

THE GOD WHO FIGHTS FOR US

THE BATTLE OF JERICHO: JOSHUA 6:1-21

Great to be back with you. People scared about the advance of the church. God's church is not in danger of being slowed down. Read text Josh. 6:1-5, 8-11, 14, 15-21.

Three Encouragements...

Now, when it comes to narrative in the OT often times we understand the story but we don't understand why it matters for our lives today. Why do we have these stories? (Rom. 15:4) For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. So we're coming to this text and asking what about this story can give us with encouragement, strength, or instruction for today? **Pray.** That's what we're asking and I want us to see three things...

- God gets glory for himself through the weakness of his people. (Josh. 6; 2 Cor. 12:9-10) When the world looks and says not, "they are so strong" but "their God is so strong". And one of the most direct ways God displayed that strength is through battle. It's important to understand that in the ANE, military battles were interpreted theologically. Every nation had their own set of Gods that they worshipped. And when kingdoms went to war, they believed that their Gods fought for them. So when a one nation conquered another, people didn't just say, "Their army was better than ours they said, "Their gods are stronger than ours." So when god destroys the entire Egyptian army and brings Israel out of slavery it sent an unmistakable message to the world: the God of Israel is supreme.

In fact, in Josh 2 before they get to Jericho they sent some spies in to scope things out, and they met a lady named Rahab who was willing to hide them. And listen to what she says to them once she knows that they are Israelites coming for Jericho: "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. 10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath." (Josh 2:9-11)

She was not at all under the impression that Israel was victorious because they were excellent soldiers with excellent tactics. She knew that God fought for them. And God is setting this whole thing up to make sure that everyone else—especially Israel—knows that too. ~~Even has them all circumcised the day before!~~ ^{No he doesn't!} And it's against this backdrop of weakness that God is going to show himself strong. Same things for Paul, 2 Cor 12 asking God to take away his thorn in the flesh, "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. God getting glory in weakness.

"Believe in yourself. Remind yourself that you can do anything. Tell yourself that you're strong." Coronavirus has shattered so many people's illusions about being bullet-proof. Old folks got it, then Kevin

Durant, and Tom Hanks—this thing doesn't discriminate at all. If anything COVID-19 has caused a lot of people to feel their frailty.

And in those moments when you feel how weak you are, that's when God does some of his best work. People scared about the advance of the church. God's church is not in danger of being slowed down. The danger is that we would use COVID-19 as a testimony to how strong we are rather than how strong He is. In your weakness, whether it's COVID-related or not, God's encouragement isn't "You're strong, I believe in you, but I'm strong you believe in me." And it's only when we accept the truth about your weakness that God displays the truth about his power. In your weakness, fear, anxiety—in the impossible thing that God has called you to do—do not rob God of his glory by trying to make it seem like you're the one who is strong. ~~"I got this"~~ "Someone's got me." God gets glory for himself through the weakness of his people...Encouragement number 2.

- God's gets glory for himself through the unwavering trust of his people.

Someone ever ask, "how much do you trust me?" God is about to ask a lot of Israel in the trust department—he's about to ask them to implement a battle plan that appears to be utterly foolish. Marching band- Not a single person complains. And the confidence Israel has to implement this strange plan is rooted in something that happens before the battle starts. Look at 5:13 with me read...Joshua is taking a walk and runs into the commander of the Lord's army, now look at the language here...take off your shoes holy ground...you get the idea that this isn't just an angel...you see Joshua worship him and He doesn't protest, which is strange because in other instances when angels appear and men try to worship them they protest, but not here. What we have here is something very special called a Christophany it's a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Christ in the OT! And he's come to lead the heavenly army that will destroy Jericho 7 days later. God gives his presence!

And he gives a promise: Josh 6:2 that he has given the city into their hands. So don't miss this: God is asking Israel to do go into battle using with a plan that wouldn't work on Call of Duty Recruit mode, and the guarantee that it's all going to work is his presence and his promise—and it's more than enough. God get's so much glory from our lives when things aren't going well, we don't understand, it doesn't make sense, but we say I have your presence and promises and that's enough for me. It was enough for them. And through their unwavering faith God's displays his power in ways that we're still talking about today—which was the goal from the beginning: The display of his power.

And we can't miss this. You and I are experts at making Bible stories about us. I've heard this preached as a self-help sermon: can you imagine in all their frustration if Israel had stopped on lap number 6? And I've seen it turned into a self-help strategy...Some of you have walls in your life and you are on lap 6 and you stop now, you won't be victorious. You won't reach those goals. If you stop short on six, you won't experience victory in that struggle. You won't fulfill your dreams. What a man centered way to look at this text. Why has God has arranged this whole thing the way he has? So each Israelite can become an incredible warrior? No so that everyone can know they have an incredible God.

God formed Israel for his glory. God delivered Israel from Egypt for his glory. God brought them over the Jordan into the promised land for his glory. God has given them his promises and presence so that when the walls fall down he gets glory. And so what's at stake here is not the soldiers self-esteem or personal development, what's at stake here is the glory of God. The reason they should keep going is not because they're about to turn over a new leaf but because God deserves the glory that is displayed in their trust and obedience!

We don't follow God so that he'll help us with our plans. We follow God because by grace he has made us part of his plans! And we bring him glory by trusting in his promises and his presence even when we don't understand. And in whatever dark or difficult circumstance God has sovereignly led us into, if we stop on lap 6 because we don't see progress, the problem is not that we won't meet our goals, the problem is that in that moment we'll tell the world that his presence and promises aren't enough to keep us going. Not enough to keep us interested. Our biggest fear shouldn't be of not getting our personal dreams. Our biggest fear should be having dreams that don't have the glory of God as their end. God's glory is displayed in the unwavering trust of his people...

- God develops our faith through incomprehensible means. (Josh. 6:1-5; 2 Cor. 1:8-10)

This is the most famous battle in the Bible (maybe David and Goliath). Deut. 3 says they already conquered 60 cities but we don't remember those, we remember this one, not because Israel wins but because of *how* they win. Put yourself in the shoes of an Israelite. You come to the battle line ready to fight and you hear Joshua say, Ok men, we're going to march around the city today—in silence. Then we're going to turn in. And we are going to do this for 6 days. And on the seventh day, we're going to march 7 laps, the priests are going to blow the trumpets, and everyone is going to yell really loud. Break!!

Lap one—no results. Lap 2 nothing. Lap 3 nothing—no movement. No change. No results. And it's not hard to believe that some of the Israelites were asking themselves questions that you may be asking yourself... "Why in the world does God have me doing this?" "What is this achieving? Nothing's changing. This is pointless." For some of you, this is how you see your life. You're obeying God, doing what you feel he's called you to do, but you don't see any of activity of God in your life, you're just grinding it out, and nothing seems to be changing and you're frustrated.

And I think it's fair to ask at this point with this text, are we really supposed to believe that the Israelites marching have any physical observable connection to the walls falling? I mean did their marching or shouting cause the molecules to disintegrate. No. Heb. 11:30 tells us: **"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days."** It ties their 7 day march and the falling walls directly to the people's faith.

Folks God didn't have Israel walk around because their walking did something to Jericho, but because it did something to them—in them. It built the faith and trust that they needed to love God and serve him in the land. It taught them to walk by faith and not by sight? Incomprehensible?—Yes! Pointless—no. What do we learn in all of this? **Often times, God is not as interested in changing your circumstances as He is in changing you through them.**

GroundHog Day: He begins to serve and finds such a joy in this that by the end of the movie when he escapes the time warp, he chooses to stay in Punxsutawney with those people. The situation he tried to escape is the same situation he grows to embrace not because anything around him changes but because something inside him changes and friends that is exactly how God uses our seemingly futile, senseless, never ending boring difficult daily grind to develop unshakable faith. This is the sanctification of marching!

All celebration until vs 20. And it may be that you read this text and one part was really hard to understand. Maybe it wasn't what happened during the battle but what happened after it. Read Josh. 6:20-21. What do we say about that. As in other places, God was using Israel to inflict judgment on the land rather than

directly destroying these people himself. God was devoting them to destruction because of their wickedness. But it's not like they are good as everyone is bad—Bible goes out of the way to show that's not the case. You keep reading what you see is that God punishes Israelites sin with the same severity. You get to chapter 7 you'll see that God one of the Israelites named Achan takes from the treasure God said not to touch and hides it in his tent. God tells Joshua about it and Achan and sons and daughters and animals are devoted to destruction—stoned and burned. So whether it's the Canaanites or Israel, God does not play games with his glory. All who sin and fall short of the glory of God are under the judgment of God. Bad news—that's us.

The Curse-Taker...

- All people stand under the _____ **curse** _____ of sin. (Gal. 3:10)
 - Are you more amazed at God's justice than His grace?

“For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” (Gal. 3:10)

We deserve wrath not mercy. Destruction not forgiveness because we're sinners and until we understand this we'll never experience the transforming power of grace. Grace will never be amazing to you if you think you deserve it. You'll never worship God for his grace if you think he owes it to people!

But this is our culture... Our culture is so much more amazed at god's justice than God's grace? Our culture is more amazed if God gives someone what they deserve than if he gives them mercy that they don't deserve. Are you more amazed at God's justice that God's mercy? Because if you are you won't be transformed by grace...It's not amazing that God destroyed the whole world in a flood, it's amazing that God saved Noah. It's not amazing that God would send someone to hell it's amazing that he would want anyone in heaven. It's not amazing that God would devote the Canaanites to destruction. It's amazing that it wasn't me. We all stand under the curse of the law deserving destruction and our only hope in someone who will step up and take our place and be destroyed for us...someone who will take the curse for us and that's exactly what we have in Jesus...

- _____ **Christ** _____ became a curse for us. (Gal. 3:13-14)
- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

This is our hope that though we stand under the curse...

- Through _____ **faith** _____ in Christ we can be redeemed from the curse and receive the _____ **promised** _____ Holy Spirit. (Gal. 3:13-14)

The is the gospel this is the good news that gives us hope—that there is an escape. There is a way out for who all repent of their sin and trust in Christ...it's our hope and it's the hope of the world—even the darkest most wicked places and people. This is why we sing to the world He comes to make his blessings flow, Far as the curse is found.