

Spiritual Revival: Pray

As we continue to study the biblical theme of spiritual revival from 2 Chronicles, we now come to a text that emphasizes the need for concerted prayer among God's people.

2 Chronicles 20:1-30

1 After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. **2** Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi). **3** Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. **4** And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

5 And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, **6** and said, "O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. **7** Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? **8** And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, **9** 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.' **10** And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy—**11** behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. **12** O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

13 Meanwhile all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. **14** And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. **15** And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the Lord to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's. **16** Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. **17** You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the Lord will be with you."

18 Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. **19** And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

20 And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed." **21** And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say,

"Give thanks to the Lord,
for his steadfast love endures forever."

22 And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. **23** For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and

when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.

The Lord Delivers Judah

24 When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the horde, and behold, there were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped. 25 When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much. 26 On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the Lord. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Beracah to this day. 27 Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had made them rejoice over their enemies. 28 They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the Lord. 29 And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. 30 So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

In verse 1 it is clear that Jehoshaphat and God's people are threatened by Moabites and Ammonites — so are we! The need of the hour in Jehoshaphat's day is a powerful visitation from God, and we need the same today. We learn some important lessons from this text.

I. A spiritual revival is always preceded by concerted prayer (vv. 1-13)

Dr. Edwin Orr, 20th century scholar on revivals, once said: "History is silent about revivals that did not begin with prayer." Also we have from E.M. Bounds these words: "Every revival of which we have any record has been bathed in prayer."

When we examine Jehoshaphat's prayer we see three key attributes:

a. He prayed fervently (vv. 1-5)

We have instances with all of the first four kings of Judah of prayers to God in times of distress, but perhaps this is the most remarkable one of them all. Jehoshaphat was not a perfect king. He was confronted by four different prophets about his tendency to create ungodly alliances. He even allowed his son to marry King Ahab's daughter, which turned out to be disastrous for the kingdom of Judah. Nonetheless, King Jehoshaphat knew how to pray. Charles Spurgeon once said, "I would rather teach one man to pray than 10 men to preach." William Cowper said, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees." Jehoshaphat prayed fervently. He gathered the people of God — men, women, children — to fast and pray together.

b. He prayed reverently (vv. 6-7)

Notice that Jehoshaphat exalts God's sovereignty in verse 6 and his faithfulness to his promises in verse 7. He is clearly praying to the one true living God, just as we do today, praying to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

c. He prayed humbly (vv.8-13)

We notice three aspects of his humble prayer:

- 1) He prayed at God's invitation (vv.8-9)
- 2) He confessed two insuperable problems (vv.10-12a)
 - Our enemies' power
 - Our impotence and ignorance

It is when we are weak that we are strong (See the testimony of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12)

- 3) He confessed he had only one solution: "But our eyes are on you."

II. God answers our prayers (vv.14-25)

Notice that God speaks to us of His power in verses 14-17 and He enables us to answer and obey in verses 18-21. Then notice that our enemies are completely subdued in verses 22-25. As Sidlow Baxter once said, “Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers.”

III. Revival brings unspeakable joy (vv. 26-30)

- a. We bless the Lord unceasingly (vv.26-28)
- b. We find our rest (vv. 27-30)

As William Carey once said, “Prayer—secret, fervent, believing prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness.”

Discussion Questions

1. Why are spiritual revivals always preceded by concerted prayer?
2. Describe Jehoshaphat’s prayer. What about his prayer encourages or challenges you the most?
3. What did God tell His people to do in verses 15-17? What is unusual about these instructions? What do we today most need to hear and heed in these instructions?
4. What did Jehoshaphat emphasize in his words to Judah?
5. What was the end result of God’s presence with His people? What would that look like in today’s world?

Going Deeper

1. How do your prayers typically compare with those of Jehoshaphat? How do your prayers need to mature?
2. Are you praying for personal spiritual revival? For your churches’ revival? Your cities? Nations?