

Depending on the Lord

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Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[0:00] I'm going to do prayers this evening. 2 Chronicles chapter 14.!

Well, as we pray this evening, and especially as we've been thinking of the matters in our prayers, we realise how often there is that variety in our prayers, the highs, the lows, the challenges that we often face.

And we've been looking at the Lord's Prayer recently. We've begun looking at it. And as we just share some words from this passage this evening, it's in light of the Lord's Prayer as well, because there we are reminded who we are praying to.

We've looked at that part of the prayer which says, Our Father who art in heaven. It is about that relationship that we have with the Lord our God as his people.

Not just as the Lord who is the creator of all things, but the Lord who is indeed our Father. We've thought of John 3 verse 1.

[1:38] How we read there, How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God. And that is what we are.

So there's great reminders for us as we turn to Scripture at such difficult times to pray, because sometimes we just don't know what to pray. We feel that just sense of burden for people, for situations, and especially as we think of young Caleb tonight, just we wonder, what do we pray? But let's not just think, what do we pray? But let's think, who are we praying to? So that whatever our words are, even if they're just the groanings of our heart, they are known by God.

And they are known by God who is our Father in heaven. And the wonderful thing about Scripture at such times as this, is that it speaks into the reality of every situation that we find ourselves in.

We see prayers throughout the Scriptures that remind us of just how many different prayers there are. You think of the many psalms that are prayers, and the variety that you find in the psalms.

[2:50] There's both delight and rejoicing, but there's also crying to the Lord in trouble. There's crying out to him for help. There's crying out with questions, such as we may have at these times.

But we thank God that he has given us that in his word, the reality of all the different situations that we find ourselves in. And even when you reflect on Jesus' prayers, we've read John 17 recently as we were looking at the Lord's Prayer, that wonderful prayer where Jesus prays for his people, where he prays for you and for me.

And even as we think of those who we are praying for this evening, we can have that assurance that the Lord has prayed for them, that we come through his name. But we also see the challenge of prayer with Jesus.

You think of his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, how he was in agony, how he was praying to the Father, if it be your will, let this cup pass me by, but not my will be done, but yours.

The challenge that there is in that prayer. And isn't there such a blessing that we can come to all of these passages in Scripture and just remind ourselves we come to God.

[4:06] We come to the Father in heaven. As there begs daily reading today, very apt for today, a reminder to pray was the heading of it.

How there are times when we can try and go on in our own strength, managed by ourselves, but we are reminded that we can't. And we are often taken to those points where we remember we cannot manage by ourselves.

No matter how much we would love to, we depend on God. And as the begs said in his daily reading today, for when you pray and watch what God does, you discover that he does far more than you had even dared ask or thought to imagine.

And that is a hope that we have as we pray tonight. That we pray and we watch what God does. We don't know what it will be.

We don't know what the outcome will be. But we watch what God does. And God is able to do far more than we ever dared ask or thought to imagine.

[5:13] So our Lord reigns. And that is our hope as we come in prayer. And as we see with Asa here, we see that element of prayer in his experience as well.

Prayer in good times, prayer in difficult times. But whether it's success or otherwise, it was not dependent on his power.

It was all dependent on God. On God who reigns on high. We see in verse 2 there how Asa's reign begins in a good way.

It begins by getting his priorities right. He begins by, Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord, he took away the foreign altars, the high places.

He broke down the pillars, cut down the ashram. He got rid of the idols that people were worshipping. And so he began with this. And he made God the focus of worship.

[6:18] And they enjoy a long time of peace. But then an army arises against their nation. And trouble comes. But he is ready to trust God.

Even in the midst of that, when there seems a likelihood that their victory would be slim. But he prays. And he organises his troops.

And so there's a reminder to us that whether it's in the good times or the difficult times, we pray. And we do as God asks.

We look for God's help and blessing. And may we continue to pray with that confidence that Asa has here, that his God reigns, our God reigns.

And just three things very briefly as we look at this passage. First of all, we see that Asa felt powerless. We see secondly, he cried out. And then thirdly, he went to battle.

[7:19] So he felt powerless. When you read the beginning of the chapter, verse 1 through to verse 7, you see peace mentioned often.

Times of peace are mentioned. And it tells us that there was no war in those years. There was peace for 10 years. They had this period where it all was well.

But it's never just wasted in that sense. It's not just a case of things going on well. As we saw in verse 2, Asa was making it clear for the people, this is a time we worship God.

Things may go well, but we still worship God. And when we have that in our times of peace, we are far better prepared then for when the times of challenge come.

Because we see that comes in Asa's experience. The Ethiopian army arises against him and his people. And from there comes trouble.

[8:29] War is imminent. What do they do? You look at the numbers. The numbers are recorded for us here. And you think, what's the purpose in that? In verse 8, Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah and he had 280,000 men from Benjamin that carried shields and drew bows.

All were mighty men of valor. You think, well, there's half a million soldiers that he has. But then when you look at verse 9, you see a number there as well.

Sarah, the Ethiopian, came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots. So the numbers are there for us to show that this is two against one.

Asa's army is outnumbered two to one. And there's this sense of where do we go? What do we do? How are we going to go into this battle?

What can I do? Would be Asa's cry. Where can I go? Well, what did he do? He did what we see in verse 11.

[9:40] He cried out to the Lord, his God. He wasn't dismayed. He wasn't discouraged. He cried out to the Lord.

And that's a powerful reminder to us at this time. We enjoy times of peace and times of blessing.

But where do we turn when we feel powerless or when we feel powerless for others? And what we do, we feel that sense of powerless nature because what can we do for Caleb?

What can we do for the family? Well, we can do the greatest thing of all. We cry out to God for them, for us, for all who are going through these difficult times.

We cry out to God. And that's never a waste of time. The psalm, one of the psalms that we sang had mentioned that how often you see people around saying, where is your God now?

[10:47] What is your God going to do? How will God help in this situation? Why has God allowed this to happen? We don't lose hope in the midst of it, even though people might say these things.

They would maybe say to Asa, if you look at the numbers, how are you going to manage two against one? It's a hopeless situation, a powerless situation. But no, it's not because he has the Lord with him.

So whether it's peace or trouble we are in, what a blessing to know that God is there for us to call upon. So he felt helpless, we may feel helpless, but that's what takes us to God because we cannot do it, but he can.

And that's what we see here, secondly, with Asa. he cries out to the Lord from feeling helpless and powerless. You see in verse 11 here his prayer. And it's only a few words, and yet it says so much to us.

Asa cried out to the Lord his God, O Lord, there is none like you. What confidence he has. There is none like you.

[12 : 07] To help between the mighty and the weak, help us. O Lord, our God, for we rely on you, and on your name we have come against this multitude.

O Lord, you are our God, let not man prevail against you. That's his prayer. It's only one verse, and yet it's full of so much for us.

He cries out to God, and it's obvious, it's the God he knows. It's obvious that the ten years of peace that they have enjoyed, has been a time of a close relationship with God.

Because he's able to say these things with confidence. There is none like you to help. There's been peace, there's been no war, so it's not like they've seen it time and time again.

Here is maybe a new situation for many of the people, but Asa is confident in this situation, there is none like you to help. help. And when we come into trying situations, difficult situations, new situations for us, there is none like you to help.

[13 : 21] There is none like God to help. There is nothing too difficult for you. When it says there is none like you to help, another way of translating it that may be closer is, Lord, in the scheme of things, this is nothing to you.

In the scheme of things, this is nothing to you. That is who God is. He is powerful, he is able, he reminds us in so many different ways, this is nothing to you.

We are in your hands, we are committing others into your hands because there is nothing too difficult for you. there are times when we can feel alone, times when we maybe feel, where is God? John Knox, I'm sure you've heard of him, a reformer in Scotland, he was used by God in a mighty way, but he said this, a man with God is always in the majority.

A man with God is always in the majority. Why was he saying that? because there were many times when he felt alone, when he felt that there was maybe no one to help around him, and yet he was able to say a man with God is always in the majority.

[14 : 48] And that is who is on our side as well. He doesn't leave his people. He doesn't abandon us in our time of need.

Asa knew that. He went and cried to the Lord, there is none like you to help. Between the mighty and the weak, it doesn't matter who we are, it doesn't matter what situation we're in, mighty or weak, he is able to help.

Oh Lord, we rely on you. That is our cry to the Lord of the impossible, to the one who is able. next week we're going to be with the children God willing in the hall. We're going to be focusing on the armour of God.

That's going to be our focus. But this isn't just something we teach young people. This isn't just something to teach the children. First and foremost, it's to remind ourselves.

[15 : 50] Take up the armour of God as it says in Ephesians 6. That's what we need at this time. That's what we need day by day. All these bits of armour that help us to know God with us, to help us know God's protection.

And with that we stand. With that we defend ourselves against the attacks. We have that armour of God to help us.

His word, the spirit, faith, all of these things. We have them. We rely on them. We depend on them. That's what Asa was depending on here.

Oh Lord, there is none like you to help. That is what we have. That is who we have. We cry out to God.

Back in the 16th century, he was a man, Sir Walter Raleigh. He used to come, it with requests to such an extent that one day she said to him when he had come with another request, Riley, when

will you stop coming to me begging?

[17:06] Sir Walter reply was, when your majesty stops giving. And there's a great reminder to us there. God doesn't say, when will you stop coming with your requests because he never stops giving.

He never says to us enough, you've had your fill. Instead he says come, cast your cares upon me for I care for you.

And so let us cry out to the one with whom all things are possible. So Asa cried out, O Lord, you are able, there is none like you to help.

But you see, thirdly, hear us well. He went into battle. In verse 12, the Lord went into battle with him. So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah and the Ethiopians fled. Asa didn't just say, Lord, that's it, I'm done.

[18:19] He went into battle. You see that as you read on how they pursued after the Ethiopians. They went into battle two against one, but they went with God on his side.

They went in confidence. They went relying on God, on his name. They went relying and believing that he was able to fight for them.

And look at the way it says in verse 11, O Lord, you are our God, let not man prevail against you. Let not man prevail against you. It's like he's saying, Lord, show us your glory in the midst of this. Let not man prevail against you.

They wanted to see the glory of God in the midst. They wanted to see God fighting for them that they might praise his name.

[19:22] And it's a reminder to us as well. We go into battle. When you think of the armour of God, it's to go into battle. It's because we're in a day by day battle against an enemy who wants to defeat us.

But as we take up the armour of God and as we pray to God, we do so, Lord, that we might see your glory. Not that but for his.

That even through the most difficult of times and experiences as has been prayed that we would see God working. That we would see God giving blessings in extraordinary ways.

That we would see a witness to those around us who have maybe no thought of God at this time and yet who are showing an interest in the situation that Caleb and the family find themselves in. That the witness of the church that the prayers of the church that the love of Christ that the church shows will be a witness to all around. Let the glory of God be seen in it.

[20:33] But again the glory of God the peace of God would shine upon them as a family and upon all who need the Lord in special ways at this time. Asa's with all our fights are with the Lord on our side.

As Psalm 18 verse 29 says with help from God I can advance against a troop and rout them all and with the aid my God will give I can leap over any wall.

That's what Asa knew in his experience here. With the help of God I can advance. God was with him. And as we go into the battle of prayer that we go with faith that we go with confidence in God that we do not lose heart as we pray even in the most difficult situations but that we pray with faith with confidence in God the God who is able the God who there is none like you to help that is the same God that we pray to as well a man called Lancelot Andrews he was one of the translators involved in the King James Bible back in 1611 there's a prayer of his recorded and I think it's a great little prayer for us to think of even as we think of how we pray to God just now he prayed this!

He was praying for God all encompassing in every way surrounding him and that's our prayer for those in need tonight it's our prayer for ourselves be within me to strengthen me without me to keep me above me to protect me beneath me to uphold me before me to direct me behind me to keep me from straying round about me to defend me that's our prayer for those in need and for ourselves may we keep praying keep praying for those in need keep praying with confidence we feel helpless for ourselves and for others but we are reminded we have a great

God we have a father in heaven to come to who hears who answers our prayers as he knows best as Asa cried to the Lord O Lord there is none like you to help we cry to the Lord in the same way because there is none like you to help O Lord between the mighty and the weak help us help us Lord keep praying help those who need you let us pray Lord our gracious God we thank you that we have your word we have that assurance from it we have that confidence in it O Lord there is none like you to help between the mighty and the weak help us O Lord we pray to be all around them

day by day

[24 : 47] Lord be our guide be our shepherd as we ask it all in Jesus name Amen we we're going to conclude by