



[6:45] This is love, not that we loved you, but you loved us and sent your Son to be the beloved Saviour. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for the historical reality of His coming from heaven to earth. We thank you for the historical reality of His living a life of 33 years upon this earth.

We thank you for the historical reality of His teaching, of His mighty works, His miracles. We thank you for the historical reality of His miracles. We thank you for all the words that He uttered. We thank you too for that deep reality that through a most unjust and cruel system that He was brought to the cross of Calvary and crucified there, that He spent His life blood, His body was broken and He died.

And we thank you for the fact that He was broken and that He was broken and that He was broken and that He was broken and that He was broken.

We thank you for the forgiveness of His sins. We thank you for the forgiveness of our sins, for the cleansing, for all that is against us being ripped away so that we might come into your holy presence as a forgiven people.

[8:27] We thank you so much for the grace that has been lavished upon us. We thank you for Calvary today. And we thank you and we say our amen to the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That the grave could not hold Him, but He rose again from the dead and is now seated at your right hand in that place of authority and power and has the right title of King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And we thank you that today we do not need to look anywhere else for salvation, for security, for hope, for assurance. Indeed, there is no other place that we could find these things except and only in the person of the work of Jesus Christ.

And we thank you, our Father, for giving us such a Savior, a Savior who loves us, who cares for us, who keeps us, and one that we can be with and will be with forever.

Because when we die, we know that that is not the end. But you will take us to be with yourself and we will be granted new bodies, a new life, an everlasting life.

[9:38] And we will praise and worship you in a way that we've never been able to manage upon this earth. Oh, Lord, we thank you for these wonderful realities and blessings that lie ahead of us.

That though this world is in a wretched condition in so many ways, with so much hopelessness and fear and anxiety, we are so blessed that we do not have to be overwhelmed by these matters, but we can turn to you.

And so we do so this morning and we ask that we may worship and praise and love you in such a manner during our time together. We want to adore and give you honor and worship.

And we pray these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. We're going to sing again a song which has a title Across the Lands, which rejoices in the reality of all that Jesus Christ is.

You're the one of God and Father, from before the war began. Every star and every planet has been fashioned by your hands.

[11:06] All creation holds together by the power of your voice. Let the skies declare your glory and the lemmases rejoice.

You're the offer of creation. You're the Lord of every man. And your cry of love brings up across the land.

That you left the gates of angels came to seek and save the lost and exchanged the joy of honor for the anguish of the cross.

With a prayer you left the hungry. With a heart you still deceive. And how silently you suffer that the guilty make of fear.

You're the offer of creation. You're the Lord of every man. And your cry of love brings up a graceful prayer.

[12:24] With a shout you still to the Lord of every man. With a shout you rise victorious. Wrestling in dream, love and pray. And ascending into heaven He recanted in your way.

Now you stand before the matter You're to sing and sing and sing. You're the Lord of every man. You're the Lord of every man. And your cry of love brings up a graceful prayer.

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Now as I indicated at the start of the meeting, we're going to be looking at a passage in the Bible in the Old Testament.

[13:43] It's 2 Chronicles chapter 20. 2 Chronicles chapter 20. And I want to read the first four verses of that passage to you this morning.

So please, if you have a Bible or you can access it through your phone or other device, please turn that up. And we're going to read the first four verses of 2 Chronicles chapter 20.

2 Chronicles chapter 20. 3 Chronicles of the Bible After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Munites came to make war on Jehoshaphat.

Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, a vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar, that is, En Gedi.

Alarmed, fearful, frightened, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.

[14:55] The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord. Indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. Now, before we read the rest of that passage, I think it will be helpful for us to get an idea of the setting of this particular passage and the incident, the mighty incident that occurred at that particular time.

Who are these Moabites and Ammonites and Munites? Where do they live? Who is Jehoshaphat? And what is this talk of this vast army coming to En Gedi on the other side of the sea?

What does all that mean? And who are the people of Judah? So there are a lot of questions. And I think to help us, it would be good to look at a map.

So here's the first map I'm going to have on the screen. And as you look at this map, you'll see some familiar names. So top right there is Damascus. How much sadly the main city of Syria has been in our news.

Then we see the coastal cities of Sidon and Tyre on the lands occupied by the Phoenicians. And then a nation of Israel and the nation of Judah.

[16:14] So we can see from this that there was a separation of the lands of Israel and Judah. And this occurred at the death of Solomon when his son, a very arrogant and headstrong young man who fatally failed to take wisdom from those who knew best, managed to achieve a total destruction of the unity of the nation of Israel Israel so that it became two nations, a northern kingdom of Israel, which had the allegiance of 10 tribes and the other two tribes, which continued in the line of Solomon, line of David with the capital city of Jerusalem, the people of Judah.

So that was a tribe of Benjamin and the tribe of Judah combined to live in that territory. So Israel actually occupied a larger land mass and had more people, more tribes.

But crucially, and as the map indicates, the capital city of Judah was Jerusalem, the city of David, the place where God had set his affection, Zion.

But even more crucially, this was the place where the Temple of Solomon had been built. And this was the one place upon Earth where God would meet with people.

Now, interestingly, when the division of the nation occurred at the death of Solomon, as I've indicated, then what happened was because Judah had ownership, if you like, or the temple lived in the land of Judah, then the nation of Israel was forced to create alternative places of worship.

[18:08] And this is exactly what they did at a place called Bethel, and in the south and in the north, a place called Dan. So two places of worship, but not authorized by God.

So this was pagan worship was being developed. The living God was not being worshiped in that place. This was the fatal difference between the two nations of Judah and Israel, which worked itself out over time in the increasing paganism of the land of Israel, Israel and the wickedness of the kings of Israel itself.

Whereas in the south, there were a succession of a relatively good kings. We'll look at that a bit later. One of whom was named Jehoshaphat. So that's a bit of a background to it.

But I want you to notice also on the map that some, we can see some of the neighboring nations there. So Damascus is found in the rather vast land of Aram.

And then below that, you see Ammon where the Ammonites live and Moab where the Moabites live. But we don't exactly know where the Munites lived, but probably to the south.

[19:23] And they, these three nations, Ammonites, Moabites and the Munites, they had ambitions for territorial gain.

And these were the ones who set their hearts on invading the land of Judah and presumably taking capture of the capital city of Jerusalem.

And no doubt, therefore, the capture and desecration of the temple of the living God. So this is the picture behind those first four verses of 2 Chronicles, chapter 20.

It was an alarming situation. Now, I just want us to turn to the second map. And on this map, you'll see in sort of black squiggly lines, what actually happened at this particular moment.

These three nations, as I said, the Ammonites, the Moabites and the Munites living in the land of Edom, came together as a vast army.

[20:30] Now, bearing in mind that we have numbers for the army of Judah numbering over a million soldiers, a vast army, which Jehoshaphat was terrified about, must have exceeded that number.

So we have a vast army coming over from Ammon, Moab and Edom. And it's clear they weren't just doing a bit of a raid and then departing back to their land. They fully intended to occupy the land of Judah and make it their dwelling place as well.

So they joined forces to attack Jerusalem. And En Gedi is about halfway up on the west side of the Dead Sea. So they crept around from the southern end of the Dead Sea.

It wasn't the obvious way in because they could have gone in on the north end of the Dead Sea.

That was to be much nearer to Jerusalem. But they they sneak in.

Well, I say sneak in. Hard to imagine how an army of a million people, a million soldiers could have sneaked around anywhere. But so it was that it wasn't until they were on the west side of the Dead Sea and maybe only 25 miles or so from the capital city of Jerusalem.

[21:46] But word came to the king, Jehoshaphat, that this was actually occurring. So he was taken by surprise, completely unprepared, if you like. And that's what you see on the map there.

By the time Jehoshaphat finds out, the army is already across the Dead Sea, leaving him very little time to prepare. So now I hope you've got a sense of the background.

There is a vast army that's coming in that is overwhelming Jehoshaphat and his forces.

Jehoshaphat had been a wise king in the sense that he strengthened his borders.

But the border that he really strengthened was the border with Israel because of the enmity between the two nations. And what hadn't been strengthened was a southern end. So there was almost like a free passage available for these Gentile heathen nations to actually come in and attack Jerusalem from the south.

So just put yourself in Jehoshaphat's shoes. How are you thinking that he's been on the throne for a while and there's been a lot of stability and a lot of growth and prosperity in the country.

[23:03] And suddenly this is all at stake. This is all under threat. Now, just moving away from the maps. Let's think about Jehoshaphat a little bit.

He is in the line of the kings that follow David. So first king of Israel. That's the combined nations, the 12 tribes is David, followed by his son Solomon.

And after that, there's a bad king, one of Solomon's son. And there's just totally bad news.

And that's when the nations split, as I told you earlier. But they continue to be good kings. Good in inverted commas. Following Solomon. There are actually 22 kings in the whole history line of the land of Judah.

But out of those 22, one could name six as representing examples of godly living. So that would be David and Solomon, a king called Asa and his son Jehoshaphat.

[24:10] This is Jehoshaphat we're reading about in this passage. Hezekiah and Josiah. And it's interesting that when the tales are told of these

kings, the sort of the high points, the good things that they do are emphasized, but their failures are also exposed.

Nevertheless, each of these kings in a fairly distinctive and a way which is special to them, demonstrate something of godliness in a way that the other 16 of that 22 don't.

There's a dreary list of the wickedness and the paganism of these kings. And often kings like Asa and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah had to mend what had been broken by the bad character of the kings that had preceded them.

And terrifyingly, really, so many good things were undone very, very quickly. And towards the end of the nation of Judah, things were in a dire state.

And as we know, eventually, firstly, Israel and then Judah were taken into captivity, like an almost ultimate judgment from God upon their poor behavior.

[25:33] So that's the background. And now we're ready to to undertake the reading. So let's read chapter 20, verses one to 30. And as we go through that, I'd really encourage you to spot the key moments and principles, because this is this chapter or at least the section we're going to read of this chapter is so rich in good things.

And I wouldn't say it's a perfect example, but it's a perfect example of the of the way in which God's people need to behave in times of crisis and the lessons that we can learn from this.

So it's so refreshing to be able to read this sort of a passage without reservation, without having to interrupt every so often and say, that's bad. You know, so sad that they worked in that way. We're not seeing the sinfulness in all our hearts being represented so clearly in this chapter.

Rather, we're seeing the mighty hand of God in control of events, in control of his people, leading his people. This this is one of those wonderful chapters which describes the relationship that God and his people should be having.

So there's lessons for us all. And it's also quite telling that it is lessons for our time as well. But the lessons of this particular incident echo down through the centuries so that 400 years later, we come across a man called Nehemiah, who returns from that captivity that I was talking about earlier when they were exiled.

[27:13] And 400 years later, he is permitted, allowed to come back to the land of Judah. The city of Jerusalem is in ruins. The walls are broken down. The temple is destroyed.

But. He's able to learn lessons from what happened 400 years before, because he faces opposition from another Ammonite.

It's not a vast army, but it was vast in the time of Nehemiah because there were so few of returning Israelites. The city was in such disarray. There was no temple.

And that had still to be built. And so there was opposition from an Ammonite. And that opposition was a serious threat to this little infant cause of the restoration of God's people.

But here we are. Nehemiah was able to look back 400 years and and see that what was happening had happened before. And importantly, how God's people behaved at that time and what God did as a result.

[28:23] So we turn to the reading. The Bible says, After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Munites came to make war on Jehoshaphat.

Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, a vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar, that is, En Gedi.

Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord. Indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah in Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard and said, O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven?

You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. O our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people, Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham, your friend?

[29:38] They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.

But now, here are men from Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt, so they turned away from them and did not destroy them.

See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. O our God, will you not judge them?

For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you. All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord.

Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehaziel, son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeol, the son of Mataniah, a Levite, and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

[31:06] He said, Listen, King Jehoshaphat, and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem, this is what the Lord says to you. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army, for the battle is not yours, but God's.

Do not be afraid or discouraged. Tomorrow, march down against them. They will be climbing up by the pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the desert of Jerior.

You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions. Stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem.

Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you. Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord.

Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. Early in the morning, they left for the desert of Tekoa.

[32:19] As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem. Have faith in the Lord your God, and you will be upheld.

Have faith in his prophets, and you will be successful. After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness, as they went out at the head of the army saying, Give thanks to the Lord for his love endures forever.

As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

The men of Ammon and Moab rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground. No one had escaped.

[33:29] So Jehoshaphat and his men went to carry off their plunder, and they found among them a great amount of equipment and clothing and also articles of value, more than they could take away.

There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it. On the fourth day they assembled in the valley of Baraka, where they praised the Lord.

This is why it is called the valley of Baraka to this day. Then led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem. For the Lord had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies.

They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the Lord with harps and lutes and trumpets. The fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.

And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side. Well, may God bless this reading of the word to us, and may he grant help as I seek to speak.

[34:43] And we all are met to listen to God's voice, to learn, to take warning, to take encouragement, to obey.

Amen. Now, this is obviously a great passage, a great storyline, but it happened a long time ago. And there are many aspects of it which we find very hard to identify with the 21st century. There's an enormous amount of bloodshed, obviously. There is something very terrifying, the spectre of death occurring in such a short space of time.

Is it possible that a million men of the army of these three Gentile nations had actually fallen on a single day? And we're thinking about what had happened, what had been going on?

And we don't have a temple now. And the whole setting of the preparation of God's people is around this temple. And we don't have that temple now. So things look very, very different.

[35:52] And we certainly don't feel as if there is a sort of a massive battle about to take place. It's not as if war has been declared and we're waiting for the sirens to sound or we're scurrying away to places of shelter and our armies are having to be ready.

It doesn't feel like that at all, does it, in this day for us? However, I want to suggest to you that actually there are so many spiritual lessons in this passage which are applicable for all our situations.

We all have personal crises and some of those crises can look like a battle. And we can be bloodied and bruised as a result of those battle encounters.

And we can be perplexed and we can be like Jehoshaphat, fearful, alarmed. And then there are crises in the church. And one might say there's a crisis in the church at this time because the church is feelingly so outnumbered by those who despise, belittle it, and possibly now with growing sense of persecution against the people of God, marginalized, set on the sidelines.

Well, that's a battlefield situation. And we have to remember that in all of our lives, Satan is not asleep. He's always active to exploit any situation.

[37:19] There are situations that God allows and Satan comes in to try to exploit those situations. There are times when God allows Satan to be active.

And these are such times for us. They've always been such times for the people of God. But there are spiritual principles that we may learn from, take encouragement from, and that will set us up so that we may be able not just to sort of escape the conflicts, but actually to be victorious, to be overcomers.

And I'm going to be bold enough to say that there are a couple of issues that we as a church in Calvary, and we as a church in the city of Brighton, need to be very aware of, because we need to apply these spiritual principles to those situations.

I refer firstly to the matter of future ministry. It's quite interesting that in the city of Brighton, there are a number of ministries where pastors have reached a certain age, or feel it's time to move on.

And that obviously has a major impact upon the churches, which they have passed in, in some cases for many years. So we have that particular situation facing us at Calvary, with Phil Wells looking to step down after a fruitful, patient, rich ministry over decades.

[38:53] So that's a big moment for us. And we've been on the road of seeking God's mind for now, for a number of years as to what lies ahead.

The other thing that is more recent is that the Grace Baptist mission has a desire to actually see the kingdom of God grow in Brighton.

Following the closure of one of the churches in Brighton, which came under their orbit, if you like, funds from the sale of premises and so forth have been made available so that there can be resources, people, housing, to come into the Brighton area, which is seen as a really needy place, and it is, and to be involved as co-workers with God, extending the kingdom in Brighton.

Well, easier said than done. There have been lots of discussions, but there's not clarity at the moment where this might go. And I want to suggest that both of these issues are battles in the sense that we have to find out how these issues can be resolved to the glory and great praise of God.

And this is a good passage for us to look at and to learn from. So we're going to think about these spiritual principles. Some of them are principles, they're facts.

[40:25] And the first one is to say that Jehoshaphat, like every other leader, is a flawed person. He was a good leader, but he was a flawed leader.

And in particular, his flaws are not hidden. They're exposed. There is one major event before this battle occurred and two other major events after the battle occurred, where he definitely either mistakenly or deliberately disobeys God by trying to form alliances with Israel, trying to get close to them and be willing to help them, even though the kings in Israel that he was helping were wicked. There was no mandate from God for this to happen at all. But he plows ahead and does it. And it's particularly astonishing after this battle that he engages in that sort of behavior again.

So this passage of which actually shows the best sign of Jehoshaphat is bookended by a couple of passages in two chronicles that show how adrift he is.

So in some of his behavior, he's not consistent. And he keeps on falling for this besetting sin of trying to cozy up to the kings of Israel.

[41:51] And he's warned about this. I refer you to chapter 19, verses one to three, where Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem. This was after a really dreadful experience where he joined up with Ahab, who wanted to have his assistance in battle.

And he was in danger of losing his own life in this sort of reckless involvement with Ahab. As it happened, wicked king Ahab was killed in that particular conflict. So he comes back, probably breathing a huge sigh of relief to his palace in Jerusalem.

And Jehu, the seer, the son of Hanani, went out to meet him and said to the king, Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Because of this, the wrath of the Lord is upon you.

There is, however, some good in you, for you have rid the land of the Asherah poles and have set your heart on seeking God. So Jehu gives him a very clear diagnosis, a statement of how the Lord sees Jehoshaphat.

He says, well, he's done a reckless thing, a wicked thing. And therefore God's anger is going to be against you. Yet on the other hand, I can see the good things that you've also been doing.

[43:04] And as I say, there were three incidents just like this that occurred. He didn't seem to learn the lessons. So even at the end of his life, he is still not learning the lessons of dealing with this besetting sin.

What a message for us that we can be so overwhelmed, entrapped, or might even say in bondage to besetting sins.

And we're never getting the victory over these situations. We're almost one step away from going into those situations. 25 years, Jehoshaphat was king of Judah.

And again and again in that 25 years, well, we're told the three occasions, no doubt there were more. He just fell. He failed. How kind of the Lord to lift him up.

How kind of the Lord to persist with him. How kind of the Lord to even recognize the good things that were in this man. It was a dreadful responsibility he had because he was the leader of this particular nation.

[44:07] And he had vast authority because of that. But this bad example that he was setting to the people obviously affected them as well.

Made them less willing to be a godly people. So there we are. A bit sad. But he puts it in the context. And that's the first spiritual principle to talk about Jehoshaphat.

A good but flawed leader. Now, what could we learn from that concerning spiritual leaders today? Well, I have to say, be very careful about the measure of trust you put in human spiritual leaders.

The New Testament has clear guidelines on the respect and honor and obedience that is owed to church elders. But not blind trust.

But not blind trust. Because they're flawed. They're sinful. We're all under the same cloak in that way.

[45:09] So, please, let's maximize the things that the Bible says should be true of us in our relationship with spiritual leaders. But not to idolize them.

And not to put them on pedestals that can't possibly support them. Because they're broken vessels. And they live and survive just as everybody does who is a Christian on the basis of the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ. And a life of repentance and faith.

Moving on swiftly. Lesson number two. And we find it in chapter 20 and verses one to four. Crisis behavior. Crisis behavior.

Verse three. Alarm Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord. And he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.

[46:08] The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord. Indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. As I've indicated in the reading earlier, this word alarmed means fear.

Frightened. He was definitely agitated. Jehoshaphat was not a coward. He was not someone to run away from a challenge.

He'd faced many challenges. He'd been on the battlefield before. So this is not a sort of a normal fear before the day of battle. This is a massive fear because he saw that the kingdom of Judah was in danger of being completely swept away and brought into the hands of Gentiles.

And in particular, the dwelling place of God, the temple, was in danger of destruction. And he said, well, what a massive moment.

Now, please notice that rather than going into a funk, rather than running into his bedroom and sort of closing the door, rather than consulting with the army commanders and the priests and the judges, all of whom were in good shape because Joshua had done a number of reforms within the nation.

[47:32] And he doesn't go to them. This is the one thing he decides to do. I will actively seek the Lord. This is the moment for seeking the Lord.

Yes. Time is very tight. The opposing army is on the doorsteps. You can hear the thump of their feet, the noise of their trumpets or whatever they're doing at the moment, getting ready for battle. Moment by moment, they're coming closer. But he says, no, I'm not going to rush around. I'm not going to panic. I'm going to trust the Lord. I'm going to trust the Lord. This is a time for us to seek the Lord.

And it is us. It isn't just that he himself takes the lead and says, I'm going to seek the Lord. But he encourages all the people of Judah to come together in this seeking process and to show their seriousness by a fast.

And that's what fasting, I think, is really about. It's a demonstration of the seriousness that we have about the situations that we're facing so much so that we're prepared to set aside the normal things of life, as it were, so that we can have quality time to seek the Lord, to repent of sin, to turn to him and to trust him afresh.

[48:51] And this is crisis behavior. He resolved to inquire of the Lord and the people came to Jerusalem. That could be a long journey, a dangerous journey in these circumstances.

But this is what they chose to do. They all came together. And where do they meet? They meet in the temple of God. What a great thing that is.

They go to the right place at the right time with the right spirit. Yes. This was a mighty moment. And they did exactly the right thing.

And I encourage each one of us to reflect on that. And if we're in a crisis situation in our personal lives, just to know that the first part of call is to come with our fear and anxiety to the living God.

If we in our churches are in times of crisis, times of difficulty, times of ignorance of the way forward, times when our hearts are failing us, perhaps.

[49:58] Well, what do we do? We come to the Lord together. Spiritual lesson number three. All were involved. I've really pointed this out already.

But I just want to emphasize this point. It's not just the judges and the priests and the army commanders. All God's people share responsibility. They've taken this long journey.

They've come to the temple. What a challenge to our nation in times of difficulty right now. I was just reflecting on this earlier and thinking, OK, so throughout COVID-19, what is the most important place that people are looking at?

Where are the statements of the nation being made? Well, they're either being made in the briefing room at Number 10 Downing Street or in the rather deserted chambers of the House of Commons, the Parliament.

And so that's where the focus is. We don't see people flocking into churches. We don't see people seeking God in this time of crisis because they're just listening to Boris or they're listening to Matt

Hancock or Rishi Shunak.

[51:12] So, you know, these are the people whose words they're hanging upon. And these people are not inquiring of the Lord. They're just inquiring of the best wisdom that they can cull in the nation from the civil service and scientists and local government leaders and hospitals and all the good and necessary structures of society, but not the living God.

And what a challenge it is to us now to remember that and not to get sucked into that ourselves, but to remind ourselves that we need to go to another place.

There isn't a temple here on Earth we go to. We don't need to go to that temple. We don't need to make the journey. Where do we look? Where do we go? We come to a throne of grace where we may find mercy and help in our time of need.

Hebrews chapter four, verse 16. Mercy and help in our time of need. What an encouragement at any time that we can come to the living God.

Yes, the Jesus Christ that we prayed about him to earlier. Yes, this one who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the one who rules and reigns.

[52:28] All things are under his authority and power. And in times of our difficulty, we can go to him. We are encouraged to go to him, not to stay away, not to stay apart, not to stay at a distance, but to come close to him.

Spiritual principle number three. We're all involved. And the way that we're involved is we come to seek the Lord together. So the situations that we're in, let's say from the point of view of the church, our church at this time, concerning the matters of future ministry.

This is not simply a matter to be resolved by godly wisdom amongst the eldership or the trustees or the deacons. But absolutely every single member of the church, it is your solemn responsibility to set these matters before the Lord.

We're all involved as we are all involved with this aspiration for kingdom growth in Brighton. I encourage you to come to this throne of grace to pray in our time of need.

Principle number four. Biblical understanding. Chapter 20 verses 5 to 11. So. Now we move to the place where Jehoshaphat is stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard.

[53:50] And he says. Not only is he saying he's praying now, he's praying now. Oh, Lord God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations.

Power and might are in your hand and no one can withstand you. Oh, God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham, your friend?

They have lived in it and have built it in a sanctuary for your name, saying, if calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your name and will cry out to you in our distress.

And you will hear us and save us. But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt. So they turned away from them and did not destroy them.

See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. Oh, our God, will you not judge them?

[54:53] So. He's praying. But I want you to notice the way that Jehoshaphat prays. It isn't simply. Oh, God, we're in such a need here.

Just please help us. That would be a perfectly valid prayer as well. But he does better. I suggest you he does better than that because he remembers something of the character of God.

And he says to God, you're such a God. You are the God who commanded us not to fight against these people when we came up from Egypt. You are the God who's given us his land as an inheritance.

And you permitted and not only permitted, encouraged us to drive out the people before us. It was promised to Abraham, your friend, Abraham.

You promised this to Abraham. And who are you? Power and might are in your hand. No one can withstand you. Yeah, we have a big, big problem, but it's not as big as you.

[55:56] Power and might are in your hand. You are the God who is in heaven. He is the one and only true God. All the other gods of the nations are idols.

They can't do a thing. They can't help in this situation. We're not looking to them. It doesn't matter that Israel is looking in the other direction and they've embraced all these gods. We won't go down that way. We're going to be close to you, the living God.

We're going to be following your ways. What is he doing? He's actually remembering the power, the promises and the commitment that God has made available and allied.

He's locked in with his own people. He's got biblical understanding. He was schooled in the lessons and words of the past. He quotes King Solomon's prayer when the temple was opened a hundred years before.

And that's a wonderful thing. You know, people can remember the great speeches of leaders of the past. You think of Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg or the broadcasts of Winston Churchill during the war.

[57:11] People remember these things. They're recorded. They're sort of treasured. They're analyzed and they're loved and they're played again and again and again. But this man, Jehoshaphat, he's not looking to sort of the human leaders and their repertoire and rhetoric, but rather he's actually joining himself with that grand heritage that stretches back to Abraham and all the fulfillment of the promises that have happened subsequently.

And remembering, remembering his grandfather, oh no, more than that, great, great grandfather Solomon a hundred years before. And remembering the words that were spoken at the opening of the temple.

What a day that was. And he's saying all these things happened and I'm just in the slipstream of that inheritance. I can remember and take courage for what God has been saying in the past.

So another spiritual principle, biblical understanding. Number five, we come as sinners. Well, we saw already that Jehoshaphat himself was definitely a sinner.

And he knows that the place of the temple is not for righteous people, righteous in their own works and ways. But even when the sword of judgment comes, if you look at verse nine here, when the sword of judgment or plague or famine comes, why do those things come?

[58:44] They come because God disciplines his people. Because his people are not perfect. They're sinful and they need to be disciplined. And that's what he did throughout the whole history of the nation.

And Jehoshaphat's honest about this. And he's saying, right, we're a sinful people. Where do we go? We go to the temple because that's where the sacrifices are made. That's where blood is spilled.

That's where sin is forgiven. That's where God meets with us. And we meet afresh with God. And his promise remains good. We come to him. We confess our sins. There is forgiveness in the shed blood.

And for us, all that sacrificial system has been wonderfully fulfilled, enriched, demonstrated in the death of the Lamb of God, Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is what we're honest about. We're sinful. And if we're not honest about that, we will be in a bad place and we will not be accepted by the Lord. We need to be cleansed of our sin as we come to him.

[59:50] We come as sinners. Principle 6, chapter 20, verse 12. What a wonderful verse this is. I kind of linger on this and think there's a whole series of sermons you'll find in verse 12.

Oh, our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you. Well, on the one hand, I suppose there was a degree of power.

I've already said that Judah had actually quite a strong army and so forth. But in this particular situation, Jehoshaphat speaks truth and he knows that this is not a battle that can be fought with

human ingenuity and strength.

He's not going to put his trust in chariots and horses. He's going to put his trust in God. What a great declaration of need. He says, we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We have no power. I'm really helpless. We're really that much in need. I'm not a caveat here. I'm not just saying the words, but we really have a need.

[61:05] And only you can sort this. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you. Well, what a cry of helplessness.

But also a fact that not only is a place of need, but as a place of dependence. He's not coming with a shred of self-reliance or self-righteousness, but he's coming to the God that he's recently proclaimed in his prayers.

And he said, you are that God, the powerful, the mighty God, the Lord, the God who reigns in the heavens, whose all things are under your control. We're coming to you in our need.

We're not going anywhere else. We're coming to you. Please help us. Spiritual principle number seven. God's answer. Verses 14 to 17.

And the spirit of the Lord came upon Jehaziel, son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jehiel, the son of Mataniah, a Levite in descent to Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

[62:09] He said, well, there's a pause at that point. And I just want you to think of that scene here. We don't know how many people were gathered there, but we have this grand picture of the men of Judah with their wives and children and little ones stood there, whole families coming together.

There must have been a vast assembly. And as Jehoshaphat has prayed that prayer, desperation and need. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.

And the spirit of God comes upon this one person in the assembly, Jehaziel, the son of Zechariah. This wasn't preplanned. This wasn't part of the choreography of what was going to happen on that day.

The spirit of God came upon him as he might have come upon any other person. But this man who appears to have a godly heritage behind him is compelled by the spirit to speak the word of the Lord.

And I think that's a wonderful thing. The Lord raises up a prophet, someone to tell the works of the Lord. How kind of the Lord, because it was an instant response to the cry of desperation from Jehoshaphat.

[63:24] There wasn't a sort of big, big pause or other speeches being made and so forth. But in the urgency of the hour, God came and spoke through this one man.

And what he said was absolutely sufficient to say, I'm going to sort this for you. I'm going to sort this for you. Verse 15.

Jehaziel said, listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem. It's not just a word for Jehoshaphat, for all of them. This is what the Lord says to you. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army.

For the battle is not yours, but God's. Well, that's a wonderful thing to be proclaimed.

Oh, if we could take that to heart. Just think if you're in that assembly that day and you've got all the rumors and all the almost inevitability that this is a battle that's going to be lost.

[64:25] And here's the prophet of God speaking under the authority of God and saying, it's not your battle. It's the Lord's. I'm going to resolve this. And God tells them what to do.

Just to go. Go out there to march out as an army, presumably, but you'll not have to fight this battle. Verse 17. Take up your position, stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you.

Oh, Judah and Jerusalem. And again, he says, do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow and the Lord will be with you.

Well, isn't that a. Isn't that a message of enormous kindness. From the Lord. A wonderful, wonderful thing.

And I'm confident. Well, we're confident from the basis of the word that people were able to receive it as the word of the Lord rather than saying, oh, that's just your imagination.

[65:27] You're just speaking. Yeah. Out of something in your head, your hopes, your aspiration, you know what you'd like to happen. No, no. Jehoshaphat.

Took the lead. And the other people, apparently were completely with it. The whole army was with it as well. We were going to actually fulfill to the letter what God has said.

They would go out. They wouldn't have to fight the battle. They would see the salvation of God. They would see the deliverance he was going to give to them. And they would not be afraid. And they would not be discouraged.

And they took those things to heart. And that's what the word of God is about. When the word is spoken to us, it's there for a reason that we should obey it. He's not just there to give us a sort of a temporary lift, as it were, an emotional high or anything like that, but that we should obey the word. And when God says to you, I'm going to fight this battle. Well, we trust him to fight the battle. I'm going to deliver you. We trust him to deliver us. I'm going to show you the way. We trust him to show us his way.

[66:29] And that's what we are looking for. We're looking to receive from the word of God. Now, I think in addition to the written word of God and the words that are there, I think in times like these, there are also significant moments when God's truth and God's purposes are enabled to be proclaimed amongst the assembly of God's people.

That's why there is a preciousness about the meeting of God's people in members meetings, because we believe strongly in the Holy Spirit leading us and guiding us. We believe strongly also in the fact that true prayer is not the imaginings of our own hearts, but us understanding the mind of God and uttering that thought back to him, articulating his will back to him.

And God will help us by his Holy Spirit to understand and articulate the truth of a situation. That's why I'm really interested all the time to be listening carefully to the prayers that have been made about these two particular needs that I've addressed this morning.

I've spoken about future ministry and the growth of the kingdom in Brighton. I'm wanting to hear. I wanted to hear the voice of God. I wanted to hear the mind of God, what he's wanted to put on our hearts, what promises from his word, what encouragements, what challenges, what warnings he might bring to us.

Let us take heart in the supernatural nature of the way God speaks to his people in their times of crisis. God's answer. Number eight, praise.

[68:11] Verses 18 to 21. Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord. Then some Levites from the Kohathites and the Korahites stood up and praised the Lord God of Israel with a very loud voice.

And off they went. And verses 20 and 21 talks about them. They go out and they do more praising. And there were people appointed to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness. And as they went out of the head of the army, they said, well, they said, I can hardly think they could say, say not singing, but give thanks to the Lord for his love endures forever.

They must have repeated that again and again and again. Reminds us of Psalm 107. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good for his love endures forever. Again and again. This word is thundered out. Now, this all happens before they see a single expression of God's deliverance. They're relying on the fact that God has heard their prayer, that he's spoken, that he said, I will deliver.

[69:21] And they're praising him. They're praising him. And isn't that a wonderful thought? They praise him after the battle as well. But they praise him before.

Well, there isn't a battle that they have defied at all. But they praise him before they see the deliverance. Because they're so confident that by faith, they're so confident that God is hearing their prayers.

And I'm reminded of that well-known verses in Philippians 4, 6 and 7, where we're encouraged by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make our requests known to God.

Don't be anxious about anything, says Philippians 4. But in everything by prayer and thanks and supplication with thanksgiving. So they've done the prayer. They've done the supplication.

And now they're doing the thanksgiving. And that's before the anxiety has been removed or the deliverance has been experienced. And even when we haven't yet seen God's answer, we can praise.

[70:23] And I want to suggest that that maybe is a missing ingredient in our handling of crises, whether they're personal or church-based. And why we should introduce that element of praise and thanksgiving as a demonstration of our faith and confidence that God hears and answers prayer.

Spiritual principle number nine. We have 11 in total. God's deliverance. Well, it's given in chapter 20, verses 22 to 28. We're not going to read all of that because it would take too much time. But I want to say to you, we've read it already. And what happens is this. The people of Judah don't have to lift a finger. What happens is that God lays ambushes. And in a remarkable sort of way, these three even nations, they fall out with each other.

And there's just a massive killing field developed. They fall upon each other. And in the chaos and confusion, these three combined armies, this mighty combined army is completely destroyed. It's by the hand of God. And there is so much booty. There's so much, so much left that it takes three days for the army of Judah to pick it all up and to take it back.

[71:39] It's a mighty demonstration of God's power. And they didn't lift a finger. And I think this is a reflection of something that was in the psyche and the DNA of the people of Judah.

They remembered the story of Moses and the Red Sea, where the Egyptian army was full on their tails. And there they were completely defenceless. They didn't have an army at all. This nation of, this sort of vagabond nation of slaves trying to escape.

And there's a river, the Red Sea in front of them. They can't get over it. It's in full flood. And there's the army behind them. What shall they do? What shall they do? Well, God brought the deliverance about, didn't he?

He parted the Red Sea. They passed over on dry land. The army of Egypt went into the Red Sea. The waters came back and the entire army perished. The army of Pharaoh. It's very much like that, isn't it?

It's the very sort of same echoes. And these things happen throughout Israel's history. And may they happen in our lives as well. But we're able to look back and see the realities of what God has done in times past being worked out again in our present reality.

[72:49] As I said, it's not unique. Think of Gideon. Think of Sennacherib's army. Think of the Aramean army in the time of Elisha. Now, marvellous things happened without the people of God needing to do anything but trust him.

Now, spiritual principle number 10. The fear of God. Chapter 20, verse 29. The fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.

And the previous references to that same experience when God demonstrates his mighty arm, then the fear of God falls upon people.

Godless people. Godless people. People who have not given him a thought in their lives. The fear of God falls upon them. News of God's victories tends to awaken people to his reality that he should be taken seriously.

So I say this. If God is serious about kingdom growth in Brighton, and surely Jesus Christ died upon the cross, that the people of Brighton and Hove should know his salvation.

[74:00] That's the seriousness of God's purpose for kingdom growth. If there is a desire put within the hearts of his people, there should be kingdom growth. If there is resource being deployed to see that growth so that we can be co-workers with God.

Well, why should not God's kingdom grow? Why should this not be the moment where, despite Brighton's rather sad story of God rejection, why should this not be a moment when Godless people are turned to Jesus Christ?

And when God's people, when Godless people are turned to Jesus Christ, that has ripples and echoes through families, through friends, through work colleagues, through neighbours. They see a

changed life and they say, what's responsible for this?

What's brought this about? And you have to say, it's the work of God. God alone has done this. God alone has done this. And as it is multiplied in the city, as more and more people are turned from the places of darkness, from their idols to serve the living and the true God.

Satan's strongholds are tumbling down. There are supernatural happenings occurring. And people become awed by the presence of God.

[75:20] Oh, that person, that person, that person. It looks like something massive is occurring. It's not explainable by any other means. And to say, this is the work and the hand of God.

I was, when I was thinking about this particular thought, this fear of God, I was reminded so strongly of the testimonies of the people on the Isle of Lewis in 1949, when God came in a visiting way. There's a great passage in this particular book called Sounds from Heaven. I was, when I witnessed his accounts of what took place.

I'm only going to read a short part of what I intended to read because of time. In fact, just a paragraph. I'll just give you this paragraph.

Donald McPhail tells of the convicting presence of the Lord when he was out in the fields with the sheep. Kenny McDonald says, wherever you went, you couldn't get away from the presence of the Lord.

[76:18] Christy Maggi claims God was everywhere in the very atmosphere, whether they were godly or godless. People knew that God was there.

An unsaved man in Arnold said when invited to the meetings, I don't need to go to the meetings to know that there is something supernatural going on in the village.

I feel it in my own home. And as the army of Judah came upon this amazing scene in the desert, those dead bodies and the transformation that happened within hours.

It could not have failed to be awestruck. It could not have failed to be awestruck. I'm sure there were people there who loved the Lord, but there were people in that army, inevitably, who didn't have a relationship with God.

And all these people together were seeing the same thing. Satan's strongholds tumbling down, supernatural happenings. Finally, principle number 11.

[77:31] There's rest on every side. Chapter 20, verse 30. And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace for his God had given him rest on every side.

Rest, peace, shalom, shalom. We have a Western world. We have a rather narrow, restricted view of peace, not just the absence of warfare and battle and so forth.

But there was something extremely wholesome, extremely rich about the peace and the rest that God granted as a reward and encouragement to the obedience of his people who had trusted him. It had happened before. It would happen again. This was a promise to his covenant people. It will happen for all of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we're going to battle through this world. We will have conflicts today. We'll have conflicts tomorrow. And we're not promised any release from that until the release that happens when we die and we are taken to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[78:50] And at that time, we are going to hear and experience the words that we find in the book of Revelation. Then I heard a voice from heaven say, right, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.

Yes, says the spirit. They will rest from their labor. Their deeds will follow them. Well, what an encouragement. Christ's people are overcomers.

And God is promising us at the end of our overcoming a rest, a rest and a peace. Heaven is not a place of crisis, not a place of fear and anxiety, a fright in people.

Well, God's going to wipe away every tear, isn't he? God's going to put us into that place of wholeness and shalom. And nothing will ever take that from us because the son will be there.

He will rule and reign. He will take all his people into his embrace and welcome them. Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.

[80:03] Let's pray. Our father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the richness of it. We thank you that we would be so much the poorer if we didn't have this particular passage in front of us.

But there are things here that have no doubt deeply challenged us in different ways. And we ask that we would be obedient to the message of this passage.

That we should not just look back in awe and amazement and move on in our lives. That we would know that the very situations that we're facing now are ones that need to be faced with these spiritual principles in mind.

Oh Lord, give us grace and help and encouragement that we should be a people who instinctively and naturally and immediately turn to you in our times of need.

And that we experience your gracious power and goodness and your promise of deliverance. And we see the deliverance of God. And may it please you, dear father, not only to strengthen us in the church at Calvary and show us your way for the future.

[81:15] But may there be such a work of God in this city, such a kingdom growth, such a manifestation of the fruit of the cross of Jesus Christ in the salvation of people.

May this happen. May this happen soon. When we feel there is a crisis and we don't want to be asleep. We want to be awake and calling out to you.

Oh, living God, please do a mighty work in this city in these days. Please do a mighty work in these days. May we see the deliverance of God. May we see your battle against Satan and all his hosts being manifest.

May the fear of God come upon this city. Oh Lord, please hear our prayers and grant us your encouragement as we leave this meeting that we may be resolved to find ourselves on the Lord's side in this great battle.

Oh, we want to be on the Lord's side. Help us not to come to the portals of death and find ourselves wrongly placed and amongst those who die without the Lord.

[82:28] Oh Lord, we don't want to be in that place. And I pray for anyone here today who is listening into this, that they would say to you, I don't want to be in that place. Oh, deliver me, deliver me, lift me, forgive me, put your Holy Spirit within me.

I trust you, Lord Jesus. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. And our closing song is a song of praise. Oh Lord, our God, how majestic is your name. Well, God bless you, dear people, and look forward to seeing you online again soon.

Thank you. Goodbye. You are ending. you and goodbye. Oh, Lord our God, you are open and you see.

You set your glory above the heavens. We will magnify. We will magnify.

[84:01] The Lord and God Messiah. We will magnify. We will magnify.

The Lord and God Messiah. Oh, Lord our God, you established the glory.

You reign in righteousness and splendor. Oh, Lord our God, the skies are ringing with your praise.

Soon those of us have come to worship. We will magnify. We will magnify.

The Lord and God Messiah. We will magnify. We will magnify.

[85:03] We will magnify. We will magnify. We will magnify. Praise and glory in God forever We will magnify We will magnify The Lord and Lord is high We will magnify We will magnify The Lord and Lord is high We will magnify

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