

A real answer to a real problem requires some faith and courage. Jehoshaphat didn't know for sure that God had answered their prayer. He didn't know with absolute certainty until he saw the dead bodies of his enemies. He didn't know until that point, as they worshipped and they sat out and put the singers in front of them, and as they marched towards the other army. Until that point when they walked by faith and when they got to the pass and saw the bodies, they had to obey.

When you come to God in prayer, what are you expecting? Are you ready for an answer? We need to be people who obey God's word and walk by faith. We need to be a church that really expects something from God when we pray. Expect that God will hear, God will lead, God will respond, and God will triumph over Satan and evil. What do you expect from God? Let us take just a few minutes of silence so that we can reflect for just a moment on what that issue is. It might be about your children. It might be about a family member. It might be about ourselves. It might be about our church or our work. Let us hold that request silently before God and just reflect for a moment on what we really expect God to do.

March 15, 2020

Prayer (3): **When God Responds**

2 Chronicles 20:5-19

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What do you expect when you pray? What are you really looking for when God hears and when God responds? When I share our prayer requests Sunday morning, I can see most of us expect God's healing, guidance, protection, and provision for our family, friends and ourselves. I know a person whose expectation in prayer was that by praying God would make him willing to accept the difficulties and sufferings. He had no power to affect any situation. The prayer was just to get him to accept it. That is what he really believed in. The last time when you prayed about a problem, what did you expect? Did you expect that God would change you? Did you expect that God might actually change or help the situation?

In today's passage, we find someone who looked for and expected real answers. It begins when King Jehoshaphat got some bad news. There were three armies that were assembled and they were just south of Jerusalem near the Red Sea. When Jehoshaphat heard this news, he got worried about it. He got alarmed. But then he resolved to inquire of the Lord about it. In other words, he prayed. Many of our spiritual battles are lost when we face our problems. We panic and don't pray when we face overwhelming crises and circumstances. We resolve to shift into a high gear of problem solving and we start setting out to solve the problem without praying.

Jehoshaphat didn't do that. He resolved to inquire of the Lord. Jehoshaphat had enough faith to believe that he would get an answer. And he had good enough sense to wait on God to get that answer. He talked about the fact that God was great enough to answer his prayer. God did this sort of thing before for Israel and God promised to hear and save.

Jehoshaphat remembered the same promise that came out of the prayer that Solomon prayed years before. Solomon prayed about the future knowing that there would be times of difficulties, time of warfare, times of battle and danger and the people of God would approach God in prayer and God would hear and answer. Jehoshaphat remembered that promise in his prayer. He prayed it to remind himself and the Israel people the bigger picture of what reality was, before he focused on the problem.

Then Jehoshaphat presented his problem in the second half of his prayer. Now why did Jehoshaphat pray this way? God already knew everything. Verse 13 says, *“All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord.”* Now there was a massive assembly of people from all over Israel. Jehoshaphat finished his prayer. *“Oh 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 on You.”* And they just waited. They were so expectant that this problem was such an awful consequence and that God was so real and their dependence was so real that they waited right there for an answer. Verses 18 says, *“Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord.”* Some people started to praise God for the answer and for God’s power. Even more amazing was what happened the next day. In says in verses 20 to 23 that they put the choir out front. They put the choir out front because they believed they didn’t need to have their soldiers out front, because the promise was that the battle was God’s. They really expected an answer.

What do you expect when you pray? What do you really expect? You notice in the first half of this prayer Jehoshaphat talked about the greatness of God, His power, His action in history, and the promises that God had given. When you get a problem, how often do you go directly to God? As soon as we get a problem, we start to pray *“God, You know the problems I am having. God, please*

help me deal with this situation and give me wisdom.” We immediately jump into the prayer.

When you pray do you remember that God is the Creator and Redeemer? Do you remember what God did in the Bible? Do you remember what God has done in your own life and in our church? Do you remember the specific promises that God made? When we pray, we tend to forget who God was, who God is, and who God will be. We start to collect our own minds and our own faith as we hold our requests before God. By the time we get to our request, we immediately jump into prayer. We hope that God might do something about it for us.

What is it that’s keeping us from focusing on God? In her book, *“Miracles Happen”* Bobbye Byerly tells us that praying is not about getting God’s attention. The purpose of prayer is to focus our attention on Him. If we just jump into our problems, we are trying to drag God’s attention into our problems. But when we first begin by focusing on the greatness of God and His promises, raising our eyes to the greatness of God and putting our attention on Him, God’s attention is already on us.

What is it you are asking? Are you asking for a blessing, healing, strength, courage, skill, insight, and guidance? That shows us what we are actually expecting from God. There are times when we ask something in prayer, we don’t have the faith to believe it. We naively think that God might do it and we just don’t have the faith yet. Honesty is important, particularly in our personal prayer.

Do we actually look for an answer? We want to get an answer immediately, but often we have to wait. When we ask God which direction should we go, are we looking in to the Bible with expectancy, that God would guide us there? Are we reflecting inside our hearts trying to listen to what the Holy Spirit might be doing to give us an impression, to shape our prayer?