

“When You Are Surrounded”

2 Chronicles 20:1-12

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Have you ever felt so surrounded by problems that it felt like a gang of badgers had encircled you and were nipping at your ankles? Or have you ever felt troubles have ganged up on you like a flock of pecking birds taking turns smacking you on the head?

Sometimes we feel like the cat whose best friend was a dog. They were inseparable. One day they were in an alley checking out the garbage cans when they were surrounded by a gang of thugs – 2 Dobermans, 3 Pit Bulls, and a Rottweiler or two. They had fire in their eyes and violence in their hearts. Cat and dog were terrified. Cat said, “Well BFF, this is it – looks like it’s us against them!” The not so loyal dog said, “What do you mean ‘us,’ mouse breath?”

This might help us understand how King Jehoshaphat felt. Let’s read the account, “Now it came about after this that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat. Then some came and reported to Jehoshaphat, saying, ‘A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi).’ Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD. Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court, and he said, ‘O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You. Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? They have lived in it, and have built You a sanctuary there for Your name, saying, “Should evil come upon us, the sword, or judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before You (for Your name is in this house) and cry to You in our distress, and You will hear and deliver us.” Now behold, the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You did not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt (they turned aside from them and did not destroy them), see how they are rewarding us by coming to drive us out from Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance. O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You.” 2 Chronicles 20:1-12 (NASB).

Linda’s song recognized, as did Jehoshaphat, the creative, infinite power of God:

One pair of hands formed the mountains
One pair of hands formed the sea.

One pair of hands made the sun and the moon
Every bird, every flower, every tree.

One pair of hands formed the valleys,
the oceans, the rivers, and the sand.
Those hands are so strong
so when life goes wrong
Put your faith into one pair of hands.

When you are surrounded, that's a good thing to do! Look at how Jehoshaphat put himself in the hands of God:

I. JEHOSHAPHAT SOUGHT THE LORD:

- A. He did not turn, as so many of Israel's kings did, to a foreign ally; or to a false god; or to fortune tellers.
 - 1. That would have been to court defeat and disaster.
 - 2. That would have been an insult and affront to God.
 - 3. "Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD."
- B. When you are surrounded, do that: Seek the Lord!
 - 1. Seek Him quickly: "O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water." Psalm 63:1 (NASB).
 - 2. Seek Him diligently: "I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me." Proverbs 8:17 (NASB).
 - 3. Seek Him constantly: "Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually." 1 Chronicles 16:11 (NASB).
 - 4. Seek Him humbly: "if My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NASB).
 - 5. Seek Him before it's too late: "Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near." Isaiah 55:6 (NASB).
- C. Jesus said, "Seek and you will find!"
 - 1. Because God is not hiding.
 - 2. Because God wants to be found.
 - 3. Because God is also seeking you!
 - 4. Because God is not far away.
- D. Sometimes we are looking for something, not finding it, and are abashed when we do find it right in plain sight! Two examples:
 - 1. When Marlene and I shop together we sometimes head in different directions to browse different departments. Once when I couldn't find her, I thought, "Where is that woman?" and I called her cell phone and

said, "Where are you right now?" She said, "Standing three feet behind you."

2. We were given some halibut by the Huckins and when we went to cook it, we couldn't find it! Keri checked her freezer – nada. We checked our freezer – nope! So, when Maxine asked how we liked it, I said, "I wish I had a good lie – but we can't find it!" When Marlene took out what we thought was chicken, Voila! There was the halibut - not seen though in plain sight!

- E. God is closer than three feet behind us; and though we don't recognize Him at times, He's there! Jehoshaphat sought the Lord and when he did that:

II. JEHOSHAPHAT REMEMBERED THE POWER OF THE LORD:

- A. "Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You."
 1. God said to Abraham,. "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." Genesis 18:14 (NASB).
 2. Jesus said it this way, "'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' They were even more astonished and said to Him, 'Then who can be saved?' Looking at them, Jesus said, 'With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.'" Mark 10:25-27 (NASB).
- B. Then Jehoshaphat recited, not for God's benefit, but for his own, "Are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You. Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?"
- C. It behooves, benefits and bolsters us to remember God's power in times past.
 1. Like when He instantly healed our daughter, Keri, when she was 2 years old.
 2. Like when He spared John's life in an accident which ought to have killed him.
 3. Like when He many times has provided just what we needed just when we needed it.
 4. Like other times when His answer to prayer was, "Not this time," and a loved one died and His grace was sufficient.
- D. Here's a thought:
 1. Compile a card file of past blessings, protections, provisions and deeds of the Lord.
 2. Compile a card file of promises He has made for your future.
 3. Bring the past provisions and the promises to bear on your present predicament.
 4. Be assured that GOD IS ABLE! Perilous times don't last – a powerful God does! His power outlasts the Energizer Bunny! Once you have experienced God's power in your life, you won't forget it!

- E. But you must be open to it! It's like a Ford Pinto we used to own. About once a month, I'd turn the key and hear the solenoid chatter but not kick the starter in. After a couple of those episodes I knew the problem: corroded battery terminals. Scraping them solved the problem. Now, if you don't remember God's power it is because you are not experiencing God's Power, so are you terminals corroded with:
1. Doubt?
 2. Stubbornness?
 3. Love of the world?
 4. Self-centeredness?
 5. Self-righteousness?

Scrape those terminals and let the power flow! Jehoshaphat remembered the power of God and in light of that:

III. JEHOSHAPHAT ADMITTED HIS INADEQUACY TO THE LORD:

- A. "For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You."
- B. The first step to gaining Divine Power is to admit our Fleshly Frailty!
1. Moses admitted it – more like an excuse not to serve – but he was used powerfully by God.
 2. Paul acknowledged it, "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NASB).
- C. God doesn't need our power; we need His! He reminded Zerubbabel about that truth saying, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit." Zechariah 4:6 (NASB).
- D. Honestly and humbly admitting our inadequacy
1. Isn't a plea for sympathy.
 2. Isn't a cop-out from service.
 3. Isn't false humility.
 4. But it is facing facts.
 5. It is ceasing to arrogantly think. "I don't need anybody – not even God!"
- E. Willie, a boy at church camp got too close to the edge of the trail and slipped down the face of a rock, certain that he would plummet to his death. He grabbed the one-inch trunk of a small tree growing out of the rock face and held on with all his might. "Help!" he screamed. "Somebody help me!"

Tim, the youth director, heard the cries and ran toward the noise. Willie was beginning to lose his strength, and his screams were becoming frantic. He knew that if Tim didn't reach him soon, he would fall to his death. Well, he didn't even want to think about that.

"We're coming!" Tim called out. "Hold on!" "Hurry!" Willie shouted. "I'm about to let go." He cried out one last time, "I can't hold on! I'm slipping!" Willie let out a horrible scream. And he fell one foot to the path below. Sometimes we worry and fight and struggle when all we really need to do is to admit our inadequacy and let go and fall into the open arms of God. Jehoshaphat admitted his inadequacy and

IV. JEHOSHAPHAT FOCUSED ON GOD NOT THE PROBLEM:

- A. "Then some came and reported to Jehoshaphat, saying, 'A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi).' Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD."
 - 1. He didn't rush to the window to see how bad it looked.
 - 2. He didn't call a council of war to determine his arsenal and the odds of winning a war.
 - 3. He didn't Google the enemy to check their record of wins and losses.
 - 4. Jehoshaphat turned his attention to the Lord, not the problem.
- B. Because he knew the power of the Lord, that's where he centered his focus.
 - 1. It was as if his mind was iron and the Lord's power a magnet.
 - 2. It was as if his mind was a hungry lion and the Lord's power was a huge steak.
 - 3. No foe or fear or hazard or harm could sway him!
- C. Consider these examples:
 - 1. Of focus on the problem:
 - a. Peter who walked on water until he looked at the surging sea and began to sink.
 - b. Judas who focused on his guilt and hanged himself.
 - c. Zacharias who looked at his old age and disbelieved the angel's promise that he'd bear a son and was struck mute until John the Baptist was indeed born to Elizabeth.
 - 2. Of focus on the Lord:
 - a. Stephen who was being stoned and who said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Acts 7:56, 59-60 (NASB).
 - b. The thief on the cross who forgot about the fear of dying and sought the grace of Jesus.
- D. We tend to move in the direction of our focus so focus on the Lord not the problem!. If we focus on the negative, we become negative; if we focus on the Lord, we move toward Him.
- E. A man found a 10 dollar bill on the ground one day and was so excited that from then on when he was walking he focused on the ground hoping to find more moolah. What he found was a knot on his head when he walked into a tree; a few pennies, nickle and dimes, and an angry rebuke when he ran into an old lady he hadn't noticed. Wrong focus

When you are surrounded, do as Jehoshaphat did: Seek the Lord, remember His power, admit your inadequacy and focus on the Lord! PRAY / INVITE

If God is for us, who can be against us? The worst Satan, or anyone else, can do is to kill us but even then they lose and we gain the victory. So, when you feel surrounded, be assured – the enemy loses, God and the faithful win! Be optimistic!

I'm not talking about phony euphoria; real optimism is not merely denying the hard realities of life; real optimism is that confident assurance that when we are in God's will, walking God's way, claiming God's promises, protected by God's presence and enabled by God's power, nothing can stop us and nothing can defeat us. WALK WITH JESUS AND BE SAFE!

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