



MARK'S TEACHINGS

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Ten Things God Instructs Us to Do When Trouble Comes

2 Chronicles 20:1-35

By Mark Maund

#1 “Resolve to Inquire of the Lord”

In the movie, “Ghostbusters”, Ray Parker, Jr. sings the theme song, which opens with:

“If there’s somethin’ strange in your neighborhood, who you gonna call? Ghostbusters! If it’s somethin’ weird and it don’t look good, who you gonna call? Ghostbusters!”

Really?! Would you really trust Dan Akroyd and Bill Murray to handle your toughest situations in life?

Jehoshaphat “resolved to inquire of the Lord” when he became alarmed by the news of an unprovoked attack and this is the first thing we should do when trouble comes to us. Why? Because we have a Savior that knows exactly how we feel because He has been there and He wants to help us in our time of need: “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

#2 “Fast”

When trouble comes, put everything else aside (“fast”)...it is preparation for prayer. When Nehemiah got the news from his cousin that his home city of Jerusalem was still in ruins because the Jews that returned to rebuild the city became discouraged by the bullying they were receiving from the surrounding people and their leaders, here is what he did: “When I heard these words, I sat down and wept. I mourned for a number of days, fasting and praying before the God of Heaven” (Nehemiah 1:4). When trouble comes put everything else aside - things that so easily distract us - and pray. Take some personal time or a day off from work and focus on the issue at hand with God - not alone.

#3 “Have Everyone Affected Pray With You”

Jehoshaphat called all of the people of Judah together to pray with him because they would all be affected by the attack. If you are troubled, so is

your family...and not just your immediate family. “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). Psalm 35:13-14 says, “Yet when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting, and my prayer was genuine. I went about grieving as if for my friend or brother; I was bowed down with grief, like one mourning a mother.”

Ask your family and your church to pray with and for you...”As iron sharpens iron, so does one man another” (Proverbs 27:17). “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:14-16).

Husbands, are you keeping your trouble at work or financial difficulties from your wife? Mothers, are you trying to spare your children the pain of knowing that cancer has returned to your body? Are you keeping your deepest needs and concerns from your church family because they are too private to reveal? Likewise, are you immune to the pain and struggles of others in your family? Your church? That is not how God designed us to operate. Do not endure trouble alone and do not let anyone else either. Go to the Lord together...”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 upon you” (v 12).

#4 “Wait on the Lord”

“All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord” (v 13). This is difficult, is it not? Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” God knows this is hard...that’s why he also says:

- 1 Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation (testing) has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted (tested) beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will give you a way out so you can stand up under it.”
- Philippians 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

We all struggle with trouble, but don’t grumble or suffer without telling God how you feel and asking Him to help you. In the book of Habakkuk, Habakkuk is very troubled by the injustice he sees taking place in Israel and begins his prayer in the second verse of the first chapter like this: “How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?” Have you ever felt like God was not listening to your cries for relief? But Habakkuk kept praying and this is how the book closes in 3:19, “The sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.” You can wait on

the Lord because He will give you His strength and His peace while you are waiting.

#5 “Know That Trouble is Designed by God for Our Good”

Romans 8:28 says: “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.” This passage does not say all things are good, but that all things work together for good. Trouble is designed by God to strengthen our faith. Look at **Hebrews 12:7,11-12**: “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

I have a friend who got colon cancer when he was 38. He endured a couple of surgeries and a long series of very difficult chemotherapy treatments that made him very sick after every treatment. On the morning of his last treatment, he was sitting at the breakfast table and began to weep. His wife, who was cooking his breakfast, came over to console him thinking that he was weeping tears of joy that he was having his last treatment and would not have to face the pain and nausea. Instead he looked at her and said the opposite, “You don’t understand...I don’t want it to be over. I have grown closer to God, you and our boys through this illness and I don’t want to go back to ‘normal.’” His cancer and the painful treatments were not good, but he would tell you they worked together for good in a way that he could never have imagined.

#6 “Don’t Be Afraid or Discouraged Because the Battle is not Yours, But God’s”

Twice the prophet of God, who was filled by the Holy Spirit to speak for God, speaks these comforting words to Jehoshaphat and the people gathered. And this is not the first time God allowed an enemy to attack for a good purpose - His purpose. Let’s look at the story of the Red Sea experience, which is the story of God’s leading the new nation of Israel out of bondage in Egypt into the Promised Land. **Exodus 14:4**: “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.” God sets up the Israelites, after He has just used Moses to administer ten plagues to get Pharaoh to let the people go, and now tells Moses to have the people turn back and He is going to make Pharaoh mad again so that he will attack the Israelites. What?! Didn’t they just escape? You see, God reveals to us here that He is not just interested in us as believers; He is also interested in using us to lead others (the

Egyptians) to Himself as well. And because He knows we won't understand His ways...“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (**Isaiah 55:8-9**), He knows we need encouragement, which is why He told Moses to tell the people in **Exodus 14:13**: “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” “Therefore, we may boldly say: the Lord is my helper: I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (**Hebrews 13:6**). We are never alone in times of trouble; God is not only with us - He is working (fighting the battle) in and through us to produce a harvest of righteousness!

#7 “Praise and Worship God - in Advance”

Verses 18-19 report that the people “fell down before the Lord to *worship* Him”, and then the Levites “stood up to *praise* the Lord God of Israel shouting with a loud voice.” There are seven words for ‘Praise’ in Hebrew...the word used here is ‘Halal’, which means celebrate, boast, shine forth. It is the root word in ‘Hallelujah’ - ‘Praise Yah.’

The word for ‘Worship’ used here is ‘Avodah’, which is the same word for ‘work.’ How can we best ‘celebrate’ God’s ‘work’ in us? Praise and worship are acts of faith. **Hebrews 11:6** says, “And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.” So ‘Praise’ is ‘celebrating’ God’s promises by faith (nothing has changed circumstantially for Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah) and ‘Worship’ is acting on God’s promises, which leads us to Step # 8.

#8 “Show Up on Time, Dressed and Ready to Fight”

“Early in the morning they left” (v 20). To do what? “Face the enemy” (v 17). But I thought they “had no power to face this vast army that is attacking us” (v 12). They don’t, but God does. So here is the process:

- Go out
- Take up your positions
- Stand firm...facing your enemy (trouble)
- See the Lord’s deliverance

Our job is to show up by faith - ready to fight...God’s job is to fight the battle and deliver His people. **James 5:7** says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Put on the armor of God described in **Ephesians 6:10-18**: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and

against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

#9 "Collect the Blessings of Obedience"

Verse 25 says, "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. There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it." Have you been able to glean the harvest of blessings God has provided from your trials? Your suffering?

Deuteronomy 28:2 says, "All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God." Maybe another way to ask this question would be: Have you ever NOT been blessed when you obeyed God? Have you ever been disappointed when you followed the Lord's commands? My friend has recovered from his cancer, but the blessings of a stronger relationship with God, his wife and his children have not only continued - they have continued to grow! This is God's solemn promise: "For I know the plans I have for you - this is the Lord's declaration - plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope" (**Jeremiah 29:11**).

#10 "Celebrate God's Victory"

Verse 26 says "They assembled in the Valley of Beracah on the fourth day, for there they praised the Lord." Have you praised God for the victories in the trials you have endured before things "went back to normal?" Did you thank God for being with you in the valley of the shadow of death (**Psalms 23:4**)? Praise God on the battlefield! If you haven't, go back and thank Him for His deliverance...to the hospital; the scene of the accident; the dirt or the building where the failed deal happened, or where you lost your job; the rehab center; the attorney's office; your home. Remember, all things are not good, but "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose" (**Romans 8:28**), and "no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (**Hebrews 12:11**).

Verse 28 says “*they* entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the Lord...” Have you gone to the temple with those who have stood beside you in your trial(s) and praised God for the victory in your life? Before Jehoshaphat and the men of Jerusalem went home to their families, they went to the temple to praise God for the victory, as we should.

Finally, God’s victory is not just for us, our family and our extended (church) family - it’s also for the benefit of others. When we glorify God by obediently enduring trials by faith, the unfaithful take note. Look at **verse 29**: “The fear of God came upon *all the countries* when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.” Remember what God told Moses when He had the Israelites turn back from their journey to the Promised Land so that He could incite Pharaoh to attack the Israelites? Was He only trying to show the Israelites who He is? **Exodus 14:4**: “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and *the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.*” Isn’t that what God has called us to do? “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (**Matthew 28:20**). The word “go” used here literally means “as you are going.” Did you realize that God has placed us exactly where He wants us to be to do His work through us? Look at **Acts 17:26-27**: “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth, and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” We are always exactly where God wants us and can use us. And those around us notice: “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life” (**2 Corinthians 2:14-16a**).

I know this is a lot to consider, and I still struggle to be faithful when trials come. So here is a **Psalms (121)** that always encourages me:

“I lift up my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you - the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”
Amen