

## ☞ **When the Odds are Against You**

Many of us can relate to this mindset lately. With this pandemic affecting everyone to one degree or another and circumstances changing every few days or so, it seems as though the odds are against us. We may not be physically sick from the virus, but we are more restricted and some are stuck at home. Some are being affected financially as some businesses have been ordered to close. We are all facing unprecedented, challenging times. It may feel like the odds are against you.

*Adversity can either destroy or build up, depending on our chosen response.*

*--John Maxwell... All miracles have one thing in common. They started with a problem.*

*What we call adversity, God calls opportunity.*

*--Merv Rosell... God could have kept Daniel out of the lions' den. . . he could have kept Paul and Silas out of jail.. . . he could have kept the three Hebrew children out of the fiery furnace. . . but God has never promised to keep us out of hard places . . . what he has promised is to go with us through every hard place, and to bring us through victoriously.*

☞ In **2 Chronicles 20:1-30** is the story of King Jehoshaphat who was being attacked by an overwhelming force. His enemies had allied together to attack him and he was feeling overwhelmed because the odds were most definitely against him. We can learn from his example. How did Jehoshaphat respond?

### ☞ **Turn to God** v. 3

To be fair, his very first response was alarm. I wanted to make sure and point that out because many of us have those kinds of feelings when the odds are against us. We become alarmed or at least concerned. It's perfectly natural. An overwhelming situation has come upon us; we wonder just how big of an enemy we are facing; how long will it last; we struggle to see how we are going to get through this. So, I'm actually comforted knowing that Jehoshaphat experienced those same feelings.

☞ But, **he didn't get fixated on his fear**. That's where we need to be cautious as well. This pandemic has most definitely interrupted our normal way of life. There are still a lot of questions about it and just how much we will be affected. It's only natural that we would be concerned, fearful and possibly alarmed. But as believers, we don't get paralyzed here. We choose to turn to God.

Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. This indicates his humility and his understanding of his need for God in a time of crisis. As Americans, we often look at adversity and become defiant, with an attitude of bravado,

thinking we can independently overcome anything. But the Bible says that when troubles come we should turn to God.

☞ **James 5:13 says, “Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray.**

In 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 God basically says that when various troubles come upon us, we should humble ourselves and pray; we should seek his face and turn from our wicked ways. That is how we will get help from the Lord.

Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of God

Jeremiah 10:21 warns that when we do not inquire of God, we won't prosper. In fact, it says we are senseless when we don't inquire of God.

☞ To inquire is to ask. Ultimately, we want to **ask for God's mercy and help** in our time of need. But along the way we may ask some other questions as well. Questions like, “Why?” or “What in the world is going on?” We may even wonder, “Is this pandemic of the devil or is it God testing us?” We likely won't get solid answers to those questions. But I think it is okay to ask questions. For some, that is part of the way we turn to God. And turning to God is what we need to do when the odds are against us.

He called a fast. Fasting is always associated with humility. It fits with turning to God. It's one way we show God that we are really looking to him in our time of trouble. It's also a way for us to get more focused on him instead of our problems.

The people came together to seek help from the Lord v. 4

☞ We can't physically meet together during this pandemic, but we can certainly **agree together and seek the Lord for help.**

Psalms 14:2

The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.

God is watching to see what our response in times of crisis will be.

Jeremiah 29:13

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

We are in a time when the odds are against us. We need to turn to God!

☞ **Isaiah 45:22**

**Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.**

When the odds are against you, turn to God!

☞ **Talk to God** v. 5 – 12

*If you are swept off your feet, it's time to get on your knees.*

*If your day is hemmed with prayer, it is less likely to unravel.*

A significant part of turning to God is to pray. We need to be talking to God, and not just to complain about our crisis, but to align ourselves with him.

☞ Jehoshaphat **recognized his authority** v. 6, you rule over all the kingdoms...

Psalms 47:2

How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth!

**Psalms 97:9**

☞ For you, O LORD, are the Most High **over all the earth**; you are exalted far above all gods.

As we pray, let's be sure we honor God by recognizing his authority. Regardless of the source of this pandemic, ultimately God is in control.

☞ **Remember his ability** v. 7, this has to do with God's promise of the land which he fulfilled.

Is God able to overcome the Coronavirus?

Is God able to heal those who have been infected?

Is God able to provide for those whose income has been hindered?

Did Jesus calm the storm?

Did Jesus heal the blind?

Did Jesus feed the 5,000?

☞ **Jeremiah 32:17**

Ah Lord God! You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! **Nothing is too difficult for You**

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

☞ **Request his assistance** v. 12, we don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you.

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer & petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

☞ **Matthew 7:7**

**Ask and it will be given to you**; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

James 4:2

You do not have, because you do not ask

*-- Watchman Nee... Our prayers lay the track down on which God's power can come. Like a mighty locomotive, his power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails.*

When the odds are against you, talk to God!

☞ **Trust God** v. 12, 20

*I would rather walk with God in the dark than go alone in the light.*

*--Oswald Chambers... Trustfulness is based on confidence in God, whose ways I do not understand. If I did, there would be no need for trust.*

*True faith goes into operation when there are no answers.*

☞ **Proverbs 3:5**

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;**

☞ **Admit your own frailty** v. 12b, we don't know what to do...

It's okay to admit that you don't have all the answers. It's okay to admit that you don't see a way through all of this. That is simply being humble, and God gives grace to the humble.

*-- Abraham Lincoln... I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day.*

But don't get stuck here and panic at your lack of solutions. Trust God. Jehoshaphat admitted he didn't know what to do, yet he went on to say, "but our eyes are upon you."

☞ **Await God's force** v. 15, the battle is not yours, but God's; v. 17, the Lord will be with you; v. 22, the Lord set ambushes against the opposing armies.

☞ Now, I believe we **do our part** in this pandemic. **Be smart, follow the recommended guidelines, but keep on trusting God through it all. He's got this.**

*I remember watching a father play with his little boy, repeatedly throwing him in the air and catching him just before he hit the ground. The child was relaxed and having a great time saying, "Do it again! Do it again!"*

*I thought, "If that was me, I'd be stiff as a board."  
"Can you explain why he's so relaxed, even when he's out of control?" I asked the father.  
"It's very simple," he said. "We have a history together. We've played this game before, and I've never dropped him."*

God is trustworthy. Many of you listening today have walked with the Lord for some time and you have a history together, so you know that God will not drop you. You can trust him.

*Faith is not merely you holding on to God--it is God holding on to you.*

Psalms 125:1

Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever

When the odds are against you, trust God!

☞ **Thank God** v. 21, 27, 28

☞ Notice, Jehoshaphat gave thanks both **before and after** the victory! We can give God thanks right now simply because we know He's got this. We can thank him because we know he is working all things out for our good. (Romans 8:28).

☞ **1 Thessalonians 5:18**

**give thanks in all circumstances**, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

We can thank God because in the midst of this pandemic more people than usual are hearing the word through these online messages. And, people are turning to God in this time of crisis. That is something to be thankful for.

☞ **Philippians 4:6-7**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. 7 And the **peace of God**, which transcends all understanding, **will guard your hearts and your minds** in Christ Jesus.

God may supernaturally bring an end to this pandemic. God may keep you healthy and untouched. But even if he doesn't, you can have peace in any situation when you **turn to ☞ God, talk to God, trust God and thank God.**

*--Erwin W. Lutzer... God often puts us in situations that are too much for us so that we will learn that no situation is too much for him.*