we are living in enemy territory. And what makes it even more serious and dangerous is the fact that each one of us has a divided heart. It seems that we can so quickly turn against our Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we have a real need for a day of prayer. But not just for a day of prayer; we have a need to spend much time in prayer every day that we live. We are not here just as inhabitants of this world to do the best we can in a difficult situation, but we are here to bear witness to the saving grace of Christ, and that is what makes our Enemy that much more determined to wipe us out, if he possibly can. The person who claims to be a Christian, but is not faithful in prayer, simply does not understand how serious our situation is.

However, tonight we are talking about A SPECIAL DAY OF PRAYER which was called long ago by King Jehoshaphat. I want to examine his prayer with you. Perhaps we can learn more about prayer from Jehoshaphat's prayer, a prayer that touched the heart of God then, and the kind of a prayer which is liable to touch the heart of God even in our day.

What we have in verse 6 can probably be described as:

I. JEHOSHAPHAT'S RECOGNITION OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD
(2 Chron. 20:6).

Here at Trinity Bible Church we speak often of the sovereignty of God. It is a truth of Scripture which we love very much. But what are we specifically to understand about this expression, the sovereignty of God?

Well, it probably would be hard to find a better verse than verse 6 to help us understand what the sovereignty of God is, and what it means. Look at the verse with me.

It means that He is God in heaven. That immediately places Him above any and everything that is on the earth. He is the eternal, almighty Creator; we are, along with every other person on the face of the earth, just a part of His creation. We did not just happen; He created us. It was true of Jehoshaphat's generation; it is true of us today. By calling God "the Lord God of our fathers," Jehoshaphat was acknowledging that what He was to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He continued to be. The generation on the earth might have been replaced by another generation, and then another, on down to Jehoshaphat's day, but the Lord God continued on and remained the same Lord over all of creation, over all of the nations of the earth.

We further see the sovereignty of God in the fact that He rules over His creation. He is not just an observer; His is carrying out His plans. He is seeing to it that His will is being done. His hand is to be seen in everything that occurs. There is no nation on the face of the earth that controls its own destiny; national destinies are in the hand of "the Lord God...in heaven!"

What a comfort that was to Jehoshaphat! And it ought to be to us, too. The Republicans talk like the destiny of America is in their hands, and the Democrats are trying to get us to believe that our destiny is in their hands. Both political parties are wrong on that score. There has never been a nation on the face of the earth that was not under the ruling hand and control of Almighty God, and there never will be!

And to make the picture even more complete to his own heart, Jehoshaphat declared another truth in the question that he asked of the Lord. He said, "And in thine hand is there not power and might, **so that none is able to withstand thee?**" Jehoshaphat was a king who knew his theology.

Why use "power and might"? Isn't power might, and might power?

By "power" Jehoshaphat evidently was speaking of the force or might to do what He wanted to do. By "might" it seems that He was speaking of the victory that the Lord could always claim. Putting the two together we see that the Lord is strong enough to do what He wants, and that He is always completely victorious. He has never lost a battle yet, and, what is more, He never will!

Nobody, not even the combined forces of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, can successfully resist the purposes of Almighty God. Instead, as Solomon had written years before in Prov. 16:4 under the direction of the Holy Spirit,

The Lord has made all things for himself,
yea, even the wicked for the day of doom.

Puny man thinks he is so great, that he is sovereign! But he is nothing. And if you put a million nothings together, or a billion nothings, all you have is still nothing! None of us will really understand ourselves, nor will we understand what is going on in the world, until we understand the sovereignty of God. And it ought to be important to all of us to see that in a time of extreme danger Jehoshaphat took great comfort and was strengthened in his faith when he recognized the sovereignty of the "Lord God."

But let us go on to verse 7. Here we find that Jehoshaphat

claimed for himself and for his people:

II. A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO GOD (2 Chron. 20:7).

Note: "Our God...thy people...Abraham thy friend..."

Many people will say that God is sovereign in perhaps a limited way, but not everyone can say, as Jehoshaphat said, "Art not thou our God?" And he went on to ask, "Did you not drive out before us the people who used to be in this land?" And then he added, "And did you not give it to us as the seed of Abraham for ever, Abraham Your friend?"

Now let me ask you a question: Who established the friendship which existed between Abraham and God? Did Abraham? Certainly not! God did! God sought out and called Abram of Ur of the Chaldees to Himself at a time when Abram was perfectly content in his heathenism. God chose him, and sought him, and brought him to Himself, and led him into the land of Canaan, and promised to give that land to him and to his seed for an everlasting possession.

Would God go back on His promises? Would God, the Lord God, turn His back upon His friend, and His people! Certainly not!

What do we see in this seventh verse? It has election written all over it, doesn't it? Jehoshaphat was saying, in so many words, "You, Lord, chose Abraham to be your friend. And you chose us, his family to be your people, and you gave us this land. Lord, it is your purposes which are being threatened by these nations. We don't appeal to you on the basis of what we have done for you, but on the basis of what you have done for Abraham and for us!"

Let me tell you something which probably most of you already know, but let me say it anyway: There are times in our lives when our greatest source of comfort is in the fact that we are the chosen ones of God! Many people who claim to be the Lord's people ridicule and reject the doctrine of election today, but they do it to the dishonor of the God of heaven, and they rob their own souls of one of the greatest sources of comfort in special times of need.

I am sure that Jehoshaphat did not plan this prayer, and have it all written out before the people got there. He was pouring out his heart to the Lord, a heart that had been established in the sovereignty of God and in the great and holy doctrine of election.

I could say more about this, but let me go on to the next

point in the prayer which is:

III. THE PROMISES OF GOD (2 Chron. 20:8, 9).

In these two verses we have an abbreviated form of the prayer which Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple. You will find the full prayer in 1 Kings 8. But what is just as important is the fact that in 1 Kings 9 the Lord told Solomon that He had heard his prayer, and that He would answer it throughout Israel's history whenever, in times of trouble, they would turn to Him for help instead of seeking help elsewhere and continuing on in their sin.

So here again is a very important part of prayer that touches the heart of God. He is delighted when we know His promises, but He is also delighted when we stand upon His promises. We come to the Lord not to tell Him the great things that we have done, or will do. We come to the Lord to tell Him that we believe His Word, and that we are trusting Him to fulfill His promises to us.

Let us never forget the Word of God when we pray. The Lord is always pleased when we remind Him of His Word.

As we come down toward the close of the prayer, we see:

IV. JEHOSHAPHAT'S APPEAL TO THE JUSTICE OF GOD (2 Chron. 20:10, 11).

Although Isaiah had not yet written his prophecy, Jehoshaphat probably knew the truth expressed by Isaiah in the latter part of the eighteenth verse of Isaiah 30, "the Lord is a God of judgment."

Sometimes in our thoughts, if not audibly, we accuse God of not being fair. That is because we do not see the full picture of what God is doing. God is never unfair. He is always righteous. We do not always see the answers to our prayers as quickly as Jehoshaphat did on this occasion, but undoubtedly there were times when Jehoshaphat had to wait, too. But Jehoshaphat showed here that he believed what Abraham had declared in his question years before, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25b). The Lord had spared these nations; would He let them now destroy what God had done before?

When we appeal to the justice of God, or to the righteousness of God (which is practically the same), we are making a powerful appeal to our God Who has never been unrighteous in any of His dealings with His people.

And now we come to the last point in Jehoshaphat's prayer.

V. HIS, AND THE NATION'S, REQUEST (2 Chron. 20:12, 13).

Jehoshaphat used a lot of questions in his prayer, didn't he? Even his request was a prayer. We can detect a note of submission, and a note of dependence, in the way he presented their request to the Lord. He was not commanding the Lord to help them. He was coming with child-like faith, trusting in the goodness of God to help them.

Why was he coming to the Lord? For three reasons:

- 1) First, they were completely outnumbered and overpowered by the forces of the enemy: "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us."
- 2) Second, they did not know what else they could do: "Neither know we what to do."
- 3) Third, their eyes were upon the Lord.

Verse 13 gives us a very precious picture, doesn't it? It wasn't just the men who were there, but the wives, and the children as well (by which we would include their young people).

What does this teach us about prayer?

It teaches us that there is power in united prayer. Men, don't feel that you are not needed on Saturday morning. The Lord would be pleased if every man in this congregation would be at the prayer meeting on Saturday morning. United prayer can mean greater blessing. Jehoshaphat was apparently the only man who prayed audibly, but his men were with him.

And so were the ladies! Ladies, your prayers are important, too. Your presence is important. And the same can be said for the young people and children. Not everyone can take part publicly, but it is important for us all to be at our day of prayer.

I love the sight that the Lord has given us here: men, women, young people, children--all responding to their King, and in their hearts joining with him as he sought the blessing of the Lord upon their lives in that time of extreme danger.

Concl: Let me mention a couple of other things as I close, and I hope that you will remember them for your own private prayers, family prayers, and prayers when we gather together as a church.

Please notice that Jehoshaphat did not begin with his

request. He focused his attention, and the attention of his people, on the Lord first of all--His sovereignty, His election, His Word, His justice, and finally His goodness. And then we have His request. We all are guilty of presenting our requests first, and then, if we have the time and inclination, we will worship the Lord and remember some of the things about the Lord that can strengthen our faith as we come to Him in a time of need.

The last thing is this: This was a prayer for their nation. Should it not be an encouragement for us to pray for our nation, too. We certainly cannot claim for our country the place that Israel has had, and still has, in the plan and purpose of God, but we are encouraged in Scripture to pray for all who are in authority. What we need before our national elections take place is a national day of prayer. We can't hope for that from our leaders because it is probably true that most of them do not know the Lord. I am sure that most of us are heartsick when we see what is going on in our country, and we fear the consequences of our sin. We also have to confess as Jehoshaphat did that we don't have the power to change anything. We may know what needs to be done, but we cannot do it. But let us say for our nation, "But our eyes are upon thee." Let that appeal come from all of us. Only God can change the hearts of our leaders. Only the Lord can change the hearts of our citizens. We are in the troubles we are in because we have forgotten the Lord, and they are only going to get worse as long as we forget Him.

So as far as we are concerned, let us make sure that we are living lives pleasing to the Lord, and let us on our day of prayer, and on every day, be crying out to the Lord for His mercy and His grace to be upon us through the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.