

PRAYING In The Bible

Prayer in the Bible: Jehoshaphat prayer

There is always a moment when our backs are against the wall. Fasting is a good thing. Yet, I feel that it has its place. Fasting all the time is not the point. A fast is for a reason. When you are having a hard time or are confused about an issue, fasting has a way of finding spiritual clarity. A way to hear the voice of God clearer. Community fasting is powerful. It's telling God that the community is serious. What would happen if the body of Christ was unified? This prayer of Jehoshaphat is corporate. It's being spoken to God and to the people all at the same time.

It's healthy to be afraid in prayer. Are you in good standing with the Lord? Will God decide to take you home to heaven? Would you want to perish by your enemies or in spite of them? Jehoshaphat was afraid. Yet, he did not yell at God. He did not run away or panic. Instead, he stood before the people and called on the Lord in reverence. He gathered the faithful and made a call to fast and pray. This is a fantastic prayer because it does all the right things. To get a good result? That is not the point. Putting God on the throne with power and reverence is the point. If you're going to pray then it better be to the only one who could save you.

This is splitting hairs. Is Jehoshaphat accusing God or reminding God? What if there was a third option. Is this man talking to himself? Reminding himself of who is the mighty Lord. There are moments when prayer is most effective when we use other scripture. God's word is powerful. Why not repeat it? Jesus did! This King goes into a series of reminders to the Lord of His word and promises. God loves it when His word and promises are put to the test. Why? It's because Jesus said that the word would never pass away. Others verses say God does not change.

We read that the Lord's word does not return void to Him. That is what Jehoshaphat is doing in this prayer. Turning Gods words into a weapon.

His word is Gods badge of honor. What He says He means. God made a covenant with Moses and the Israelites. If you will follow the Lord, then the Lord your God will be with you. Look at Zechariah 8:8 *“and I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.”* Jehoshaphat points out that God made good on the promises He made to His children. Then the King goes on to say that the people have made good on their end of the bargain too.

It's interesting that Moses told God “Your people” have murmured. Here in this prayer Jehoshaphat pleads to God that His people have built a place for worship. They are not murmuring but crying out for help from the one true God. He then goes further by stating that God was the one who spared the enemies that threaten them now. This is a bold prayer. Yet, somehow, I believe that Jehoshaphat is saying that God allowed this mess but also that God must have a plan.

Don't believe that this prayer is demanding anything. Some of the words decry humbleness. There is a series of “we” statements that are really powerful. It begins in verse 12. “We” are powerless. This enemy is greater than them. Yet, He is calling on the God that is greater than the enemy. Secondly, Jehoshaphat says “we” don't know what to do. So often humans try to devise a way through. Yet, at times, they don't ask God first. That is not what's happening here. There was a call to corporate prayer and fasting.

I love the third “we.” Ok, it's not we but “our.” *“But our eyes are on you.”* How often are our prayers calling for something we want. Yes, the Kings wants something. Yet, I love the last

few words of verse 18. It's saying we will be quite now and look to the east. We will listen for your thunder. God, we prayed. God, we worshipped and fasted. Now we wait on the Lord. Did you notice there is no "if" statement. No, they are waiting for God to do God things to save them.

This prayer is so good. It's important that we honor God first and foremost. Put Him in His rightful place above us all. Declare that He his powerful and of good character. Don't leave Gods word void. Send it back to Him. It's partly why He gave us His word. To return it to Him. Yet, how does it come back full? I believe Jehoshaphat knew that honest prayer and fasting gives back reverence and love to God. That our trust in God hugs the Lord. In a sense it's equivalency exchange. The words love us and in turn our changed hearts love God. This is good stuff.