

“Bold Faith”
Joshua 10
March 2, 2003
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This morning I am going to soon ask you to follow along in your Bible, in Joshua 10, as I read that rather long account of a major military victory of Israel.

Most of you probably remember that the descendants of Jacob, also known as Israel, a large nation of people over a million in number, had escaped from slavery in Egypt and invaded Canaan.

Their mission, under God’s direction, was to drive out the inhabitants and take possession of the land that had been promised to them 500 years earlier.

They began by invading the center of the territory and defeating the armies of Jericho and Ai, learning great lessons in the process.

Last week, from chapter 9, we learned, from Israel’s experience of making a treaty with the people of Gibeon, the valuable lesson of always seeking God’s wisdom and guidance even in the most obvious decisions of life.

Now in chapter 10 we see how Israel breaks the military back of the cities and armies of the southern part of Canaan.

Some of you are not history-buffs and so this kind of literature holds no great interest for you.

But believing 2 Timothy 3:16 that “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...” you read it asking what God would teach you from Israel’s experience.

As we read the account, I want you to imagine yourself a great-grandchild of Joshua, reading the account for the first time, 50 years after it happened.

You’ve heard the story many times growing up but this time you are struck with the way the author relates the story.

And you notice that over and over again he emphasizes one significant point.

Joshua 10

"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 were living near them. ² 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. ³ So Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem appealed to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish and Debir king of Eglon. ⁴ "Come up and help me attack Gibeon," he said, "because it has made peace with Joshua and the Israelites."

^{JOS 10:5} Then the five kings of the Amorites--the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon--joined forces. They moved up with all their troops and took up positions against Gibeon and attacked it.

^{JOS 10:6} The Gibeonites then sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: "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."

^{JOS 10:7} So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men. 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."

^{JOS 10:9} After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. ¹⁰ **The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel,** who defeated them in a great victory at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. ¹¹ As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, **the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them** from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.

^{JOS 10:12} On the day **the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel,** Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel:

"O sun, stand still over Gibeon,
O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon."

^{JOS 10:13} 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. ¹⁴ There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. **Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!**

^{JOS 10:15} Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.

^{JOS 10:16} Now the five kings had fled and hidden in the cave at Makkedah. ¹⁷ When Joshua was told that the five kings had been found hiding in the cave at Makkedah, ¹⁸ he said, "Roll large rocks up to the mouth of the cave, and post some men there to guard it. 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.**"

^{JOS 10:20} So Joshua and the Israelites destroyed them completely--almost to a man--but the few who were left reached their fortified cities. ²¹ The whole army then returned safely to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah, and no one uttered a word against the Israelites.

^{JOS 10:22} Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me." ²³ So they brought the five kings out of the cave--the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon. ²⁴ 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.

^{JOS 10:25} 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.**" ²⁶ Then Joshua struck and killed the kings and hung them on five trees, and they were left hanging on the trees until evening.

^{JOS 10:27} At sunset Joshua gave the order and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had been hiding. At the mouth of the cave they placed large rocks, which are there to this day.

^{JOS 10:28} That day Joshua took Makkedah. He put the city and its king to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it. He left no survivors. And he did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.

JOS 10:29 Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked it. ³⁰ **The LORD also gave that city and its king into Israel's hand.** The city and everyone in it Joshua put to the sword. He left no survivors there. And he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

JOS 10:31 Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Libnah to Lachish; he took up positions against it and attacked it. ³² **The LORD handed Lachish over to Israel,** and Joshua took it on the second day. The city and everyone in it he put to the sword, just as he had done to Libnah. ³³ Meanwhile, Horam king of Gezer had come up to help Lachish, but Joshua defeated him and his army--until no survivors were left.

JOS 10:34 Then Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Lachish to Eglon; they took up positions against it and attacked it. ³⁵ They captured it that same day and put it to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it, just as they had done to Lachish.

JOS 10:36 Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron and attacked it. ³⁷ They took the city and put it to the sword, together with its king, its villages and everyone in it. They left no survivors. Just as at Eglon, they totally destroyed it and everyone in it.

JOS 10:38 Then Joshua and all Israel with him turned around and attacked Debir. ³⁹ They took the city, its king and its villages, and put them to the sword. Everyone in it they totally destroyed. They left no survivors. They did to Debir and its king as they had done to Libnah and its king and to Hebron.

JOS 10:40 So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. ⁴¹ Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon. ⁴² All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because **the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.**

JOS 10:43 Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.

What stands out in the way the author tells the story?

Now I helped you with my emphasis but as we read the story it becomes evident that the author is repeatedly illustrating a point that he wants his readers to see and learn:

Ten times he speaks of the Lord's intervention and provision:

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."

10 "The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel"

11 "The LORD hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky"

12 "The LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel"

14 "Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!"

19 "Pursue your enemies...for the LORD your God has given them into your hand.

25 "This is what the LORD will do to all the enemies you are going to fight."

30 "The LORD also gave that city and its king into Israel's hand

32 "The LORD handed Lachish over to Israel"

42 "All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because **the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.**"

Now if you were reading this account 50 years after the event, like our hypothetical grandchild of Joshua, what question might you ask of yourself?

- Is God fighting for me?

If you belong to him, the answer to that question is a resounding "yes"!

Romans 8:38-39 “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:26 “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Philippians 4:19 “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

If we don't seem to experience that kind of relationship with God, even though we are Christians, it may be that we have a misunderstanding of the relationship.

I see five factors that allowed for the Israelites' intimate and powerful relationship with God.

I say “allowed” because Israel didn't make it happen, it existed by God's grace; but for once they cooperated with God's grace instead of getting in the way.

The first factor is that they were living intentionally.

They understood the mission for their lives and they were living it out. The Gibeonites were under attack and they sent word to Joshua to come and help them.

The Gibeonites had tricked Israel into making a treaty with them and Joshua could have let them get thrashed – it serves them right.

But Joshua knew what his mission was and he couldn't allow petty vengeance to deter him.

They had been given a mission by God and it was their responsibility to carry it out.

They were supposed to rid the land of its inhabitants and settle the land for the people of God.

How tempting it might have been for Joshua and the others to settle down on the land they already had.

In fact two of the tribes of Israel had already suggested such. They were satisfied with the land they had already secured on the east side of the Jordan.

Certainly Joshua could have been satisfied with staying at Gilgal.

They had defeated Jericho and Ai, the land was secured, they had water, and a place to live their lives – why ask for trouble by attacking more cities?

They might have said, we will settle down and let God take care of us where we are.

But the promises and provision of the Lord are for us when we are living out his purposes not when we are living out only ours.

The Lord intervened for Israel because Israel was doing what the Lord commanded.

We want God to be with us.

We want God to bless our lives.

We pray for health and comfort.

We pray mainly when we get sick or lose our jobs or need something to make our lives easier or more comfortable.

But too often we aren't on the same mission as God is.

We expect God to bless our agenda when he has called us to his agenda.

Is God on our side?

In WWII a German helmet was found, on which were printed the words, "Gott Mit Uns" or "God with us."

The allies would have taken exception to that.

Today Iraqi citizens and soldiers are praying.

American citizens and soldiers are praying.

Whose side is God on?

During the Civil War Abraham Lincoln was asked if he thought God was on his side. He replied, "The key issue is not whether God is on my side but whether I am on God's side."

Joshua 10 is a great account of people who were giving themselves to God's mission **and the result was God's intervention.**

God is at work in this world to achieve his purposes.

If we expect God's intervention, we will need to be about his business.

And what is God's business?

Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely **I am with you always**, to the very end of the age."

We have been called to take the land - Christ is building his kingdom and we are the means he has chosen to do it.

- We aren't just employees, we are the advance team into the territory of lives Jesus wishes to reclaim.
- We aren't just parents, we are rearing children for the King and the kingdom.
- We aren't just neighbors, we are beachheads into territory that belongs to the King.
- We aren't just giving to charity, we are supporting the ministries of the church for the sake of the kingdom.
- We aren't just Sunday-School teachers, we are training soldiers committed to the King and the Kingdom.

The Lord fought for Israel because Israel was doing the Lord's business.

God has given us a mission – have we accepted it?

The second factor is that Israel was living dependently.

How many times had Joshua seen this demonstrated?

- He saw God open the Red Sea for Israel to cross over.
- He saw the more powerful Egyptian army drowned.
- He saw water come from a rock and manna from the sky.
- He saw the Jordan River open up so they could cross on dry ground.
- He stood before the walls of Jericho and said, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!” and he watched the walls crumble before their eyes.
- He had watched his army go up proudly against the city of Ai and get trounced.
- He had participated in not inquiring of the Lord and leading his people into a bad treaty with the Gibeonites.

He had learned his lesson; he was utterly dependent on God.

Joshua knew that the power was not in him and his ability to command anything but that the power was God’s.

We don’t see the King’s intervention in our lives because we aren’t involved in the King’s business.

And we don’t see the King’s intervention in our lives because we too often don’t think we need it.

We try to take on Goliath with Saul’s armor instead of with David’s dependence on God.

- We think we can be salt and light in our places of employment and neighborhoods without the prayers of dependence on God.
- We think we can raise our children to be Christ-followers without dependence on God evidenced in prayer.
- We think we can be effective in ministry without prayers of dependence on God.

The Lord fought for Israel because Israel asked him to.

The third factor is that Israel lived expectantly.

Israel had heard the promises of God and they believed him.

They heard the promise of 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."

Any time they were tempted to be discouraged, they had only to remember the promise of God: He would give them the land.

Listen to what Jesus has said about the future:

Jesus said: Matthew 16:18 "And I tell you...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Jesus said: Matthew 13:31-32 "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

Jesus said: Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Jesus said: Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I am coming soon

Do we believe that?

Do we believe that he is building his kingdom?

What are your and my pictures of the future?

Do we see what God sees?

Do we believe him and live expecting him to act to accomplish his purposes?

Do we believe so firmly in what God is doing in the world that we expect God to act on his behalf.

The Lord fought for Israel because Israel expected him to – they believed him.

The fourth factor is that Israel lived boldly.

Because they were on God's mission not just their own,
because they knew they were dependent on God and
because they expected God to achieve his mission through
them,
they dared to pray boldly.

Can anyone imagine a greater prayer of foolishness or faith than the
prayer of Joshua to God to stop the sun?

Please don't get caught up in the fruitless speculation of how
God stopped the sun.

If he could make the universe in the first place, I don't
have much difficulty believing he could stop or slow the
rotation of the earth sufficiently to give Joshua more
daylight for battle.

Whatever exactly it was that God did or how he did it is not the point
- that he did something of which the author would say in Joshua
10:14 "There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when
the LORD listened to a man."

Do I dare to pray boldly?

The only way we can dare to pray boldly is to pray in concert
with God's will.

James 4:2,3 "You do not have, because you do not ask
God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you
ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get
on your pleasures."

As missionary William Carey headed off to India in the 1700s he said
what ought to be our life slogan: **"Expect great things from God
and attempt great things for God."**

Wayne and Amy Losey have relocated to central Asia to work among
a people among whom are no Christians, a people steeped in Islam.

They might as well pray for the sun to stand still – foolishness
or faith?

The Lord fought for Israel because they believed him capable of great things.

In the mid-1800s George Mueller ran an orphanage for over 2000 children in Bristol, England.

Some nights when the children went to bed, Mueller knew that there was no food for the next morning.

But Mueller prayed boldly knowing that God had said he was the Father of the fatherless.

God never failed them.

On more than one occasion, Mueller would walk and pray early in the morning only to be met by someone who would ask to help.

Or as on one occasion, when a baker knocked on the door as the children sat before empty plates.

The baker said that God had impressed upon him to bring bread to the orphanage.

And a milk-man also entered, saying that his milk-wagon had broken down in front of the orphanage and he needed to unload it before he could fix his wagon.

Lastly, the fifth factor is that Israel lived obediently.

Joshua didn't sit and watch God act, Joshua engaged.

He knew that **he** was responsible to **act** in faith **not just wait** in faith.

When the hailstorm broke, the enemy was destroyed.

The enemy's capacity to attack Israel was gone.

Joshua could have turned around and gone home.

But Joshua knew he was responsible to finish the task whether God brought hail or not, whether God stopped the sun or not.

He was obedient to God's commands, to do the dangerous work yet ahead.

We do not determine obedience by whether God chooses to stop the sun.

We act in obedience and dependence and allow God to be God, to fight as he chooses.

We can expect an intimate and powerful relationship with God when
we live
Intentionally,
Dependently
Expectantly,
Boldly,
And obediently.

And I dare to believe that when I have made God's mission my own.

What do you live for?