

# How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

by Russell Kelfer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of rejoicing and praising God after a victory, and trusting in God's timing and plan.*

**Duration:** 27:17

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 20:19-20, 2 Chronicles 20:28-30, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Rejoicing"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of giving thanks to God as fervently as we ask for things. The sermon is the final part of a four-part series on battling through difficult times, using the story of Jehoshaphat from 2 Chronicles 20 as a blueprint. The speaker outlines five parts of the study on how to rejoice when the battle is over, including the importance of praising God and remembering His faithfulness. The sermon emphasizes the need to spend as much time praising God for what He has done as we do asking Him for help.

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## Transcript

There is an appointed time for everything, and there's a time for every event under heaven. There's a time to give birth and a time to die, a time to plant, a time to uproot, a time to kill, a time to heal, a time to tear down, a time to build up. There's a time to weep and a time to laugh.

There's a time to mourn, a time to dance. A time to throw stones, a time to gather stones, a time to embrace, a time to show an embracing, a time to search and a time to give up the search, a time to keep, a time to throw away, a time to tear apart, a time to sew together. There's a time to be silent and a time to speak.

There's a time to love, a time to hate, a time for war, a time for peace. According to Solomon Ecclesiastes chapter 3, there's a correct time for everything. Time to weep, time to laugh.

You don't cry when someone tells you a joke, well, when most people tell you a joke. You don't laugh when someone shares their grief with you. There's a correct time to cry, there's a correct time to laugh.

And likewise, there's a correct time, a time when it's not only advisable but necessary for you and for each of us to stop whatever we're doing and give thanks. Now in America, we do that at Thanksgiving but that's hardly adequate for anything. We stop and thank and then before we think, we stuff until we can neither

think or thank anymore.

But there is a proper time, especially for believers, to stop whatever they're doing and rejoice and give thanks to God, not only for what he's done but for how he's done it. And most of all, for who he's glorified, his son, Jesus Christ. There is a time to rejoice and that doesn't mean that if you're not running around giggling and whispering hallelujah night and day that you're not rejoicing.

Idle words that do not come from the heart make God sick. That's not the issue. There's a difference between pasted on smiles with religious cliches and heartfelt joy from a heart filled with gratitude.

And God knows the difference and so does the world. You remember when Jesus healed those ten lepers in Luke chapter 17 verse 15, only one of them came back glorifying God. And you remember Jesus asked the question, were there not ten cleansed? The nine, where are they? And I believe Jesus is still asking that question today.

The nine, where are they? Where are the 90% who have tasted of the goodness of God and without so much as a thanks Lord have taken off to enjoy their newfound freedom and never look back? It's a question of questions and too many of us as Christians know how to ask God for things, how to ask God to reveal himself and then when he does, all we know how to do is enjoy what he's done or act as though we deserved it. God forgive us. Today's lesson is about learning to rejoice when the battle's over.

It's about learning to stop at the far edge of life's miracles before we so much as take a breath and tell someone else about them and take time to tell God about them and to tell him what it means to us, what he's done. You see, no one who's ever been a parent will argue with the fact that you're deeply touched when someone you give to and do for stops to say thank you and means it. So ask yourself this morning, do you spend as much time specifically praising God for what he's done as you did specifically asking him to do it? Are you as fervent and as insistent in giving thanks as you are in asking for things? If not, this lesson may be for you.

I know it's for me. It's the final part of a four-part series outlining a blueprint for battle from the life of Jehoshaphat and in particular from that incredible battle in 2 Chronicles 20. And in case you've forgotten, there were four parts to this series, what to do when bad news comes.

It was the first part, how to pray when hope is gone, that was the second part, and how to walk in the midst of the conflict, part three, and today the last installment, how to rejoice when the battle's over. There are five parts to this study. Part one, it's possible to sing before breakfast.

Part two, Satan's ultimate problem. Part three, man's ultimate expectation. Part four, a platform for remembering, and part five, a pattern for praise.

Now perhaps you remember from our last study that once Jehoshaphat and his fearful followers had fallen at the feet of God in worship. Even though the enemy's hoofbeats were pounding in their ears, something amazing happened. God told them to go to bed, get a good night's sleep, get up early the next morning, and be prepared to see what he was about to do.

What he was about to do was this. He was about to handpick a choir, that's right, a choir to lead the troops into battle. You heard me, a choir.

Because God was not worried about how to defeat the enemy. You see, that was his problem, and it was already solved. What God was concerned about was how to maximize the effect of what he was about to do in the lives of his children.

You know who his children were, the ones with the short memories. And the thing they needed to learn he had determined was that this battle was not theirs, it was his. So as soon as they learned to praise him for what he was about to do before he did it, they would release power from God and he would take it from there.

And so we read those words last week, when they began to sing and when they began to praise, the Lord did the rest. He said ambushes against the enemy and down they went like flies. When they began to sing and to praise the Lord, not when they began to sing and to praise the Lord, though that's what they did, when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord at that point in time was freed to do what he intended to do.

Go before them, arrange the circumstances so the enemy would get so tangled up in his own web of defeat, he'd destroy himself. And then all the children of God would have to do would be to enjoy the victory, a victory they had nothing to do with, except of course for their singing and praising. And what the singing and praising did was just exalt God as commander-in-chief and let him be himself, a formula for victory in spiritual warfare.

Now let's reread the passage now, beginning with verse 19, 2 Chronicles chapter 20. And the Levites from the sons of the Korathites and the sons of the Korahites stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel. They did it with a loud voice, they weren't bashful, and they rose early in the morning and they went out to the wilderness.

And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and this is what he said, he said, listen Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord and you'll be established. Put your trust in the prophets, you'll succeed. Reveille came early that morning.

I imagine it was about 3 a.m. and the trumpets began to sound and those who were actually sleeping at a time like this, we don't know how many they might have been, immediately jumped to the tension as one body, though one sleepy body perhaps, and marched perhaps with a somewhat hesitant step toward the wilderness and on towards En Gedi, both of which were on the western side of the Dead Sea. And this was where they had been told the enemy would be and God was now having them move right in the enemy's direction. You see, God's not afraid of his enemies.

That's what the verse means, greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. It isn't a matter of whether or not God can defeat Satan, beloved, it's never been a problem, it never will be a problem. It's a matter of the unfolding of his perfect plan in such a way that he will be best glorified and we will be best transformed into his likeness at the proper moment through worship and praise and obedience.

And I would remind you once again of a principle we've talked about many times before in this class and that is that it is possible to sing before breakfast. It is possible to rise in the morning with a song in your heart and a whisper of praise on your lips, no matter how formidable the day that lies ahead might seem. In fact, the more hopeless the day appears to be, the more important it appears to be for you to wake up singing.

Now I'm not good at it, as you can probably guess. I'm one of those that wakes up grumpy and goes downhill from there. But it does work.

Whenever I do remember to get up from my bed, making melody in my heart, and that's the only way I can do it because even the cats next door howl if I sing. But if you make melody in your heart, there's an uncanny sense of freedom and an absence of fear over what the day might hold. There's a freedom.

And even when you're so tired that the last thing you want to do is get up, if you discipline your mind as you awaken to sing in your heart, rise up, oh men of God, or stand up, stand up for Jesus, at least you get out of bed. And as we've suggested before, as you shower, just sing to yourself, there shall be showers of blessing. You say, what do you sing when you look in the mirror? Well, I sing, we'll understand it better by and by.

But some of you may look in the mirror and sing face to face with Christ my Savior. Face to face, what will it be? When you take your morning walk, sing marching to Zion. If you're a jogger, sing art thou weary.

In my case, I sing, it is finished. But rise up singing and move out praising, no matter what the day might hold. Sure, it may seem like a desert where you're headed, and the enemy may be heading right your way.

If so, take a tip from Jehoshaphat, it is possible to sing before breakfast. In fact, it's advisable. So our living legend now marches his troops toward En Gedi, and just as they approach the enemy camp, here comes King Jehoshaphat.

He calls the troops together one last time, and he gives them the shortest pep talk in history. He says two things, two statements. He says, listen gang, put your trust in the Lord, it'll be okay.

Put your trust in the prophets, you'll succeed. Bye. Don't you wish some of the rest of us would just say it that clearly and quit? I mean, there are two immovable trustworthy things Jehoshaphat said that you can count on when the battle's intense.

You can count on God, and you can count on his word. You can believe that he is who he says he is. You can believe that he'll do what he said he'll do.

And with that quick but complete explanation of who God is, the troops were poised for conflict. Now, you can almost feel the sense of calm that settled over these battalions of men who stationed at the edge of the desert floor waiting to face what to man was an impossible conflict. And now for the battle.

The battle was brief. It always is. You see, once God's had enough, and once his children have had enough preparation, and they're ready to enter into the victory, it only takes God seconds to make mincemeat out of his enemies.

It may be taking man generations to prepare for the second coming of Christ, but beloved, once we're ready and the time is right, it'll only take God the twinkling of an eye to accomplish what man has been waiting on tiptoes for since Jesus returned to the Father. When God's alarm goes off, he doesn't wait to move. Now listen once again to the play-by-play of the conflict.

It's so brief that if you blink your eye, you'll go from the pregame to the postgame show and miss the total annihilation of God's enemies. It only covers one sentence. And when he had consulted with the people, verse 21, he appointed singers, those who sing, and those who praised him in holy attire.

They went out in front of the army, and this is what they sang, Give thanks to the Lord. His loving kindness is everlasting. And when they began singing, and when they began praising, the Lord set ambushes against the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, and they were routed.

For the sons of Ammon and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, destroying them completely, and when they'd been finished with them, they destroyed each other. Now I want to talk to you momentarily about an oft-forgotten principle, and that principle is Satan's ultimate problem. Satan's ultimate problem is this.

Given enough time and enough exposure to God's plan, he'll always fall off his horse and land on his head, always. The problem is we won't wait long enough for him to stumble and fall. We're such impatient creatures.

And he's banking on that, but you just relax. Give God a little room to work and a little time to work, and the fruits of what Satan's trying to do in your life will turn against him, and he'll destroy himself. You watch it.

It'll happen every time. You see, that's what's going to happen at the Great Tribulation. Satan will be free at last to do whatever he chooses, and one of the first things he'll do is destroy most of his own people.

I mean, this guy is a born loser. The key to it all is the timing of God, and we impatient mortals will not let God's plan run its course until that split second when God is ready to act, so we're always in combat when we ought to be back at the barracks praising God, waiting for the precise moment to move. Given a day or two, a month or two, or a year or two, we assume either God forgot or we didn't hear the trumpet, so we move on our own.

Jehoshaphat just said, don't do that. Station yourself. Find your place.

Stand perfectly still, and then look expectantly for your God to move on the battlefield instead of you, and when you begin singing and when you begin praising about what he's about to do, he'll take care of the rest in his timing. Now, given that scenario and given that much rope, our noisy enemy who struts to and fro across planet Earth, seeking whom he may devour, will devour his own instead. It's a much forgotten scriptural principle.

It's Satan's ultimate problem, and it's our ultimate victory, which means that our ultimate expectation then ought to be the total, complete destruction of the enemy. You see, our enemy Satan, and don't ever forget it, is on a temporary visa to planet Earth. He's been elected interim chairman of the board by the masses for a season or two, so he's the King Kong of the here and now.

But beloved, I want to remind you this morning there is about to be a change in government. This deceitful liar who's muscled his way into power named Satan won't be around to hassle us much longer. The grains of sand in the hourglass of eternity are about to run out, and one of these days, as the song says, we're going to be caught up into the heavens and snatched from Satan's grasp, and after a few short years that will seem like an eternity to those who remain, we'll return with the real king to set up the real kingdom, and that noisy, that pesty noisemaker who's been hassling us for generations will be thrown into God's holding tank until the time is right to toss him into the fire for good.

Don't let him scare you. He's a goner, and don't you ever forget it. Right now he may loom as big as life in your life, and the spiritual conflicts he's inflicting upon you may seem to be endless and hopeless, but

hang on, beloved, because he's just fighting harder because the end is in sight.

The Prince of Peace is about to reign. The King of Kings is about to return. The Lord of Lords is about to appear once and for all.

His Shekinah glory surrounding him and all mankind who've met his son will gather at his throne and worship. Satan will be no more. Sin will be no more.

Evil will be no more. Frustration will be no more. Depression will be no more.

Pain will be no more. Fear will be no more. As the writer of that old-time chorus said it so well, it'll soon be done, all trial and trouble.

It'll soon be done on the other side. I'm going to sit down beside my Jesus. I'm going to sit down and rest a little while.

Amen. It'll soon be done, and so will Satan's reign on this earth. He's a marked man.

Verse 24, when Judah came to the lookout in the wilderness, you can imagine their feeling about now. Here they are at the edge of the desert. They've come to the edge to look over and see this army marching toward them.

They look toward the multitude. They look to see who would see them coming, and behold, here's what they saw, corpses lying on the ground. No one escaped, and when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take the spoil, they found so much among them, goods, garments, valuable things, more than they could carry.

Isn't that always the way with God? And they were three days just taking the spoil. That's how much there was. Verse 26, and on the fourth day, they all got together in the valley of Baraka, for there they blessed the Lord.

So they've named that place the Valley of Baraka until today. Until today. That valley got a new name because God who always keeps his word kept his word, and because his children needed to do something to remember that experience so that generations yet unborn would be reminded of who they were and who God was.

Who God was was the great I Am. He always has been. He ever shall be.

Creator, sustainer, deliverer, and judge. And who they were and who they ever shall be, rebellious, insensitive, disobedient, or apostate though they might be, are his people. The Jews will always be God's people.

He chose them. He nurtured them. His name was in them, and one day he will be revealed again through them.

And we, the church, now have the right to join their ranks as God's own. And we, like they, occasionally need to stop and establish remembrances so these forgetful spirits of ours won't cease to function once the battle is over. Now I won't belabor the point since we've discussed it so many times in this class, but may I just remind you once more that ours is a God who encourages his people to create remembrances or reminders of the things he has done.

And if God's recently done something special for you or something special in your family or in your church or in your business or in your life, let me just ask you the question, what have you done to engrave that on the tablet of your life indelibly so that that erase head Satan has applied to the computer of your mind won't eradicate the impact of it before it has a chance to put its mark on those around you? Make a plaque and put it on the wall. Write a poem or a chorus and teach it to your family. Rename a room in your house or a corner of your yard as a memorial to the Lord who has done great things for you.

But it's no wonder God so often seems to take so long to answer our pleas for help. He's waiting for us to be grateful for the last victory he gave us. He's waiting for the other nine of us to come back and say, thank you and do something to remind us to be grateful.

Now verses 28 through 30, and they came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets to the house of the Lord and the dread of God was on all the kingdoms of the lands where they heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel. So the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace for his God gave him rest on all sides. You say, what was going on? Praise was going on.

God had just delivered them from an enemy from whom there appeared to be no deliverance and all at once the priority of the hour was not to enjoy the fruits of what God had done, but first to stop whatever they were doing long enough for the whole family of God to praise him for what he had done. Priority number one, when God meets a need in your life, however small, the first priority, stop and praise him. Let's look quickly at the pattern for praise that's left in that passage.

First of all, it says they came with musical instruments ready for a real celebration. Whenever they had, they brought. Now this was not a weak, timid praise the Lord.

This was a time of celebration. They stopped whatever they were doing, made specific arrangements. Every musician in the crowd went back to his tent and got his instrument and got ready for a real celebration.

The victory was commensurate. The victory service was commensurate with the victory. It's so often God wins great victories in our lives and we respond with thank yous not even the angels can hear.

Secondly they came to the house of the Lord. This wasn't a victory to celebrate with the unbelievers. The unbelievers didn't even understand what was happening.

Oh, they knew something happened. Verse 29 says that the dread of God was on all the kingdoms round about because they heard God fought for their Israel. The world is astounded when they hear God moving on behalf of his children, but beloved, be cautious how you communicate those little miracles to your unbelieving friends without the Holy Spirit to interpret what you're saying.

It may be as if you are casting pearl before swine, so be careful. Let God reveal it in his own way, but otherwise ask your Christian friends and family to celebrate with you. They'll understand what God has done and your victory will give them hope and their rejoicing will give you joy.

Thirdly, it says they all returned with joy. Verse 27, there was not one person who was not filled with joy. You know what joy is? Joy is an inner excitement at who God is that is totally unaffected by anything the world can do.

It is an inner excitement at who God is that is totally unaffected by anything the world might do. So when God does anything in your life that reveals more perfectly who he is, God commands you to respond with joy. That means you're commanded to quietly stop what you're doing and praise him for who he is.

And fourthly, the battle was followed by victory. The victory was followed by peace. Another oft-forgotten principle of spiritual warfare, at the end of every battle there's a time of peace.

The kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace because God gave him rest. For a season, the enemy was locked up in a cage and could not harass God's children. Couldn't.

Now, they had two choices, and so do we. They could enjoy the peace and praise God, or they could sit and wonder and worry where the accuser was going to strike next. So many Christians today are so Satan-conscious, they cannot be God-conscious the way they were called to be.

Now you may still be on the battlefield, and the battle may still be rough. But, beloved, let me give you a principle to work from. If God this week has given you even the smallest of victories, if he's revealed himself even in the tiniest of ways to you to encourage you, stop what you're doing and take the time to enjoy that victory.

Stop to praise him. Stop to create some kind of remembrance. Stop to share it with those who will understand and ask them to praise God with you for what he's done.

And then take a deep breath and enjoy the victory. God will have given you rest, maybe only for an hour, maybe only for a day, maybe for a long time. But, beloved, whenever God defeats Satan in any area of your life, it is imperative that you take the holiday with him and stop to enjoy the victory.

See, it gives glory to God. It focuses our attention back on God rather than the enemy or the problem, and it prepares us for the next wave of artillery that may be coming our way. I'm convinced that part of the problem is we're waiting for the war to be over before we celebrate, rather than celebrating each victory along the way.

My friend, the war won't be over until the Lord descends from heaven with a shout and with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, or until King Jesus quietly whispers our name and gathers us up in his arms, clothed in those triumphant robes of death. But, beloved, between now and then, our lives will be plagued with conflict after conflict, and thus we will experience hundreds or even thousands of victories along the way. There are many reasons for those conflicts, but my friend, the most important is God is getting us ready for heaven.

And a big part of getting ready for heaven is this course in angelic praise taught at the far edge of the battlefield in the classroom of victory, just after the battle is over. And if we learn well, and if we learn to praise well, we will enter into eternity with a master's degree in thanksgiving, and we will be equipped to do what we've been sent to do, worship, praise, and give thanks. You see, that's one reason for the battles that are going on in your life and in mine even today.

God has allowed Satan just enough freedom to attack us, so he can give us lessons in warfare and lead us to the place Jehoshaphat came to, the place of worship, the place of dependence, the place of crying out, we have no might against this enemy, and we don't know what to do. But, Lord, our eyes are on you. And he's then waiting for us to shout that shout of deliverance with Jehoshaphat, praise God! I just figured it out.

The battle's not ours, it's God's. And he's waiting then, I believe, to teach us that when we begin to sing, and when we begin to praise, no matter how dark the sky might be, that our God will move in and set ambushments about the enemy, and he'll move with a mighty arm, and we'll come to the outpost at the edge of the desert, and when we get there, we'll find the enemy's already gone. He's dead.

The victory is already won. And then, beloved, we'll be ready for him to teach us the final lesson of all, the most important lesson of all, by God's grace, may we learn it well, so that when the final trumpet blows and the final victory is at hand, we will have learned from Jehoshaphat how to rejoice when the battle's over, oh, to learn to celebrate as through life's paths we've tried those seemingly tiny victories given to us by God, oh, to learn to worship him each time that God's dear son quietly comes and whispers, look, the battle's already won. What joy to know that at that time, he's teaching us to praise.

He's teaching us to give him thanks in oh, so many ways, so that at heaven's final trump, when all life's wars are through, and we hear come, it's praise time, we'll all know what to do. And all the people said, Amen.

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