

Praying When You're in a Crisis 2 Chronicles 20: 1-26

Good morning! Today, we're going to start a new series called, "PUSH". How many of you know what it means? PUSH stands for "Pray until something happens". In this series, we're going to talk about prayer. We're going to look at how to pray when you're in a crisis, why we need to pray, what is a thanksgiving prayer, and how to get your prayers answered. It'll be a four-week series which takes us to the end of this month and then before we know it, Christmas is here! How soon time flies. It just seems like yesterday. We started with a pandemic and we're still in a pandemic. The crisis isn't over yet. But we can be hopeful because God is still on his throne. Amen?

We're still in a crisis. Even though there are bright hopes for the future because the bitterly-contested presidential election has concluded, we're still in a crisis, no doubt. Some of you, perhaps, are even facing your own personal crisis like a family crisis, or financial crisis, relationship crisis, etc. But what is a crisis? We all know when it comes, right? The dictionary says, "a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger."

Have you been in a crisis? If you've lived long enough, you have. If not, you will. That's a guarantee. Life is not easy. That's why we need to push. Pray until something happens.

This message is entitled, "Praying When You're in a Crisis". Seriously, life is tough. That's why we must pray hard. There's a lot of challenges before us. What I'd like to share with you this afternoon is the kind of prayer that you must pray when you're in a crisis. I call this "Breakthrough Prayer". An example of a breakthrough prayer is in 2 Chronicles 20.

Please open your Bibles and turn to 2 Chron. 20. I'm going to tackle **verses 1-26**. We're not going to read it right now but I'll refer to some relevant verses as I go through this message.

In this passage, King Jehoshaphat had three enemy nations coming against him. Let me read verses 1-5 and please follow along. *"After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat. Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, 'A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar' (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him. Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard and said:"*

This king does three things right when he's in a crisis. You need to do these same things too. He prayed privately, he gets other people to pray, and then he prays publicly. This is what you want to do when you're in a major crisis in your life. First, he prays privately. It says, *"Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord."*

You see, instead of worrying, "I got three enemies coming against me and there's no way we're going to beat them" he seeks God. Instead of panicking, he prays. He doesn't seek a consultant. He doesn't ask his best friends. He goes directly to God. The very first thing he does in a crisis, is he resolves to inquire of the Lord.

Prayer should always be the first choice in your life, not the last resort. Too often we act like prayer is the last thing we do. You say, "Well all we can do now is pray." Somebody goes, "Has it come to that?" Like, "Wow, it's that bad, all we can do is pray?" No. It ought to be your first choice.

He prays privately, and then he enlists others to pray. The entire country gets together to pray for God's help. There is power in group prayer. In the days ahead, I'm going to teach you how to pray for everybody else in the church, because everybody else is going to be praying for you. Now, there's enormous power in this, it's like a chain letter. You give out one prayer, but you've got almost a hundred people praying for you between now and Christmas Eve. That's a big deal. There's power in group prayer.

Now, what do you do in a breakthrough prayer? Well, you do five things. Write these down. Number one, the first thing I do, is I

1. Start by focusing on God, not on my problem.

When you're in a crisis, it's natural to start saying, "God I'm in a crisis," and you start telling God all the crisis, as if he doesn't know it. God knows you're in a crisis, he knew you were going to be in the crisis long before you did. You don't start your prayer by saying, "God, here's my prayer. I need money. I need a new job. I need to get out of bankruptcy. I need healing". Whatever the crisis is you start by focusing on God. What you do is exactly what this guy did. He does four things here. You might write these down.

First, in my prayer,

o I remind myself of God's greatness.

When you're praying for a breakthrough. When you're praying for something you cannot control, you don't focus on the problem, you focus on God's greatness. Our God is an awesome God, amen? He reigns from the heavens above. With wisdom pow'r and love, Our God is an awesome God. Sounds like a song, right? You see, the bigger God gets in your mind, the smaller the problem becomes. God says, nothing's too hard for me, all things are possible with me. So, I start my prayer, not by thinking about the problem, but by reminding myself of God's greatness.

That's what the King prayed in verse 6. *"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."* I focus on God's greatness. Second, next thing I do, is

- **I remind myself of his unlimited power.**

I remind myself of God's unlimited power. When I realize that God has all the power in the world, I don't have to have any power, God's got it all, and I can just trust him. In my prayer, I think of all the ways that God has helped me in the past, all the ways God has helped other people in the past, all the ways God has helped people in the Bible, and I go, "Remember when you did that? Remember when you did this? You had all the power to ... Like you split the Red Sea, and you brought water to the thirsty people in the desert through a rock."

In the first part of verse 7, this is the King's prayer, *"Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel..."* What's he talking about? He's talking about the Exodus. Remember God gave the land of Israel to Abraham. He said, "I'm going to make you a great nation," and they began to grow and grow. The Jewish nation began to grow and grow. Then there was a famine, they left their own country, because there was food in Egypt, and the whole nation moved to Egypt where they were enslaved for the next 400 years.

Finally, Moses brings them back to the Promised Land, back to the land was given to them, and guess what? In those 400 years, other people had moved into their place, and God helped them to drive away those people. I remind myself of God's greatness, and I remind myself of God's power.

Here's the third thing you do in a breakthrough prayer.

- **I remind God of his promises!**

This is a real important key for you to get. In your prayer, you say, "God didn't you promise to help us? Didn't you promise to take care of us?"

You know, there are up to seven thousand promises in this book, the Bible. In the second part of verse 7 he says, *"...and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?"* He's saying basically, "God you promised." Because that's what's God promised Abraham. Now God loves to be reminded of his promises. We don't. If we're parents, we don't. If your kid comes with, "Dad you promised. You said you'd do this. Mom you promised. How can you break your promise?" When that happens, we feel guilty. Because we're imperfect. We can't fulfill our promise because sometimes it's inconvenient or we're not loving enough. But God is perfect. He doesn't feel guilty because he always fulfills his promise. In fact, he wants to show you again and again that he loves you and it's not an inconvenience for him to do the same thing for you what he has promised others.

Then finally, the fourth thing he does, is he asks God for a breakthrough.

- **I ask God for a breakthrough!**

In verses 11-12, the king prays, *"See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. Our God, will you not judge them?..."* Notice in this prayer, he's very specific, he gives a very specific request. Do you know what you need to ask God? If you don't, God can't give it, because you've got to know what you want to ask for. You need to clarify, where do I need a breakthrough in my life?

Don't ever ask God, "Oh God bless my life." It's such a general vague thing. How are you going to know if God did it or not? What is a blessing anyway? Could anybody right now give me a definition of a blessing. What is a blessing? Sometimes a problem is a blessing. That's why it's called a blessing in disguise. Is that what you're praying when you say, "God give me a lot of blessings?" "God give me a lot of problems?" You might want to be careful about asking God to bless you. That's very vague. It's very general. You can't actually measure it.

When you say, "God I need to get out of debt. God I need healing. God I need this relationship to be restored." That's measurable. That's specific. You'll know when there's a breakthrough.

Now that's all in just the first step. You start by focusing on God. Now here's the second part of a breakthrough prayer.

2. Tell God: I can't do this. I need you to do this.

This is what makes breakthrough prayers different than other prayers. When you say, "God I need your help", that means you still think you can do it. That's okay. Lots of times you say, "Lord I need your strength today. Lord I need your help today. Lord I need your wisdom today." That's a normal prayer. In a breakthrough prayer you go, "God I can't even possibly do this, because it's beyond my control. I need you to do this. I need you to do this." It's when you feel powerless. Have you ever felt powerless? Let me ask it another way. Have you ever held a screaming baby, and tried to get it to be quiet, and it wouldn't? No matter what you do, that baby won't stop screaming. That's feeling powerless. When you feel that way, you need to pray a breakthrough prayer.

Now, you tell God, "I can't do this. It's beyond my ability. I need you to do this." Look at verse 12 again. Here's the second thing he prays. After he says, "God you're great, you're powerful." He says, *"... 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."*

When you don't know what to do, that's when you need a breakthrough prayer. Like when you have a family member or loved one who's dying, there's nothing you can do about it. If anything is going to be done, it has to be done by somebody greater than you. If your company moves overseas, you're going to lose your job, there's nothing you can do about it.

Most of the big things in your life, there's nothing you can do about. That's why you need to learn the breakthrough prayer.

Now did you notice, that in that verse 12 it says, "We have no power." But six verses earlier, when he started to pray he said, "Power and might are in your hand." So, I don't have to be powerful if I'm connected to God, because he's all-powerful. I don't have to be all-knowing if I'm connected to God, because he is all-knowing. I don't have to be in every place if I'm connected to God, because he's in every place. What do you do when you're in a situation that you cannot control, you cannot change, and you cannot manage? What do you do in that kind of situation? You wait and you trust. You wait and you trust.

Sometimes, faith means doing nothing. You just stand still. You just stand there, you wait and you trust. You trying to do something puts it back in your court. Sometimes there's something so big in your life, you can't do anything about it, and you keep saying, "You know if I just figure this out I just work it out, things will work out great." You just get more and more tired. Sometimes faith means doing nothing. Sometimes faith means just standing there and waiting while the enemy is headed straight at you. You just wait. Look at the next verse, verse 13. *"All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord."* This means they literally ... All the guys in the nation, they stood up before God, doesn't mean five minutes. They might have stood before the Lord for hours. What are they doing? Simply by standing they're saying, "God we're looking to you. This thing's too big for us. We're going to have a national crisis. We're going under for the last time. We're at the end of our rope but we're hanging on. We just stand before the Lord. We're going to wait, watch, and trust."

Notice who were with them? Their wives and children and little ones. Even the babies. So, the whole family can get involved in your breakthrough prayer. If you're a parent and you're praying for something big, you need to tell your kids. You need to get everybody praying about it at the dinner table. You need to tell your spouse the breakthrough prayer you're praying.

Get your kids involved in praying this and you just say, "We're going to stand before the Lord. We can't change this, but God you can, and it is our faith in you that's going to make the difference."

Now, here's the third part of praying a breakthrough. After you have told God, focused on him, his greatness and all that, and you've told God you can't do it, you need him to do it, here's the third thing:

3. Listen to what God says.

Listen to what God says and that's why I told you prayer is a conversation. It's not a monologue. Prayer is not you doing all the talking. "You mean, wait a minute. In those five minutes I don't have to be talking the whole time?" No. A person who talks all the time, that's not a conversation. That's a monologue. You want to have a conversation with God. You can't build a friendship if they never get to talk.

You're not spending the whole time talking to God, you're spending some time letting God talk to you. How? Through this book. Through reading this book. This book is filled with what God wants to say to you. Everything God wants to say to you, he's already put it right here. People are always looking for some sign. "I wish God would tell me what he wants to do. I wish he would write it in the sky." God is not going to write it in the sky, he's already written it in a book! Why in the world do you think that you're going to look up at the sky? Stop looking for a sign and start looking for a scripture. Stop looking for a vision and start looking for a verse. I'm not saying God can't give you dreams and visions because we can't put God in a box, but in general, God's will is in God's Word, and the more you read this book, the more you're going to know what to do. His word is the final authority. Did you get a vision? Good, now check it against God's Word. Does it line up? I remember a guy, a preacher, years ago, who said that he got a vision that Jesus was coming in 19-something.

And he wrote a book and promoted it and many people were led astray. I'm sure he knew that Jesus said no one knows the day and time of his coming except God alone but this guy put his vision above God's word.

Now I want you to listen to what God said to the king and the people, because they're all praying, "Lord, the enemy's coming. We don't know what to do. We can't... We don't have the power. We're going to die." This is a crisis and it's uncontrollable. Verses 15 to 17 is packed with encouragement for you. And God would say the same thing to you in his Word if you would just read it. God said it through a man he chose named Jahaziel in verse 14. Here's what God 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. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. 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.'"

Now, imagine the scene in verse 18. An entire nation getting on the ground, bowing down on their knees, and worshiping God, because God had said, "I'm going to take care of it." Now this is an amazing thing. When you pray the way these people pray, Jehoshaphat the king, and everybody else, you're going to get God saying the same thing to you. There's a lot to be distilled from that message God gave to the people, but let me just focus on one that I think is very important and significant here. I'm talking about the last part in verse 15, where God says, **"For the battle is not yours, but God's"**. God is saying, "It's my battle, and I'll handle it."

Do you wonder why you're tired all the time? Why you're frustrated? The reason you're so tired, is you're trying to fight battles that belong to God, and you're not God. The battle is not yours, it's God's. That problem out there you think is your problem, God says, "You're my child. Fathers take care of their children. It's my battle." The battle is not yours but God's. You see, what happens in life, when we see a problem we think, "If it's to be it's up to me. I got to figure it out. I got to plan it all." What we start doing is we assume God's role.

Since this is God's battle, what do you need to do? You've got to **wait and watch what God does**. That's what verse 17 says, "*You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you.*"

You just need to be quiet. Be still and know that he is God. Like what Jacob read for us earlier. So, you don't move. You don't even run away. If there's anything you can take away from this message, let this truth sink in your mind.

It is never God's will for me to run from a difficult situation.

Did you write that down? It is never, never, never, never, never, never, never, God's will for me to run from a difficult situation. Because if you run, you're going to face it again somewhere else. Also, running means giving up. When you give up, you trip up. Just stay where you are and wait for God's deliverance. He is faithful.

Now, God says, stand firm. How do I stand firm? Verse 20 says this; here's how you stand firm. "**Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.**" Well, the way you get stability is by putting your faith in God, his character, and the way you get success, is by putting your faith in what his prophets have said.

This is it. It's the Word of God. Everything the prophets in the past said are in this book.

The Bible says in Joshua 1:8, “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

Here's the fourth step. The fourth thing you do in a breakthrough prayer.

4. Sing Your Praises to God.

Have a praise and worship time. Our God likes music, doesn't he? Especially if that music is all about praising him and giving thanks to him. The psalmist, in fact, encourages us with these words, *“Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.”* (Psalm 95:2) That's why there are 150 psalms. Psalms is the book in the Bible with the most chapters. Majority are songs of praises to God and even the psalms of lament end with a praise to God. The reason I chose this particular story from the Bible, was because it perfectly illustrates the power of praising God in songs and music. Notice this is an unusual battle strategy. George Patton would have fainted if he'd been given this order. Verse 21, *“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.’”*

This is what Paul and Silas did when they found themselves in a crisis. They were arrested in Philippi at the instigation of the crowd who falsely accused them of breaking the law. They were thrown in jail then stripped and severely flogged and fastened their feet in stocks and the Bible tells us, *“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.”* (Acts 16:25) A miracle happened while they were praying and singing!

Which is what happened in verses 22-23. *“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. The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.”* Now that's cool. They haven't lifted a finger, and they win the battle by singing to God. Even thanking him in advance. So, there's nothing wrong in thanking God for what he is going to do. It just shows the faith you have in his power to act on your behalf.

By the way, you don't have to sound good, the Bible just says make a joyful noise. Some of you are prison singers. You're always behind a few bars, and never have the right key. Nevertheless, you sing your praises.

Now here's the final part. The fifth part of a breakthrough prayer. This is the kind of prayer I'm teaching you to pray every day for your breakthrough. Number five.

5. Expect God to turn battles into blessings.

Expect God to turn battles into blessings. I want you to notice what happens when you let God fight your battles. Verse 24 to 26 says this. *“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. 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. On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berakah, where they praised the Lord. This is why it is called the Valley of Berakah to this day.”*

The word berakah means “blessing” in Hebrew. The valley of bitterness, the valley of burden, the valley of battles, was renamed the valley of blessing.

God wants you to live your life in the valley of blessing, not in the valley of battles. Where there's so much blessing it takes you three days to carry off the spoils of war. God doesn't want you to live in the battleground, in the valley of battles. You've been fighting these battles, don't know how to win. Apply these principles and see the power of God in your life, in your circumstances. God says, "I don't want you in the valley of battles, I want you in the valley of blessing. I want to bless you so much it takes you two or three days to carry off all the spoils." Because they thanked and praised God there, they renamed the valley. Where do you want to live today?

Folks, I want you to see that blessings come when you rely on the power of God alone to save you. The battle is the Lord's. But you know what, only those who know God can receive this blessing. Many of us know God but only in our minds. We should know him in our hearts as well. That happens when you have a personal relationship with his son Jesus Christ. All blessings come through the Lord Jesus Christ who died for you and then rose from the dead for you. He did that so you could receive the greatest blessing there is in the whole universe, the blessing of eternal life. Nothing can beat that. All you need to do is to ask God for forgiveness for your sins and then surrender your life to God, allowing his Holy Spirit to change you inside out.

Let us pray.