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How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

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Series: Living Legends - Part 3



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How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

Our Father and our God, we worship You and we praise You.

We come to You, Father, with the realization of Your greatness and Your power, and yet, that realization, Lord, is so incomplete. We look forward to the day, in glory, where we will sit at Your feet and be able to behold You as You really are, face to face. Until that time, Father, we pray that You would reveal Yourself continually to us through Your Word, in ever-increasing splendor, from one degree of glory to another.

We pray that You would touch our lives in spite of the teacher, because of Your Spirit, and You would use Your Word to sensitize us to the issue of praise.

In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven—

A time to give birth, and a time to die; A time to plant, and a time to uproot what is planted.

A time to kill, and a time to heal; A time to tear down, and a time to build up.

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance.

A time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing;

A time to search, and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep, and a time to throw away.

A time to tear apart, and a time to sew together; A time to be silent, and a time to speak.

A time to love, and a time to hate; A time for war, and a time for peace.
(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NASB)

According to Solomon, in Ecclesiastes 3, there is a correct

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

time for everything, a time to weep, and a 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 is a correct time to cry and a correct time to laugh. Likewise, there is a correct time when it is not only advisable, but necessary, for each of us to stop whatever we are doing and give thanks. In America, we do that at Thanksgiving, but that is hardly adequate for anything. We stop and thank; then before we think, we stuff until we can neither think nor thank anymore.

But there is a proper time, especially for believers, to stop whatever they are doing and rejoice and give thanks to God, not only for what He has done, but for how He has done it; and, most of all for who He has glorified—His Son, Jesus Christ. There is a time to rejoice.

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 is not the issue. There is a difference between pasted-on smiles with religious clichés, and heartfelt joy from a heart filled with gratitude. God knows the difference, and so does the world.

When Jesus healed the ten lepers in Luke 17:15, only one of them came back, glorifying God. Jesus asked the question, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine, where are they?" I believe *Jesus is still asking that question today.*

Where are the nine? Where are the 90% who tasted of God's goodness and, without so much as a "Thanks, Lord," have taken off to enjoy their newfound freedom, and never looked back. That's the question of questions. Too many of us, as Christians, know how to ask God for things and know how to ask God to reveal Himself, but when He does, all we know how to do is enjoy what He's done and act as though we deserved it. God forgive us.

This 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, and *before we so much as take a breath and tell someone else about them, we should take time to tell God how much what He has done means to us.* No one who has ever been a parent will argue with how deeply touched we are when someone you give

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

to and do something for, stops to say, "Thank you," and means it.

So, ask yourself, "Do you spend as much time specifically praising God for what He has done, as you did specifically asking Him to do it? Are you as fervent and as insistent in your giving of thanks, as you are in your asking for things? If not, this lesson may be for you. I know it is for me.

It is the final lesson of a four-part series outlining a "Blueprint for Battle" from the life of Jehoshaphat, in particular, from that incredible battle that took place in II Chronicles 20. In case you've forgotten, the series involved four parts:

- 1- What to Do When Bad News Comes
- 2- How to Pray When Hope is Gone
- 3- How to Walk in the Midst of the Conflict,

In this lesson we study the last installment #4:

"How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over." Our outline looks like this:

- I- It's Possible to Sing Before Breakfast
- II- Satan's Ultimate Problem
- III- Man's Ultimate Expectation
- IV- A Platform for Remembering
- V- A Pattern for Praise

I trust you remember from our last study, that once Jehoshaphat and his fearful followers fell at God's feet and worshiped, 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 God was about to do was handpick a choir, to lead the troops into battle. You heard me. A choir. *Because God was not worried about how to defeat the enemy.* 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. The thing they needed to learn was that the battle was not theirs; it was His. So, as soon as they learned to praise Him for what He was about to do, they would release power from God, and He would take it from there. We

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

read those words last week.

Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.
(II Chronicles 20:22 NKJV)

“When they began to sing and to praise; the Lord...” It was not simply, “when they began to sing and to praise the Lord,” though that was true. It was “when they began to sing and to praise (at that moment, motivated by that action), “the Lord.” It was their singing and their praising that freed God to do what He had already purposed to do, which was to go before them and so arrange the circumstances that the enemy would get all tangled up in his own web of deceit, and destroy himself. Then all God’s children would have to do would be to enjoy the victory, a victory *they* had nothing to do with, except for their singing and their praising, which exalted God as Commander in Chief, and allowed Him to be Himself.

I- IT’S POSSIBLE TO SING BEFORE BREAKFAST

Our passage will take up in II Chronicles 20:

And the Levites, from the sons of the Kohathites and the sons of the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

And they rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the LORD your God, and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed.”
(II Chronicles 20:19,20 NASB)

Reveille came early that morning. I imagine about 3:00 a.m. the trumpets began to sound, and those who were actually sleeping at a time like this, we don’t know how many, immediately jumped to attention. And as one body, (maybe one sleepy body), they marched, perhaps with a somewhat hesitant step, toward the wilderness of Tekoa and on toward Engedi, both of which were on the western side of the Dead Sea. This was where they had been told the enemy would be, and God was now having them move right in the enemy’s direction. God is 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* (1 John 4:4). It isn’t a matter of whether or not God can defeat Satan, beloved. It has

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

never been a problem and it never will be. It is 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.

I would remind you of a principle we have talked about many times before and that is, *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 is for you to wake up singing. I'm not good at it. I'm one of those who 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—there is an uncanny sense of freedom and an absence of fear over what that day might hold. There is a freedom. Even when you're so tired that the last thing you want to do is get up, if you discipline your mind as you wake up, to sing in your heart, "Rise up, O Men of God," or "Stand Up, Stand Up, for Jesus," at least you get out of bed. As we've suggested before, as you shower, just sing to yourself, "There Will Be Showers of Blessings." You say, "Well, what do you sing when you look in the mirror? Well, I sing, "We'll Understand It Better By and By." Some of you may look in the mirror, and sing, "Face to face with Christ my Saviour, 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.

Our Living Legend marches his troops toward Engedi now, and just as they approach the enemy camp, here comes King Jehoshaphat. He calls the troops together one last time and gives them the shortest pep talk in history. He makes two statements. He says, "Listen, gang, put your trust in the Lord; it will be okay. Put your trust in the prophets; you will succeed. Bye." Don't you wish some of us would say it that clearly, and quit? There are two immovable trustworthy things you can

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

count on when the battle is intense. You can count on God and you can count on His Word. You can believe that He is who He says He is, and that He will do what He's said He will do. With that quick but complete explanation of who God is, the troops were poised for conflict. You can almost feel the sense of calm that settled over the battalions of men who were stationed at the edge of the desert floor, waiting to face, what to man, is an impossible conflict.

II- SATAN'S ULTIMATE PROBLEM

Now for the battle. The battle was brief. It always is. Once God has had enough, and His children have had enough preparation, and *they are 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 are ready*, and the time is right, it will only take God the twinkling of an eye to accomplish what man has been waiting for on tiptoe since Jesus returned to the Father. When God's alarm goes off, He doesn't wait to move. Listen, once again, to the play by play of the conflict. It's so brief, if you blink your eye, you'll go from the pre-game to the post-game show, and miss the total annihilation of God's enemies.

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the LORD, for His lovingkindness is everlasting."

And when they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed.

For the sons of Ammon and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir destroying them completely, and when they had finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

(II Chronicles 20:21-23 NASB)

Now, I want to talk to you momentarily about an oft forgotten principle. This principle, which is Satan's ultimate problem, is that given enough time and enough exposure to God's plan, he will 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

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

little time to work, and the fruits of what Satan is trying to do in your life will turn against him, and he'll destroy himself. You watch, it will happen every time. That's what is 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. This guy is a born loser. *The key to it all is the timing of God.* 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, or a month or two, or a year or two, we assume either God forgot or we didn't hear the trumpet, so we move out on our own. Don't do that. Station yourself. Find your place. Stand perfectly still. Then look expectantly for your God to move onto the battlefield in your stead. And when you begin singing and praising Him for what He's about to do, He will take care of the rest, in His timing. 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.

III- MAN'S ULTIMATE EXPECTATION

This means that our ultimate expectation ought to be the total, complete destruction of the enemy. Our enemy, Satan, 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, there's about to be a change in government. This deceitful liar, named Satan, who has muscled his way into power 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 will return with the real King to set up the real kingdom, and that pesty noisemaker who has 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 large on the horizon of your life, and

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

the spiritual conflicts he's inflicting upon you may seem endless and hopeless. But hang on, beloved; 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, as all mankind who have believed in 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 the old-time chorus put it so well:

“It'll soon be done, all trial and trouble
It'll soon be done, on the other side
I'm gonna sit down beside my Jesus;
I'm gonna sit down and rest a little while.”

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

IV- A PLATFORM FOR REMEMBERING

When Judah came to the lookout of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and behold, they were corpses lying on the ground, and no one had escaped.

And when Jehoshphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found much among them, including goods, garments, and valuable things which they took for themselves, more than they could carry. And they were three days taking the spoil because there was so much.

Then on the fourth day they assembled in the valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the LORD. Therefore they have named that place “The Valley of Beracah” until today.

(II Chronicles 20:24-26 NASB)

“Until today...” That valley got a new name because God, who always keeps His Word did so, 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 is. Their God is the Great I AM. He always has been, and He ever shall be, Creator, Sustainer, Deliverer, and Judge. Who they were and ever shall be, rebellious, insensitive, disobedient, or apostate though they might be, they 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

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

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 will not cease to function once the battle is over.

I won't belabor the point, since we have discussed it so many times, but ours is a God who encourages His people to create remembrances or reminders of what He has done.

If God has recently done something special for you, your family, your church, your business, or your life, let me ask the question. What have you done to engrave it on the tablets of your life indelibly, so that the 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. 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.

V- A PATTERN FOR PRAISE

Now look at II Chronicles 20, verses 28-30:

And they came to Jerusalem with harps, lyres, and trumpets to the house of the LORD.

And the dread of God was on all the kingdoms of the lands when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.

So the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God gave him rest on all sides. (II Chronicles 20:28-30 NASB)

What was going on? Praise was going on! God had just delivered them from an enemy from whom there appeared to be no deliverance. 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 #1—when God meets a need in your life, however small, the first priority is to stop and praise Him!

Look quickly at the *pattern for that praise*.

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

1- They came with musical instruments ready for a real celebration. Whatever they had, they brought. This was a time of celebration. They stopped whatever they were doing, and made specific arrangements. Every musician in the crowd went back to his tent, got his instrument, and got ready for the big celebration. The victory service was commensurate with the victory. So often, God wins great victories in our lives, and we respond with “thank you’s” not even the angels can hear.

2- They came to the house of the Lord. This was not a victory to celebrate with the unbelievers. They didn’t even understand what was happening. Oh, they did know something happened as we read in verse 29.

And the dread of God was on all the kingdoms of the lands
when they heard that the LORD had fought against the
enemies of Israel. (II Chronicles 20:29 NASB)

The world is astounded when they hear of God moving on behalf of His children. But, beloved, be cautious in how you communicate those little miracles to your unbelieving friends. Without the Holy Spirit to interpret what you are saying, it may be as if you are “casting pearls before swine.” So, be careful. Let God reveal it in His own way. Otherwise, ask your Christian friends and family to celebrate with you. They will understand what God has done, and your victory will give them hope, and their rejoicing will give you joy.

3- They all returned with joy. Verse 27 says there was not one person who was not filled with joy. What is joy? Joy 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, He commands you to respond with joy. That means you are commanded to quietly stop what you’re doing and praise Him for who He is.

4- The battle was followed by victory. The victory was followed by peace. Another oft forgotten principle of spiritual warfare is, at the end of every battle, there is 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. 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. Many Christians today are so Satan-conscious, they cannot be God-

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

conscious, as they are called to be.

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 has given you even the smallest of victories; if He has revealed Himself, even in the tiniest of ways to encourage you, stop what you are 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 has done. 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. 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 yet be coming our way.

I'm convinced that part of the problem is, we are waiting for the war to be over before we celebrate, rather than celebrating each victory along the way. The war won't be over until *the Lord descends from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God* (1 Thessalonians 4:16), or until King Jesus quietly whispers our name and gathers us up in His arms, clothed in those triumphant robes of death. But between now and then, our lives will be plagued with conflict after conflict, and we will experience hundreds, or even thousands of victories along the way. There are many reasons for those conflicts, but 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 eternity with the Master's Degree in Thanksgiving, and we will be equipped to do what we have been sent to do—worship, praise, and give thanks. That's one reason for the battles going on in your life and 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

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over

do, but Lord, our eyes are on you.” And He is, then, waiting for us to shout that shout of deliverance with Jehoshaphat, “Praise God, I just figured it out. The battle is not ours; it’s God’s!”

He may be waiting then, to teach us, that when we begin to sing and to praise, no matter how dark the sky might be, our God will move in and set ambushes about the enemy, and He will move with His mighty arm, and we will come to the outpost at the edge of the desert, only to find when we get there, *that the enemy is already gone*. He’s dead and the victory is already won.

Then, beloved, we will be ready for Him to teach us the final, 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

Oh, to learn to celebrate,
As through life’s paths we trod
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.

How to Rejoice When the Battle's Over
For Further Study and Application

1- How would you characterize your life? Are you one of the nine who never takes time to go back and say, "Thanks, Lord"; or are you the one who returns each time to the feet of God to worship Him for what He's done?

2- Take a sheet of paper and write down the words to some songs or choruses or Scriptures you would like to learn to sing as you arise in the morning, or as you jog, or as you drive, or as you work. Memorize the words to the songs or Scriptures, and begin the process of practicing praise.

3- Have you ever stopped in the midst of one of life's trials and considered the final outcome of the battle? No matter what seems to be happening now, the time is at hand when Satan will be trampled underfoot at the hand of God, and banished to his eternal prisonhouse as we celebrate with a praise gathering beyond our imagination. Picture that celebration in heaven. Picture Satan in chains, and in torment. Recognize that "this light affliction is but for a season".

4- Practice making remembrances of the victories God wins in your life, both to remind you to celebrate, and to give you reminders to share with your family and others, of the wonderful power of our God.

5- Practice resting once there are evidences of God's victories in your life. Set aside time to be conscious that, at least for a season, the enemy has been placed by God "on hold", and he cannot get at you while you have this season of rest.

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