

---

# SHOWING UP!

## II Chronicles 20

DAMATIE IKUKU, HENRY (DEACON)

THEME: THE BATTLE *IS* NOT YOURS, BUT GOD'S

Woody Allen was once asked what he thought was the secret of his success as an actor and as a film director. He replied that, in his opinion, *“eighty per cent of success is just showing up.”*

One of the simplest spiritual principles is showing up. In this message we'll discover the importance of showing up so that you don't miss out and how you can position yourself for an impartation from God.

The man—Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, a good king, the son of Asa. During his reign there was peace and prosperity because Jehoshaphat was a man of the Book. More than anything, he wanted to do what God said. God honored him for that commitment and made him great.

The crisis—A surprise attack from the southeast. Three nations suddenly moved against Judah—Moab, Ammon and the Menuites. Without warning, they crossed the Dead Sea. Even now they were only 40 miles away. The attack came from nations nursing ancient hostility, long memories of

perceived slights, anger simmering over the years, jealousy now boiling over. The danger was very real.

The news came this way: *“A vast army is coming against you. They have crossed the Dead Sea and are already in En Gedi.”* Another day or two or three and the enemy would be at the gates of Jerusalem.

Verse 2 adds a significant phrase: *“A vast army is coming against you.”* That made it very personal. Not just against Judah, not just against Jerusalem, but against the king himself, against Jehoshaphat. This was a true test of one man's faith in the time of crisis.

### **The Decisive Moment**

What will he do? A man may do many things in a time of crisis. Some cover up, some give up, others panic, still others deny they have a problem. Verse 3 reveals the key response: *“Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord.”* Everything turns on that fact. This was the decisive moment. It's not the crisis that destroys men; it's what we do or

don't do when the crisis hits. No one can avoid a moment like this.

The first few moments, the first hours, the first days, the way you respond when your back is up against the wall—that's when you discover what you are made of. What do you do when your land is invaded? Get the guns? Call the army? That would make sense because Judah had a large, well-trained army.

### A Time to Pray

Not this time. Jehoshaphat did something that by human standards makes no sense. He called a nationwide fast and asked the people to join him in Jerusalem for a prayer meeting. Now that's crazy by all human standards. Common sense says, "Don't waste time. There's a time to pray and a time to fight. Now's the time to fight."

Oh no, says Jehoshaphat. Now is the time to pray. His prayer, recorded in II Chronicles 20:6-12, stands as one of the greatest prayers in all the Bible.

Two things strike me about his prayer: There is great faith here ... and great simplicity.

### 1. Faith

- A. There is faith in God's character: "Power and might are in your hand and no one can withstand you" (6). **Jehoshaphat recalled the divine nature of God (Declare God's power over the trouble)**
- B. There is faith in God's promise: **(Remember what God has done**

**in your life)** "Did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?" (7).

### 2. Simplicity

- A. There is only one request: "Will you not judge them?" (12).
- B. There is only one complaint: "See how they have repaid us" (11).
- C. There is only one confession: "We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (12).

We get all mixed up when we think about prayer. We look at the externals—the form, the words, the length, whether we are standing or sitting, whether our eyes are open or shut, whether we phrase things in precisely the right way. But God looks at the internals—the faith, the sincerity, the honesty. He's not that interested in the outside; when he listens to prayer, he looks at your heart. And Jehoshaphat's heart was in the right place. This isn't a very long prayer but it saved a nation. It wasn't very complicated but it got the job done.

The answer wasn't long in coming. While the people were gathered in Jerusalem, the Lord spoke through a prophet named Jahaziel. His message was simple: "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 the God's"** (15).

Take a moment to savor that last phrase: *"The battle is not yours, but the Lord's."* I imagine Jehoshaphat was glad to hear that. The prophet went on to give some very specific instructions:

1. Tomorrow you will march down to meet your enemies.
2. Take your positions, but you don't have to fight.
3. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

### **Whose Battle Is It, Anyway?**

In the moment of crisis, our greatest danger is discouragement. We see the foe lined up against us and it scares us to death. After all, fear is well-founded if you have to face a vast army with no help from above!

The real question is, will you go in your own strength, or will you go in God's power?

If the battle is yours, you are in real trouble. If the battle is God's, you don't have to fight. You just have to take your position.

The prophet's final words were, "Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you" (17). Two things happened next:

1. Jehoshaphat bowed down to the ground and all the people of Judah fell to the ground and began to worship the Lord.

2. The Levites stood up and began to praise God with a loud voice.

### **Singers Leads the Way!**

Now we get to the good part of the story. The next morning the army of Judah begins to move against the enemy. But it's the strangest battle formation in history: "Early in the morning they left for the desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Listen to me, people of Judah and Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.' **After consulting with 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'"** (20-21).

Can you imagine the sight? Here comes the army of Judah, thousands of men armed for battle. Who's at the head? Not the scouts, not the archers, not the warriors, not the infantry, not the mighty men. Singers leading the way!

This was a bold, audacious move. Either the singers will be killed in a great slaughter or God will come through. But this is God's battle so the proper response is bold, audacious worship. What Jehoshaphat does seem like nonsense, but it makes perfect God-sense.

### **Suicide Unless ...**

But the army of Judah gave up the element of surprise. Here they come

down the road, led by the male chorus, singing at the top of their voices. Not a patriotic hymn, not a love song, not a military march, but a cry of praise to Almighty God: **“Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.”** Over and over they sang, lifting their praise higher and higher. No doubt the soldiers joined them, thundering the sound of praise across the arid hills toward En Gedi.

This strategy would appear to be suicidal. In the first place, they were giving up all hope of surprise. Even the deaf could hear this army coming. Meanwhile something strange is happening in the enemy camp. As the men of Judah came closer, the sound of singing confused the Moabites and Ammonites. Precisely what happened is unclear. The Bible simply says, “The Lord set ambushes against them.” Perhaps he sent his angels to join the battle somehow. Perhaps he caused them to fall into their own traps and begin killing each other.

Meanwhile, the army of Judah kept on marching. When they got to the high place overlooking the battlefield all they saw were dead bodies, stiff corpses drying in the hot desert wind. That’s all. A field full of corpses—stiff, stark, silent. Dead men as far as the eye could see. Thousands and thousands of dead men. Moabites, Ammonites, Menuites—all dead—not a one of them killed by the men of Judah. In their confusion, they had killed each other. The vast army was no more.

### **They Won a Battle They Never Fought**

The Bible is specific on this point: No one escaped. Think of that. Not even one survivor. Every man who came to fight died that day.

The men of Judah never shot an arrow, never threw a spear.

They didn’t fight at all.

They marched out singing and by the time they got to the battlefield, it was over.

He didn’t even break a sweat! No general ever had an easier battle than this. He didn’t fire a shot and didn’t lose a man. He didn’t even have time to get his uniform dirty. And he not only won the battle but the entire battle was over before he got there.

The rest of the story goes like this:

1. When the other nations heard what had happened, they decided to leave the people of God alone. The end of the story is in verse 30: “The kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.”

### **Three Pertinent Applications**

1. Have you ever missed out on some experience because you didn’t show up?

We need to show up to receive what God has appointed for us. So many times, people miss the presence of God and His blessings on their lives because they expect Him to come to them on their terms. Let’s show up in faith.

Our commitment to God is a commitment to our relationship with Him. It’s not passive but participatory.

I took a few minutes to think about what showing up looked like in my everyday life. When I let the Lord be my Lord and my Savior. When I yield to the Holy Spirit. When the words of the Lord are my worlds. When I take a bite of the fruit of the Spirit and I let them shine through me as I am digesting them, I show up. I show up when I am more like Christ than I am like myself. I show up when I let love guide me and I walk in love. I show up when I pray, praise, worship and give thanks. When I am hungry, I have a hard time showing up for the Lord at times. I show up when my spirit is stronger than my flesh. I show up when I keep my eyes on Jesus. I show up when I place others before myself. I show up when the meditation of my heart is all about Jesus. I show up when I am quick to repent and slow to let my ego direct me. When I am tired, I have to make an extra effort to show up.

### **2 Kings 2:1-14**

Each step of the way, Elisha had a chance to stop going forward. But he chose to keep showing up wherever Elijah was. In the house of God, in the fragrant place of prayer and worship, where the anointing was flowing.

He chose to stay until he received the promise. He chose to keep going until he received the blessing.

### **2. Great things happen to us when we realize our powerless condition.**

The key to this victory is found at the end of Jehoshaphat's prayer: "We have no power to face this vast army that is

coming against us." Have you ever felt like that? What a great place to be! If you are there right now, don't despair. God delights to intervene on behalf of powerless people.

This whole story pictures our situation in the world. We are always outnumbered, always outflanked, perpetually surrounded by duties, cares, hindrances, harassments, problems and the entanglements of life. It's so easy to have false security:

I can take it.

Don't worry. I can handle it.

I've got it under control.

But we are always broken sooner or later. In the end, even the most powerful realize they have no power at all.

### **Ground Zero**

Here's a key thought for you: Christian growth is the process of continually breaking our false security. God does it by slowly stripping from you the things in which you trust: your health, your job, your money, your friends, your plans for the future, your career, your dreams, your children, your spouse, and in the end, even your reputation may lie in ruins. God does it, not to destroy you, but to take everything else away so that you have nowhere else to go until your trust is in him alone.

Back to the last phrase of Jehoshaphat's prayer: "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." That's where God wants you to be. That's Ground Zero of the spiritual life.

## 2. **The cultivation of worship is our only means of spiritual victory.**

Once again, we come face to face with the reality that worship is not something, we do just one hour a week. Nor is it simply a religious routine reserved for 09:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. Worship is our response to God as we turn to him in our helplessness!

That's why this story is so crucial to the proper understanding of worship. Look at all that was involved in worshipping God: fasting ... gathering ... praying ... standing ... bowing ... Kneeling ... praising and marching ... singing and praising ... thanking---- testifying

But notice this: They worshiped God before the crisis, they worshiped during the crisis, they worshiped after the crisis. Worship was not an event they attended; worship was a way of life for the people of God. And God responded to their worship by giving them a fantastic victory.

That's why I think verse 22 is so significant: "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." **Praise wasn't the prelude to the battle; praise was the battle. Worship wasn't the preparation for the strategy; worship was the strategy.**

### **Worship Releases God's Power**

Let me make my meaning plain: When we worship, God's mighty power is unleashed on our behalf. Worship opens the door for God's delivering power to flow into our desperation. God is seeking men and women who will see their helplessness and worship him anyway.

### **Worship Means Honoring God!**

Worship means honoring God with our lives. That's what Romans 12:1 means when it speaks of offering your body as a "living sacrifice." The various means of worship are simply ways of expressing how we feel about God.

When we pray, we worship out of need. When we obey, we worship out of love. When we sing, we worship out of joy. When we give, we worship out of gratitude.

When we praise, we worship out of reverence.

The Mighty One will deliver his people. He is God the savior who rescues his people. That's what Solomon meant when he said, "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the Lord" (**Proverbs 21:31**).

If you are in trouble today, I have three pieces of advice:

1. Admit your helpless condition.
2. Stop complaining and start praising.
3. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

He can set up an ambush and defeat your enemies.

Rejoice, child of God. Does the enemy have you surrounded? Do you feel helpless against the foe? Fear not, for the Lord is the Helper of the helpless.

Lift up your voice. Let fear be  
vanquished by the sound of your

praise. Go into battle singing, and you  
will soon go home rejoicing.