The Cry of Desperation

2 Chronicles 20:3-9
3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.
4 And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities they came to seek the Lord.
5 And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court,
6 And said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?
7 Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?
8 And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying,
9 If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

Introduction
David had a desire to build God temple.
• It was one of the greatest desires of his life and it pleased God.
  o However, because of the blood that was on David’s hands,
    ▪ the Lord wouldn’t allow him to build the temple.
  o Instead he amassed the raw materials,
    ▪ made the plans
    ▪ and wrote the songs that would be sung there
      • but Solomon was designated
      • as the one that would complete David’s desire.
  o When it was finally done
    ▪ and Solomon had finished the exquisite temple
      • of the one true God,
    ▪ he took to heart the great gravity of the situation
      • as he invited God to inhabit the temple.
  o As the Ark of the Covenant made that critical transition into that brand new tabernacle,
    ▪ there was a great day of sacrifice and petition before God.
• It was an unprecedented display of worship
  o And God answered it with a very powerful promise:

2 Chronicles 7:12-15
12 And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.
13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;
If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place.

A Desperate King

In the fifth generation we find a king named Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat fought many wars,
- was involved in many battles and was a victorious warrior.
- But, in our text, we find this victorious warrior in a desperate situation.
  - Never before had he really stood in need of God's help.
    - His own armies had always been enough.
  - He had never before felt the need to cry out to God for help.
    - Never had he needed to rely on God to help him gain the victory.
    - He always had his own abilities to fall back on.
  - The Jehoshaphat that we find in our text, however, is in a much different situation.
    - 3 warring nations have risen together and combined their forces against him.
      - The children of Moab, Ammon, and Mt Siere
      - have determined to crush Jehoshaphat
  - As Jehoshaphat surveyed his enemies no doubt he realized that he could conquer any one of them alone.
    - However, when they combined their forces, they were far more and mightier than he and his armies.
      - His back was to the wall and it was simply more than he could handle.
- Have you ever felt that way?
  - When several different elements come together at the same time
    - to create that perfect storm in your life
      - that threatens your very existence.
  - Any one of the problems, taken individually,
    - would represent a small challenge
      - that you are well able to over come.
  - But they don’t come separately.
  - All at once you find yourself inundated
• and overwhelmed by problems and difficulties
  • that threaten to drag you down.

  o Verse 3 tells us that he was afraid.
    ▪ All of a sudden his own abilities weren’t good enough.
  o For the first time in his life he was facing an obstacle that he couldn’t overcome on his own.
    ▪ He was overwhelmed by the fact that the enemy was mightier than he was.
      • He was afraid.
        o Pure and simple.
      • Despair settled in.
        o Desperation got a grip on him.
  o It was a completely impossible situation that had all the earmarks of an inevitable, unavoidable defeat.
    ▪ Jehoshaphat didn’t have anywhere to turn,
      • there was no ally that he could appeal to for help.
        o His back was against the wall.

Quit or Continue?
• I guess he could have quit.
  o I guess he could have allowed despair to take over
    ▪ and rob him of all desire to go on
      • after all, who would blame him for backing down and backing up now?
    ▪ The enemy was simply more and mightier than he was.
  • But he didn’t quit!
    o He didn’t throw in the towel.
      ▪ We need a revival of that warrior spirit that is never defeated.
        • It may know despair.
        • It may recognize imminent defeat.
          o But it never loses hope.
    o Too many people throw up their hands and quit at the first sign of trouble.
      ▪ Too many people are willing to give in to despair and depression,
        • letting hell have its way in your life.
    o When are we going to realize that those times of great opposition
      ▪ are great opportunities for God to show up and show out?
    o When are we going to start seeing, in the midst of our chaos,
      ▪ the perfect opportunity for God to speak peace into a troubled situation?
    o Jehoshaphat feared, but instead of giving up,
      ▪ he “set himself to seek the Lord
        • and proclaimed a fast throughout all of Judah.”
      ▪ He sought God.
My what a simple but powerful principle.
- Before we seek a chance to quit we should seek God.
  - Before we appeal to the wisdom of this world for hope
    - we should seek God.
- As he began to pray and fast,
  - God reached way back through the annals of time
    - and got a hold of an old dusty promise,
    - prompting it to Jehoshaphat’s memory.
- Somewhere in the recesses of Jehoshaphat’s mind hope began to stir
  - as Jehoshaphat remembered the promise
    - that God had given to Solomon 5 generations ago.
  - Suddenly Jehoshaphat knew what to do.
    - He gathered the people together, in the court of the temple,
      - and, from that place,
      - they called upon the Lord.
- In the face of overwhelming opposition,
  - with the enemy breathing down his neck,
    - with certain defeat looming over the horizon
      - Jehoshaphat went to church!
- I want you to know tonight that you don’t quit church to work out your problems.
  - Too many stay away from church to work out all that has afflicted them.
    - When are we going to realize that it is in church that you overcome your problems.
      - It’s in church that you find the strength to carry on the fight,
        - its in church that you overcome your enemies!
- So, from the temple, Jehoshaphat called out to God!
  - He said, “O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven?
    - God said, Yes.
  - He then states the obvious: You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations.
    - You are large and in charge.
    - And God said, Yes.
  - “In your hand,” Jehoshaphat said, “are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.”
    - And God said, Yes.
  - He goes on with another question:
    - “Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel,
      - and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?”
      - And God said, Yes!
  - Then he gets to the heart of the matter:
Aren’t you the God who said,
“‘If disaster comes upon us,
• the sword,
• judgment,
• or pestilence,
• or famine,
• if we will stand before this house and before you
  • — and cry out to you in our affliction,
    o that you will hear and save?
  • Now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir
    • are coming to drive us out of this land you have given us.
  o Standing on the promise of God, Jehoshaphat said,
    • “will you not execute judgment on them?
    • For we are powerless against this great horde
      • that is coming against us.
    • We do not know what to do,
      • but our eyes are on you.”
      o And God said, I thought you would never ask!

The Cry
In that moment, Jehoshaphat did something that he had never done before.
• He cried to the Lord for help
  • – and God was moved by his cry!
• I want to focus in here for a moment tonight
  o because this wasn’t just your ordinary, run-of-the-mill cry.
    • Jehoshaphat meant business when he cried out to the Lord.
    • He was in a desperate situation
      • and the cry that went forth was a desperate plea for help.
• The little 3 letter word “cry” in 2 Chronicles 20:9 is an interesting word.
  o Most of the time, throughout the Old Testament,
    • the Hebrew word “Quara” is used for the word cry.
      • It means to call aloud,
      • proclaim, pronounce, etc...
        o all of the normal usages of the word cry.
• However the cry of Jehoshaphat was different.
  o It was a seldom used Hebrew word: Zaaq,
    • which means to shriek, from anguish or a sense of danger,
      • to cry aloud, a desperate cry for help!
  o I want you to know, tonight, this was not your ordinary cry for assistance.
    • Jehoshaphat’s cry was the pleading of a man that was going down for the last time.
• It had a significant sound, it was the cry of desperation.
  o This was not a now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep kind of prayer.
    ▪ This was a now-I’m-getting-down-to-business kind of prayer.
    ▪ This was the cry of a man that was making one last desperate plea for help.
    ▪ This was the cry of a man that was at the end of his rope
      • and was calling for help just before he went down for the count.
  o In the face of sure defeat,
    ▪ at the edge of desperation,
      • Jehoshaphat finally called upon God,
        o earnestly, with a heart-felt urgency.
• Tonight, if you find yourself on the edge of desperation,
  o if you find yourself facing an enemy that is greater than you,
  o if you simply don’t know the answer and don’t know where to turn,
    ▪ you have two choices:
      • You can quit and give up.
      • Or you can be like Jehoshaphat
        o and get serious about touching God.

David’s Cry
I know of one other place in the Hebrew scripture where this peculiar word for cry is used.
• David uses the word cry over and over again in the Psalms,
  o but only once does he reference this cry of desperation.
• It was in Psalm 142.
  o David was still young when he wrote this Psalm.
    ▪ As a matter of fact, it was very early in his life,
      • but David was in one of the most desperate times in his life.
        o It was from the Cave of Adullum that David wrote Psalm 142.
  o David, who was the anointed King of Israel but had not yet taken his throne.
    ▪ Is on the run from Saul, the rejected king that still holds the sceptor.
      • David has become an outlaw in his own land.
      • Saul hates him and is hunting him with a desire to kill him.
  • Times are tough for David,
    o he has no friends,
    o even the priests that helped him have been slain,
      ▪ and – for perhaps the first time in his life – he is truly all alone.
• Hiding in the caves of Adullum,
o desperate for his life,
  ▪ out of his time of despair,
  ▪ David wrote Psalm 142.
o Beginning with verse 4 he said,
  ▪ “I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.
  ▪ I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.
  ▪ Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.
• From the cave of Addulum, David cried in desperation unto the Lord, “Help Me!”
  o Never again in the life of David will he be as utterly helpless as he is now.
  ▪ Never again will he be this desperate.
  ▪ And never again will he cry this kind of cry.
• From the cave of Addulum until the day of his death
  o he will be surrounded by a band of mighty men
  ▪ who will stand beside him,
  ▪ willing to do anything for him.
  o But, at this one time in his life, he stands alone
  ▪ and there is no one to help him.
  o In that moment, he cried unto the Lord with the voice of desperation.
  ▪ David meant business, that day in the caves of Addulum.
  ▪ He needed help!

Cry Out To God
I come to you tonight with a simple message.
• All of us fight our personal battles against the enemy.
  o Not one of us is exempt.
  ▪ We all battle spirits and temptations.
  o For some it is despair,
  ▪ for others it is loneliness,
  ▪ some battle depression,
  ▪ others battle feelings of uselessness or worthlessness.
  o We all struggle against an enemy that seeks to destroy our souls.
• Most of the time we fight those battles alone.
  o For a myriad of reasons,
  ▪ we never feel quite comfortable
  ▪ with sharing those intimate struggles
  ▪ with our friends and fellow worshipers in the church.
  o Often we are afraid that, instead of praying with us,
  ▪ they will spread this juicy bit of gossip.
  o So we struggle through our battles
  ▪ and fight to maintain our spiritual balance.
• However, there comes, in each of our lives,
  o those moments and times when we feel overwhelmed
    ▪ when the enemy that has arisen before us
      • seems to be more than we can handle.
  o Those moments when 2 or 3 things come together at the same time
    ▪ and threaten to sink your ship.
  o Sometimes we are able to force our way through difficult times on
    sheer willpower alone.
    ▪ Sometimes we are able to pull off some unexpected,
      • seemingly impossible comeback
      ▪ and make it through the fight.
• But eventually each of us comes to that place where Jehoshaphat found
  himself,
  o where our strength is nearly gone
    ▪ and there’s no sign of deliverance from our foe.
  o Jehoshaphat had never before had to rely on God to win the battle.
    ▪ His own armies and his own skill had always been enough.
      • But this time he was overwhelmed.
• Let me tell you what to do when you are overwhelmed.
  o You join your voice with Jehoshaphat and David
    ▪ and you cry with desperation unto the Lord!
• There is within you a certain cry,
  o a certain sound that gets the attention of God.
    ▪ It’s that cry of surrender,
      ▪ its that sound of desperation,
        ▪ it’s that plea that says, “I’ve tried everything and
          nothing helped, I need you God!”
• When he could no longer rely on himself,
  o Jehoshaphat cried out to God in desperation
    ▪ and God used him to bring about one of the greatest victories
      ever recorded!

2 Chronicles 20:13-17
13 And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their
children.
14 Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son
of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of
the congregation;
15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou
king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by
reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s.
16 To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz;
and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.
The Cry Of Desperation

17 Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you.

• When Jehoshaphat got serious about touching God
  o and cried out with the cry of desperation,
    ▪ he moved the very hand of God to fight for him.
  ▪ It was exactly what God was waiting for.
• The next day Jehoshaphat marched to battle with a choir singing praises to the Lord.
  o They never drew a sword,
    ▪ and God fought their battle for them.
  ▪ I wonder what God would do in your life tonight if,
    o just for a moment you stripped yourself of dignity and pride
    o and earnestly cried out to God?

Close
• God hears the cry of desperate people.
  o Isaiah 58:9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.
    ▪ Not only does god hear the cry of desperate people,
    • But listen to what he says:
      o Not here I come!
        ▪ But Here I AM!
• He’s been there all along, Jehoshaphat discovered,
  o the promise has been there all along,
    ▪ God had never abandoned them,
    • they had just neglected to call upon him.
  o In their hour of desperation,
    ▪ at their time of greatest need,
      • they called on him
      • and he said, Here I am!
        o I’ve been here all along!
• God wants to reveal himself in your life tonight.
  o He wants to say, “Here I am.”
    ▪ He’s just waiting for you to realize that you need him.
    • In desperate times, he’s a mighty God!!!!!