

## 2 Chronicles 20 p.372

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, a 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.

## 1 Timothy 6:11-12 p.993

### *Fight the Good Fight of Faith*

11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, 14 to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.

## 2 Chronicles 20 p.372

**Daily Prayer** in Booklets – it can help us take hold of our faith practically and powerfully

Great story from the OT in 2 Chron 20. p. 372

▶ 1 After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against **Jehoshaphat** for battle.

**Jehoshaphat** – King of Judah (divided against Israel). Lots of bad kings recorded in the Bible – Jehoshaphat did a lot to be a good king. We see here how he was a godly leader

▶ 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).

Trouble! Coming your way!

What’s your response when you hear trouble’s coming?

How do you feel? What do you?

▶ 3 Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

How did he feel? His emotional response was **fear**.

What did he do?: **set his face to seek the Lord**, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

**Set his face:** determined course of action. What I’m going to do is *this*, and *this* is exactly what I’m going to do.

**Seek the Lord:** if God really is at the centre of reality, it makes obvious sense to seek him. Sometimes we seek other things in a good way – friends, advisors, mentor, experts. Some times we seek other things in bad ways – illicit use of money, sex, drink, drugs, power, control.

J simply put God first. Above all the rest – God first.

He proclaimed a fast. **Fasting** – one way of trying to focus on God. Not a religious behaviour to manipulate some approval from God, but a way of focusing attention on him, shutting out other distractions.

▶ 4 And Judah *assembled* to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

**Assembly** – putting God first *with others*. Great Leadership: calling everyone together *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.

**Worship.** Jehoshaphat led them in **Worship** – saying how great God is, praising him. This is an affirmation of reality – the way things truly are.

God doesn’t need to hear this to make Him feel alright about himself. It’s us – *we* need to know and remember how great God is to help *us* when we’re frightened or in trouble in any way.

▶ 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?

**Thanksgiving** – remembering what God has done in the past. J knew the story of the Israelites – they had been miraculously delivered out of slavery into freedom. It was a tough journey – but they got there, they got to the promised land.

In trouble and crisis, J took hold of history and held it up as proof of God’s greatness.

**Community Worship & Thanksgiving** are vital parts of lives. So often people who come to church troubles say to me afterwards “I feel better now; I’m glad I came.” Worshipping helps us to re-gain true perspective. We put God first, focus on him, and we understand again how great he is and we begin to be reassured.

(Communion Prayer – tells the story of what God has done for us.)

One reason why Sunday and other days/times of worship with others should be the first priority for us every week.

▶ 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.’

**Taking hold of history** also gives an example to follow. This is what Abraham and the people did – this is what we’ll do too.

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. 12a O our God, will you not execute judgment on them?

Crying out trouble to God. It's not fair, J says, that they should come against us. Israel should have dealt with this. It was someone else's problem, not ours. Now they're coming after us.

Many of us – me especially are good identifying who should have done something about whatever trouble I face. I can shout and scream “It's not fair” very easily. Maybe you can too.

Jehoshaphat does that here – but there's one really big difference.

Remember: he has set his face to God. He gets together with his people, and, with them, tells God.

“Will you not do it, will you not execute judgment?”, He says. And then comes another statement of reality, along with another demonstration of wisdom, integrity and reality:

► 12b 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.”**

Sooner or later all of us feel like this – powerless and fearful.

Perhaps it's worse when we think we do know what to do about it.

Here, though, J is clear. We're powerless, frightened and we really don't know what to do about it.

We don't know what to do, that is, apart from this one thing: **we fix our eyes on you.**

It could have been all those other things – looking for military allies, raising up the army, trying diplomacy and politics, appeasement or sabre-rattling; great oratory or empty promises; whatever.

But remember J has set his face to seek the Lord – and when you set your face, you pretty much have to fix your eyes too.

We're frightened. We're clueless. We don't know what to do. So we are just going to set our face, fix our eyes on you.

What's your response when trouble is coming? So often, when trouble hits, we don't do what Jehoshaphat did.

Sometimes instead of turning to God, we blame him or reject him. Then we miss out on him, and either put our trust in something or someone else for a while, or just sink into despair.

J had it right – set your face, fix your eyes, on God – the worse it gets, the harder the concentration.

That isn't about ignoring the problem, pretending all is well when it's not. Jehoshaphat has already acknowledged openly and exactly just what's going on. But he still clearly states he is first and foremost going to trust in God – seek God's face, fix his eyes on God.

► 13 Meanwhile all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

It's a touching picture isn't it? An entire community under threat of death and destruction, gathering before God, looking to him, trusting him, putting him first, united in their trust.

That's what we're to do too – for families and our community. We need to cry out to God and seek his face. Right now, families and communities are being destroyed by broken ways of life. As many as are willing need to follow the example of Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah.

► 14 And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly.

The Spirit! HS makes appearances in OT – here’s one of them. It’s prophecy – Jahaziel speaking out God’s heart, God’s words, to warn or to encourage his people:

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.

They’ve cried out to God; now God speaks to them. **Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s.**

Fantastic words! How much better would life be if we could know and believe this in our troubles.

► 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.”

God promises to act for them. They won’t have to fight – he will do the fighting: **You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf,**

We’re so ready to go with our own battles, do things in our strength. We’re so prone to leave God out of it unless we really have to include him

Our battles would go so much more smoothly if only – if only we’d let God do the fighting.

► 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, worshipping 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.

The response? More **Worship!** Renewed, strengthened, deepened trust. There’s a ‘virtuous circle’ going on here:

The more we worship in a heartfelt way, the more we believe and trust. The more we believe and trust the more we listen.

The more we listen, the more we see and discern God in action, the more we launch out doing what he says in faith – and that always brings us back to deeper and greater worship again.

► 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.”

They were encouraged – they were *couragified* if you like– they received hope where there hadn’t been any, but only fear.

When the day began – in the morning, when the battle lay looming and ominous before them – they take hold of it all again. I re-iterated what God has said and done the day before: **Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.**

And then: *they did what they’d been told.* They didn’t get ready with swords and shields. They didn’t draw up battle lines. They didn’t fortify their positions. Instead...

► 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.”

He set up a worship group. He got them to sing worship songs. They got out the psalms and sang them. They *worshipped* again. Out of obedience, they worshipped as a community once again.

And the anchor of it was the **LOVE** of God. They sang of how much God loved them, and how that love never changed or went away,

► As they did, this is what happened:

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 people they thought were coming to get them instead turned on each other, and did each to death and destruction. God was true to his word: he fought, and they didn't have to. 2 Chronicles 20.

I love that story – there's so much in it. The world laughs at us for trusting God and believing in him and calling out to him – but the testimony of so many for thousands of years is that the more we trust him in our battles, the better life proves to be.

Trusting God fully:

- setting our face towards him
- fixing our eyes on him
- Worshipping him
- Thanking him for what he's already done
- Trusting him even when we don't know what to do
- Listening when he speaks encouragement
- Believing him when he speaks
- Obeying him and doing, putting into practice, what he tells us

Trusting God fully in our battles means life gets better. The battles don't disappear; they still come. But life is better, more hopeful, more joyful.

Now as I've been talking, maybe you're aware of battles in your life, past and present.

Maybe you can now thank God for the victories he's won for you – you're on that path of hopeful living in your battles, learning to trust him more.

Or maybe it's still dark for you: you've struggled to believe that God is good and his love endures for ever. You've looked elsewhere, and the battle didn't get much better, or got worse.

The reason I think it's a good idea to take this prayer booklet and to start to use it is because it puts in practice so much of what Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah did in this story.

There is one big, crucial difference, though. The story of Jehoshaphat comes in the OT.

The story we take hold of is one better than one tribe, the Israelites, being delivered out of slavery in Egypt into the promised land of Canaan.

The story we take hold of is the story of all the nations, every nation, all humanity being delivered out of slavery to sin and shame and pain into the promised land of God's kingdom of freedom and justice and peace and joy.

Jehoshaphat had Abraham, as do we. But now we also have the true and better Abraham, Jesus.

Jesus is 100% God and 100% human – he humbled himself, came down from heaven to live like us, and with us, and for us.

He did great things – gave a foretaste of life in God’s kingdom, by giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, freedom from oppressive evil forces, even raising the dead. He gave genuine hope in God to ordinary people right in the middle of all their battles. He told them and showed them that God was with them in all their troubles and was committed to delivering them into freedom.

And then came his greatest battle: He was rejected, and tortured to death. The best man with the best, most good life ever lived, suffered the complete injustice and humiliation of death on a cross. Sometimes our battles don’t seem to have a good outcome.

Tim Keller: “The basic premise of religion– that if you live a good life, things will go well for you– is wrong. Jesus was the most morally upright person who ever lived, yet He had a life filled with the experience of poverty, rejection, injustice, and even torture.”

*But this is exactly what God chose to do for the love of us.*

God himself took our place, and out of his never-ending love, died for us.

Our sins – all that we have done and all that we are that is contrary to God’s good ways – are taken away on the cross. We’re washed clean, made new.

All that has bound us and oppressed us and enslaved us destroyed us in – everything that has ever been done to hurt us – is all taken care of on the cross. We’re washed clean, made new.

Jesus had to trust God in the hardest of battles, and trust that God would turn it for his good and the good of the whole world – including us.

And even in that ultimate battle we all must face, death itself, Jesus was vindicated by God, who raised him up from the dead to a whole new kind of life.

That means we too can start a new kind of life.

The same Holy Spirit that spoke to Jahaziel raised Jesus from the dead.

And the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead can live in us too – raising us to new life spiritually now, and one day physically too, in God’s new heaven and new earth. We gradually become the good, life to the full people we’re meant to be.

As we wait, we know the the devil is beaten, and we no longer have to live out lives of deception and untruth and accusation and condemnation: satan is beaten, and we can deny him any place in lives with the authority and power Jesus gives us in our battles. Jesus has won the battle – we just have to use his name against the enemy to win so many battles that seem terrifying.

The battles we think are ours turn out to be God’s; he has already won them. All we really have to do is trust him and take hold of him and the history of what Jesus has done.

This daily, morning prayer takes hold of what Jesus has done, and equips us to face each day with renewed hope and expectation.

Like Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah who all gathered together, I’d like us to do this as a church family, part of God’s redeemed people worldwide.

Let's commit to gathering and praying and worshipping and crying out together, to God and for each other and our families, children and community.

Pray it with your husbands/wives. Explore it and work through it with friends. Community groups to discuss things and share experiences of how to apply all this.

And let's take the time every morning to pray through this prayer remember who God is and who we are, and what he has done already, and what we have.

Like FiC – the more you put in the more you'll get out of it.

It means daily surrender of ourselves to him, a willingness to trust and believe and obey, in the enough times and the good times.

Paul says

**Fight the good fight of the faith.**

**Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called** and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, 14 to **keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.**

## PRAYER

Perhaps you're in a peaceful phase: train now, practice now, get ready now, take hold of the blessings and get ready for the next battle.

Perhaps you're in the thick of a raging battle: take up the blessings you already have in Jesus Christ right now; hold on, and don't let go.

- **Set your face to seek the Lord**
- **We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.**
- **Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf.**
- **Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed.**
- **His love endures for ever**

Let's pray this together now:

■ 1 My dear Lord Jesus, I come to you now to be restored in you – to renew my place in you, my allegiance to you, and to receive from you all the grace and mercy I so desperately need this day. I honour you as my sovereign Lord, and I surrender every aspect of my life totally and completely to you. I give you my body as a living sacrifice; I give you my heart, soul, mind and strength; and I give you my spirit as well. I cover myself with your blood 1 *John* 1:9 – my spirit, my soul and my body. And I ask your Holy Spirit to restore my union with you, seal me in you, and guide me in this time of prayer.