

# Sermon Outline

## **“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”: A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA**

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### CRUSHING THE SERPENT’S HEADS (JOSHUA 10:16-21)

#### **I. “Be Strong and Courageous”**

#### **II. Joshua Pursues the Five Kings (10:16-18)**

- A. The Lord came through for his people in a stunning way.
  - 1. He sent hail stones from the sky to pummel the enemy soldiers.
  - 2. He stopped the sun and moon—he suspended the laws of nature—to give his people more time to fight the already-weakened enemy.
- B. In the meantime, verse 16 says, “These five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah.”
- C. However, Joshua learns that “The five kings have been found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah” (v 17).

**\*Question for reflection:** (1) How did the Lord help Israel defeat the Amorite armies? (2) Where did the kings hide themselves?

#### **III. Joshua Orders Israel to Trap the Enemy Kings (10:18, 19)**

- A. Joshua orders his men to “Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave and set men by it to guard them,” (v 18).
- B. But Joshua calls on the soldiers to continue pursuing their enemies.
  - 1. “...attack their rear guard.”
  - 2. “Do not let them enter their cities...” (v 19).
- C. Once again, Joshua reassures his soldiers: “for the LORD your God has given them into your hand.”

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What order does Joshua give to his men? (2) What does Joshua say to reassure his soldiers?

#### IV. Wipe Out (10:20, 21)

- A. Joshua and the Israelites are victorious—they were able to wipe out most of the rear guard of the Amorites.
- B. But there were remnants.
  - 1. According to verse 20, these people fled “into the fortified cities.”
  - 2. At this point, the Israelite soldiers halted their attack and “all the people returned safe to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah.”
- C. On the part of the Amorites, however, “Not a man moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel.”  
—The Amorites were in dread of Israel!

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Where do the remnants of the Amorites flee? (2) How did the Amorites respond to Israel?

#### V. Punishing the Antichrist Kings (10:22-27)

- A. Now that the battle is essentially won, Joshua turns his attention to the five kings trapped in the cave.
- B. Joshua orders his soldiers to “Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me from the cave” (v 22).
- C. When the kings had been brought out, “Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him...”
- D. Joshua orders his generals “Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings.’ Then they came near and put their feet on their necks.”
  - 1. This is a symbolic gesture of conquest.
  - 2. The enemies of God have been broken and defeated by the Lord God himself.
- E. We may also see something deeper here.
  - 1. The kingdoms of Canaan are the dominion of the prince of the power of the air.
  - 2. The war between Israel and Canaan is representative of the larger war between Christ and Antichrist, between the Church and the World.
  - 3. When Joshua commanded his soldiers to put their feet on the necks of their enemies, we’re reminded right away of the very first announcement of the Gospel in Genesis 3:15:

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;*

*he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.*

4. The crushing of the Amorite kings is a crushing of the serpent's many heads.
- F. Joshua entrusts the symbolic act of conquest to his soldiers.
1. "And Joshua said to them, 'Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.'"
  2. Joshua is speaking here as the prophet of the Lord.
  3. He is instructing his soldiers and future generations of Israelites to act on the promises of God.
  4. God's Household will stand triumphant over all their enemies.
- G. The execution itself: "And afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees. And they hung on the trees until evening."
1. Joshua executes the kings first before he hanged them.
  2. The significance of hanging is in Deuteronomy 21:23: "a hanged man is cursed by God."
  3. The kings have been cursed and rejected by God.
  4. Deuteronomy 21:23 also stipulates that the body of a hanged man shall not be left over night, but shall be buried on the same day.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What Joshua instruct his military chiefs to do to the kings? What is the significance of this act? (2) What is the significance of hanging the kings? (3) What promise of God does Joshua give to his men?

## **VI. "Be Strong and Courageous"—A Charge to the Church**

- A. A key lesson our Father wants us to embrace revolves around the words: "Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous."
1. Although God does not call us to fight earthly kings, God continues to urge his children to take courage in their ongoing struggles.
  2. Strength and courage are always needed in every generation, because of the ongoing reality of our spiritual warfare.
- B. What specifically are Christians to be strong and courageous about today?
- C. First, we need strength and courage *to stand with God; to keep up the good fight on the side of God.*
1. Satan paralyzes Christians by discouragement.

2. Discouragement may not seem as serious as blatant sin; yet it can be damaging over time.
  3. Believers in Christ may find moments or seasons in life when the evil one will tempt you to doubt that you belong to God.
  4. He will cause you to look at the imperfections and the remaining sins in your own life—how you are still struggling with this or that issue; or how you have not done this or that duty.
  5. Satan will suggest to you that...
    - you are probably *not* a real Christian
    - you are only playing at being a Christian—everything that you do is just for show.
  6. If Satan can get you to be preoccupied with constantly questioning yourself, he can...
    - distract you from the things your heavenly Father wants you to do.
    - make you forget that the real ground of your assurance is not in you but in Christ.
    - cause you to live life at a minimal level of joy and zeal.
 —The overall effect would be to slow you down in the spiritual war and turn your gaze inward, away from God to focusing on yourself.
  7. Therefore, God’s people need strength and courage to believe that we *do* belong to God in Jesus Christ; that we *can* and *must* stand with God for what he loves and against what he hates.
- D. Second, we need strength and courage to continue valuing Scripture as the Word of *God*, the supreme authority for all of life.
1. Satan paralyzes Christians with doubt and uncertainty.
  2. Doubt is part and parcel of growth.
    - Churches need to tenderly minister to those who sincerely struggle with questions and doubt about various doctrines.
  3. The doubt that is most troubling is the kind that looks like our postmodern skepticism.
    - a. Such doubt is often a deliberate unwillingness to settle on anything—a deliberate unwillingness to bow to the authority of Scripture in spite of all the evidences for its truth.
    - b. People are simply not committed to believe.
    - c. Regardless of what evidences you show for the accuracy of Scripture, these people will remain skeptical.
  4. Sometimes, this spirit of skepticism can invade the Church and make us doubt the Scripture and the key teachings of historic Christianity.
  5. What are we to do then in the face of such skepticism today?

- a. We Christians must stay true to our baptism.
    - i. At baptism, the name of the triune God was placed upon us.
    - ii. We have obligations to God:
      - (A) God requires faith from us.
      - (B) God requires us to stand courageously for the Word of God.
  - b. Scripture alone is the supreme authority for all of life and morality.
 

—Second Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

    - i. We must allow Scripture to speak to every area in our lives.
    - ii. We intentionally let Scripture—God’s Law and God’s promises—shape all that we believe, value, and do.
      - (A) The goal of Scripture is to bring us to the Lord Jesus Christ. So...
        - Are we making a point to go to Christ every day in prayer and in the Word?
        - Are we offering our lives in service to the Lord Jesus?
        - Are we are more and more motivated in our hearts to love Christ?
        - Are we surrendering more and more to Christ? Do we see Christ as our ultimate goal in life, our ultimate treasure?
        - How is the way we work and play shaped by the concern to honor Christ?
    - iii. In the event that we find ourselves wrestling with doubt, we are to struggle with our doubt as Bible-believing people!
- E. Third, we need to show strength and courage today is *in the area of holiness and the struggle with the World*.
- 1. God has not taken us out of the World just yet.
  - 2. We are bound to come into contact with the thoughts and the ideas of the World.
  - 3. The World will try to get us to conform to its values and ways. defenceless against this cultural tidal wave.

4. While the World rejects the loving and wise rule of God, it seeks to impose a rule of its own—the rule of autonomous human preferences.  
—If you yourself do not bow to God, you really have no reason to disallow others from living the way they want.
5. In the end, Church must ask:
  - Will Christians live as Christians? Will saints live as saints?
  - Will we live up to the holiness that God has placed upon us?
  - Will we live up to the family name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?
6. In the end, holiness is not merely about shunning bad activity. It is about giving our lives fully over to our God who is Perfect Love.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How are Christians to show themselves strong and courageous today? (2) Why is it important to stand against satanic discouragement? (3) How are Christians to stand against discouragement today? (4) Why is it important to uphold Scripture’s supreme authority? (5) What is the most dangerous kind of doubt? (6) How do we uphold Scripture’s supreme authority in our lives? (7) What is the goal of Scripture? (8) How do Christians stand firm in holiness, resisting the world?

## VII. Abide in the Promise of God

**The struggle against discouragement, unbelief, and worldliness can be intimidating if it is left only to us. This is precisely why our Father gives us so many loving reassurances of his presence—and why we need to embrace those assurances for ourselves. What are some of those assurances? “for the LORD your God has given them into your hand” (Josh 10:19). “For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight” (Josh 10:25). “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Rom 16:20). Different words. Yet, they are essentially the same promise: God will be with you, God will never leave you or forsake you, God will grant you victory.**

- A. If we do not root our strength and courage in the promises of God...
  1. We turn the Christian fight into a mere exercise of human discipline and determination.
  2. We lose the life-source of our victory.
    - a. There is no way that we can win our battles with discouragement and the World if we are not joined to the promises.

- b. The World is too strong for the Church to resist.
      - It pervades education, entertainment, politics, government, and religion.
- B. The promises of God are to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - 1. John 15: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, *for apart from me you can do nothing.*”
  - 2. Apart from Christ, we cannot have faith, repentance, obedience, joy, or courage.
  - 3. We must not think that the Gospel is only to get non-Christians into Church.
    - The Gospel is God’s power to sustain us all the way to heaven.
  - 4. The Gospel is the good news of Christ and all that he has done for you and me.
- C. So let us keep looking to Christ.

“Are you accused by Satan, the world, or your own conscience? Christ is called your Advocate. Are you ignorant? He is called the Prophet. Are you guilty of sin? He is called a Priest, and High Priest. Are you afflicted with many enemies, inward and outward? He is called a King, and King of kings. Are you in straits? He is called your way. Are you hungry or thirsty? He is called Bread and Water of Life. Are you afraid you shall fall away, and be condemned at the last? He is our second Adam, a public person, in whose death we died, and in whose satisfaction we satisfied justice.”

(William Bridge, *A Lifting Up for the Downcast*, 63)

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Why is it necessary for us to root our strength and courage in the promises of God? (2) Where are the promises of God found? (3) How often do you look to Christ in a day? Is your day characterized by constant looking to Christ in prayer?