**God Fights For His People**

November 10, 2019

Joshua 10:1-27

Key Verse 10:13b-14 “The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since a day when the Lord listened to a human being. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!”

Joshua was a spirit-filled soldier. But he had a weakness. He was not a man of prayer like his mentor Moses. He was impulsive. We saw that in chapter 8 when he attacked Ai by depending on the reports of the spies, rather than seeking God’s guidance. In chapter 9, again we see that Joshua did not pray. When Gibeonites acted as if they came from far away, Joshua believed and made a peace treaty with them. We should give the Gibeonites Academy Awards for their acting. They acted so well; they put worn and patched sandals on their feet, and brought dry and moldy bread. They acted as if they were very tired after a long journey. Joshua was deceived because he did not ask God. But Joshua honored his oath and did not kill them. God’s providence overruled the situation. The people of Gibeon served God and Israel as water carriers and woodcutters. They came to know God and forsook their idolatry. They became a part of Israel. God turned their curse into a blessing. God used this treaty made in deception to Israel’s advantage. God was working behind the scenes for Israel. In spite of Joshua’s lack of prayer, God was merciful to him, and encouraged him, saying, “Do not be afraid; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.” Joshua was convinced that God was fighting for Israel, and dared to ask the impossible, “Sun, stand still,” in order to complete the task of destroying the enemy. Amazingly God listened to Joshua’s prayer. May God help us to be confident that God is fighting for us so that we may ask God to do the impossible. May God help us to learn Joshua’s conquering spirit.

Look at verses 1-2. “Now Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had taken Ai and totally destroyed it, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and that the people of Gibeon had made a treaty of peace with Israel and had become their allies. He and his people were very much alarmed at this, because Gibeon was an important city, like one of the royal cities; it was larger than Ai, and all its men were good fighters.” God’s promise that he would bring fear upon the Canaanites was being fulfilled yet again. The king of Jerusalem responded by sending word to four other kings. He requested that they form an alliance to punish Gibeon for their treachery. He wanted to ensure they couldn’t help Israel. So the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, joined forces and attacked Gibeon. Gibeon was in a desperate situation. So the Gibeonites send word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal, saying, “Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us.” (6)

How did Joshua respond? Since the people of Gibeon had deceived him, he could have a grudge against them and just left them to be killed. But Joshua didn’t do that. He honored his oath. Up until now Israel had been fighting against one city at a time. If they continued this way, the campaign to conquer Canaan would take a long time. The confederation of the five kings brought their armies out of their walled cities into open country to attack Gibeon. Joshua sensed that this was an opportunity to gain a great victory. So he immediately left Gilgal and ascended to Gibeon. This was a steep climb, a journey of about 25 miles. By doing this, Israel could possess Canaan much faster. This trial was a blessing in disguise! God was using what seemed to be an inconvenience to help Israel. Because Joshua had faith, he saw this trial as a blessing.

Look at verse 8. “The LORD said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.” After Joshua left for Gibeon. God spoke words of encouragement. He said that not a man would be able to stand against him. This was the same promise he gave in Joshua 1:5, “No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will never leave you nor forsake you.” He also said that He had delivered them into Joshua’s hand. This is a key statement in this chapter. Five times it says that God delivered the enemy into Joshua’s hand. Joshua was a man of great faith. He believed God and attempted great things for God. He led Israel on an all-night march to Gibeon. Under the cover of darkness Israel marched to Gibeon. The enemy would not have suspected this. This was a daring move and God used it to help defeat the enemy. However, it meant that Israel had to fight immediately after a long march without any sleep. Obviously Joshua believed God would help them and strengthen them in the battle. And God did just that. In 1800 Napoleon with his army of 40,000 crossed the Alps to attack the Austrian army in Italy. He surprised the enemy and won the victory. No one believed that he could do that. Napoleon said, “Impossible is not in my dictionary.”

Look at verse 10. “The Lord threw them into confusion before Israel, so Joshua and the Israelites defeated them completely at Gibeon.” God caused the enemy to run before Israel in confusion. They didn’t know what to do, or where to go. God caused them to be afraid and run in confusion. Look at verse 11. “As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the Lord hurled large hailstones down on them, and more of them died from the hail than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.” God turned the weather against them. He cast down large hailstones on them with pinpoint accuracy. More soldiers were killed by the hail than by Israel’s sword. Joshua realized that they would not have enough time to complete the victory. So he asked God to stop the sun from moving across the sky. Look at verses 12-13. “On the day the Lord gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel: ‘Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you, moon, over the valley of Aijalon.’ So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day.”

As we know today, the sun does not move but rather the earth rotates on its axis. Therefore, some people claim that the Bible is at odds with science. However, this terminology is still used today by the weather man. My favorite weather man, Mr. Tom Brown, tells us what time the sun will rise and set. This particular day lasted for about 48 hours. Imagine what the 5 kings who worshipped the sun and the moon felt. The sun and the moon were their gods. Yet they obeyed Joshua’s command. This must have discouraged the Canaanites greatly. To find that their own gods were either against them or overpowered by Israel’s God. Israel’s God must be the Almighty God. God caused the sun to stand still so that Joshua might finish them off. One liberal theologian once said, “It is ridiculous that God would stop the entire universe for one man.” It may sound ridiculous to some people, but God did it. He also sent his one and only Son into the world to die for sinners, which was much more wonderful than stopping the sun. When God stopped the sun, He demonstrated his power and wisdom. When He sent His Son into the world to become a man and die on the cross, He displayed His love. If you were the only person that had ever been born, Christ would have died for you. The theologian will say that is ridiculous also, and it is.

Look at verse 14. “There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to human being. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!” God fought for Israel. Yet Israel was very much involved in it. God had determined the outcome at the start. But Israel still had to fight the enemy. Israel marched all night to Gibeon so as to take the enemy by surprise. Previously they took three days to make the same journey, after they found out the deception. But this time it was urgent. Israel chased them as they fled. They pursued them as they sought to escape. They cut them down with the sword. They started with a great slaughter at Gibeon and did not let up when the enemy fled. God fought for Israel. Israel also fought, and with God’s help they accomplished much more. They continued pursuing even though they must have been very tired without sleep. Remember that Joshua is almost 90 years old. What a conquering spirit Joshua had! The enemy trusted in their armies. They even formed a confederation to increase their strength. But Joshua trusted in God. God did not let him down. Where does your confidence lie? In human resources or God’s? If your confidence rests in God, are you standing courageously for Him? Like Joshua, believe that God will work mightily behind the scenes. God delivered their armies into Joshua’s hands.

The five kings had escaped from the battle and taken refuge in a cave at Makkedah. Joshua became aware of this and instructed his men to place large stones in front of the cave to trap them in. He told them to set a guard by the cave also to make sure they didn’t escape. Then he gave important commands in verse 19. “But don’t stop; pursue your enemies! Attack them from the rear and don’t let them reach their cities, for the Lord your God has given them into your hand.” Joshua didn’t want to waste time on these five kings now. There was still much fighting to do. So he told them to trap the kings, set a guard then continue the fight. He knew that it was much easier to defeat the soldiers in the field before they could enter their walled cities. Joshua commanded them to take the victory that God had delivered to them.

After Israel returned from a great slaughter of the enemy, Joshua brought the 5 kings out of the cave. Look at verses 24-25. “When they had brought these kings to Joshua, he summoned all the men of Israel and said to the army commanders who had come with him, ‘Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings.’ So they came forward and placed their feet on their necks. Joshua said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight.” This was a custom observed by victorious commanders in the middle east. This was a symbol of complete humiliation of the enemy. Joshua told his commanders that the Lord would do this to all their enemies. He did this to encourage them for the future. The 5 kings that had threatened Gibeon and Israel had been totally defeated.

God was fighting for Israel all along. He was the reason that they had accomplished so much in a short time. With God fighting on their side, they could make bold attacks, because he would bless their efforts. Verse 42 says, “Joshua conquered all these kings and their land in one campaign, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.” Joshua prevailed, not because of his own ingenuity, no! Joshua prevailed, because God fought for Israel. The Lord was fighting for Israel, but Joshua had to move forward with confidence in God’s promise. Even though God was fighting for Israel, there would be no victory if Joshua didn’t advance against the enemy. So when God promised him the victory, Joshua didn’t hesitate to proceed with confidence. He marched his army 25 miles through treacherous mountain passes and attacked right away. Do you want to win the victory over the enemy in your life? Then do the same thing Joshua did. Don’t shrink back from the challenge ahead. Instead proceed with confidence in the fact that God fights for you. So many believers feel like their particular struggle puts them at a disadvantage. However, the opposite is true when you depend on God. He uses that very struggle to enormous advantage.

In his book David and Goliath, Malcolm Gladwell documents the lives of many successful leaders and entrepreneurs who succeed not in spite of challenges and suffering in life but because of them. He calls this phenomenon “the advantage of disadvantage.” Gladwell cites a study from City University of London that notes that a third of highly successful entrepreneurs are dyslexic (people like Richard Branson and Charles Schwab). Also one researcher asked at a meeting filled with successful business people how many of them had been diagnosed with a learning disorder. Half of the hands went up. Gladwell suggests that there are two possible explanations. One is that this remarkable group of people triumphed IN SPITE OF their disability. In other words, they are so smart, nothing could stop them, not even a lifetime of struggle with reading. The second explanation is even more intriguing. They succeeded, in part, not IN SPITE OF THEIR disorder, but BECAUSE OF it. In other words, they learned something in their struggle that proved to be of enormous advantage.

God fights for his people. With this assurance, you can even dare to ask God to do the impossible. And that is what you must do if you want to win the victory over the enemy in your life. Like Joshua, pray with confidence in God’s will. Dare to ask for the impossible if that is what you need to accomplish what God has told you to do. 1 John 5:14-15 says, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.” May God give you the indomitable spirit like that of Joshua and conviction that God fights for you so that you may win the spiritual victory.

Big idea: If we are convinced that God fights for us, we can ask God to do the impossible.