

# Praying About Our Problems

by Mark Jarvinen

**True or False** – After I became a Christian, I no longer had any problems. That's not what Jesus said. In **John 16:33**, Jesus says, ***"In this world you will have trouble."*** The question is not if you will have problems, but when. It goes with the territory. But are we left to handle our problems alone? Jesus finishes **John 16:33** with the words – ***"But take heart! I have overcome the world."*** Our problems are not insurmountable.

Today's text provides a beautiful paradigm for overcoming our problems – **PRAYER**. The main character in the **20<sup>th</sup> chapter of II Chronicles** is **Jehoshaphat**, the King of Judah, who reigned for 25 years and was a good king. He was a righteous man who was interested in bringing about spiritual revival among the people of Judah. He had a good sized army of his own, but on one particular occasion he heard that the armies of the Moabites and the Ammonites were planning to join forces against him and attempt to drive them out of their land. Let's read portions of our text from **II Chronicles 20:1-30** that tells the story of King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah.

**20** After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat. <sup>2</sup> Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea...." <sup>3</sup> Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. <sup>4</sup> The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. <sup>5</sup> Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard <sup>6</sup> and said:

*"LORD, the God of our ancestors, 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. <sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup> They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, <sup>9</sup> '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.' ... <sup>12</sup> 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 on you." <sup>13</sup> All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.*

*<sup>14</sup> Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah ... as he stood in the assembly. <sup>15</sup> 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.' <sup>16</sup> Tomorrow march down against them. ...<sup>17</sup> You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.'" ....*

*<sup>20</sup> Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. 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." <sup>21</sup> 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."*

*<sup>22</sup> 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....*

*<sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> 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....

<sup>27</sup> 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.... <sup>29</sup> The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. <sup>30</sup> And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side. (**II Chronicles 20:1-30**)

**As this story begins, it certainly sounds like a crisis wouldn't you agree? If I'm Jehoshaphat, my first human instinct just might be fear.** But Jehoshaphat shows us a better way to face our problems, and that is to pray – not just for emotional relief – but believing that God has the answer to my problem and will meet my need. So often, we pray with our own preconceived notion of how God should answer. We say, **“If God will cooperate with me everything will be fine.”** The only problem is that God doesn't take His direction from us. Let's look at our text and find out how to pray about our problems in a way that allows God to be our problem-solver and so receive the glory for His answers to our prayers.

## **I. GOD CARES ABOUT OUR PROBLEMS.**

Do you remember the time in **Mark 4** when Jesus and his disciples were out at sea in the middle of a severe storm and Jesus was asleep in the boat? The disciples said to him, **“Don't you care that we are about to drown?”** Although sometimes it may seem like He doesn't care, you must understand that God knows about our problems and cares about us in the midst of them. **I Peter 5:7** tells us that we can cast all our cares on Him because He cares for us. This

was a bedrock conviction for Jehoshaphat, which is why he was led to talk to God about his problem.

In **v. 6**, Jehoshaphat addressed God saying, ***“O Lord, God of our fathers....”*** This was so important because with these words the king acknowledged that the same God who had entered into a covenant relationship with his forefathers was also going to be at work in this situation. By extension, as NT believers, we can rest assured that when we came to faith in Christ, the Father entered into covenant with us as well. This is a relationship of promise in which we can know that everything which concerns us, will concern God as well. Every desire of our heart concerns God’s heart. Every problem I have is God’s problem. God cares about us like a parent cares for his or her own child. ***So the first thing to remember is that God cares about our problems.***

## ***II. GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR PROBLEMS.***

Look at the rest of **v. 6**, ***“... 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.”*** Is God all powerful? He is. Is He all knowing? He is. Is He merciful? He is. Has He entered into relationship with us through Christ? He has. If all that is true, can you think of any problem, any challenge, any battle, any suffering, any pain, any circumstance that is too large for God? Of course you can’t. God is greater than any problem you might have. ***What does that mean for us?*** Not only is God interested in my problems, but He has already become involved in them and is big enough to handle them.

Some of you are here today saying, ***“You don’t know how big my problems are!”*** And guess what? I am amazed at the complexity and severity of some people’s trials. What some of you have experienced or are currently going through makes my problems pale in comparison. But I can still say, based on Scripture, ***“God is bigger than your problems.”*** The Psalmist says in **Psalm 46**, ***“God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”*** Then he speaks for God later in **Psalm 46** saying, ***“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”*** Once we are certain that God is greater than our problems, we’re well on our way to having them solved.

### ***III. PRAY FIRST, NOT LAST.***

A lady went to the doctor with a problem. The doctor told her that the only thing left to do was to pray. The woman grabbed her chest and cried out, ***“Oh no, has it come down to that?”***

For too many Christians, prayer is their last response to their problem. Too many operate by the maxim, ***“When all else fails, PRAY!”*** Notice **v. 3** of our text. Upon learning of the enemy threat against Judah, it says, ***“Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, ....”*** The king didn’t summon his military counsel, or consult his generals. The first thing he did was seek the Lord. In fact, he ordered a time of fasting, which means he made seeking the Lord a priority.

When you receive news that challenges you, or you suddenly face a problem, what is your first response? ***Do you dial a friend, or do you call on God? Do we feel fear or express our confidence in***

**the LORD?** Scholars suggest that the Bible says 83 times to “**fear not.**” Not that we’ll never have a fleeting moment of fear. But we have no reason to let fear dominate us. In the face of problems, make prayer a priority not an after-thought.

#### **IV. SOLICIT PRAYER SUPPORT.**

Look at **v. 4** – ***“The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.”***

It’s not that God won’t answer the prayers of individuals. But sometimes God wants us to pray in groups. **Why? To illustrate that no man is an island. We’re part of a great family.** It strengthens our ties to know that others are praying. What a blessing to know that there are others that you can confide in during a time of trial. Furthermore, when others are involved in praying, the answer, when it finally comes, brings encouragement to more people in the body. **Pastor Manley Olsoe** after months and months of asking and waiting, finally has a new liver – a request for which our prayer team has joined in praying. Jehoshaphat enlisted the entire nation to pray. Don’t hesitate to enlist your church family to pray for you in the midst of your difficulties.

#### **V. TRUST GOD TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS.**

God’s solution may not always be the one you expect. Most of us pray with a solution in mind that we think best suits us. Many times, God has a surprise in mind. Sometimes we limit God with the solutions we expect. But we must believe He has a solution.

Sometimes the Lord reveals his solutions through unexpected means. He doesn't always show us directly. Sometimes He speaks to us through others. In the case of Jehoshaphat, God spoke a word through a man named **Jahaziel**. **Verse 14** says, ***"Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, ... as he stood in the assembly."*** It was through him that the people of God received their solution. In **v. 15**, Jahaziel delivers these significant words, ***"Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this problem, for the battle is not yours, but God's."***

**Make a note to yourself:** ***"The problem is not mine, but God's"*** We must first bring our problems to God, and then leave them with Him. That's not a cop-out. That doesn't absolve us of responsibility in the situation. You'll notice that **v. 17** says that they had to stand firm and take up their positions on the field of battle, they had to show up, but the battle was the Lord's. ***"You will not have to fight this battle,"*** the text says. We all have a tendency to try to help God. God does not need our help. We are to take our positions and watch the Lord deliver us.

## **VI. GOD'S SOLUTION INVOLVES STEPPING OUT IN FAITH.**

In **v. 20**, Jehoshaphat stands before the people and says, ***"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."*** The king admonished them to have faith but it wasn't just mental assent. An act of faith was required. God said, ***"Get your choir together and have them lead you into***

**battle.”** Wait a minute, this is war, you mean the army don’t you Lord? **“No, I mean the choir!”** When God tells you to do something, you either do it His way or you don’t get His solution. With the choir leading, there was so much confusion that the Moabites and the Ammonites killed the Meunites, and then began killing each other. All the Israelites had to do was gather the enemy plunder.

Could it be that you’re facing a problem that God has already given you the solution for but you’re hesitant to take the first step? It makes you feel afraid, vulnerable, at risk, like going into battle being led by a choir. Know this! There is no problem God is not willing to solve if you will be obedient to Him. Take the risk! Step out in faith!

## **VII. GOD REWARDS FAITH WITH PEACE AND REST.**

In **vv. 29-30**, we learn that the result of Judah’s victory was that the fear of God came on all the other nations when they heard how God had fought for them. ***They had peace and rest on every side. When God solves our problems, we receive His peace and rest.*** Notice that God didn’t remove the problem, He defeated the problem. He conquered the problem. **God doesn’t take away our problems, He leads us through them to victory – to His peace and rest.**

God will handle our problems if we’ll let Him. Don’t you think it’s time to turn things over to Him and receive His peace and rest?

**A-men.**