

Sermon Outline

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

THE LORD GOD FOUGHT FOR ISRAEL (JOSHUA 10:29-43)

I. Your Kingdom Come

II. The Conquest of Makkedah (10:28)

- A. Joshua had just executed the five Amorite kings who attacked Gibeon.
- B. From there, Joshua captures the city/region of Makkedah itself.
 - 1. Makkedah was the region in which the five kings hid in the cave.
- C. Joshua “devoted to destruction every person in it; he left none remaining.”
- D. Joshua “did to the king of Makkedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho.”

***Question for reflection:** (1) What did Joshua do to Makkedah? (2) What did Joshua do to the king of Makkedah? (3) What do you think and feel of the fact that Joshua “devoted to destruction every person in it”? Why?

III. The Conquest of Libnah (10:29, 30)

- A. Joshua leads his people on to *Libnah*.
—“Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Makkedah to Libnah and fought against Libnah.”
- B. According to Walter Kaiser, Libnah is about eight miles (thirteen kilometers) southwest from Makkedah (*History of Israel*, 159).
- C. Joshua did to Libnah what he did to Makkedah.
- D. Scripture attributes victory to God: “And the LORD gave it also and its king into the hand of Israel....”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Where does Joshua lead Israel to next? (2) What did Joshua do to Libnah? (3) Who gave Libnah and its king into Joshua’s hand?

IV. The Conquest of Lachish and Gezer (10:31-33)

- A. From Libnah, Israel moves on to *Lachish*.
- B. One of the five kings that Joshua executed was Lachish’s king, Japhia (10:3).
- C. Joshua and all Israel “laid siege to it and fought against it.”

- D. Once again, victory comes from the Lord: “the LORD gave Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he captured it on the second day and struck it with the edge of the sword, and every person in it, as he had done to Libnah” (v 32).
- D. Lachish had some assistance from Horam, the king of Gezer.
- E. Yet, this did not prove to be of much use as Joshua also struck King Horam and his people “until he left none remaining” (v 33)!

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Israel go after Libnah? (2) What tactic does Joshua adopt to seize Lachish? (3) Who gives Lachish into Israel’s hands? (4) Who comes to assist Lachish?

V. The Conquest of Eglon (10:34, 35)

- A. After Lachish comes *Eglon*, eight miles (thirteen kilometers) southwest from Lachish.
- B. Eglon was also one of the cities from which one of the five kings came.
- C. Joshua “laid siege to it and fought against it” (v 34).
- D. Eglon was overcome easily—within the same day.
—“And they captured it on that day, and struck it with the edge of the sword. And he devoted every person in it to destruction that day, as he had done to Lachish.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Where does Israel go after Lachish? (2) How quickly was Eglon overcome? (3) What did Joshua do to Eglon?

VI. The Conquest of Hebron (10:36, 37)

- A. From Lachish, it was on to *Hebron*, which was one of the five enemies Israel defeated.
- B. Once again, complete destruction of the city and its inhabitants.
—“Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron. And they fought against it and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword, and its king and its towns, and every person in it. He left none remaining, as he had done to Eglon, and devoted it to destruction and every person in it.”
- C. Based on verse 37, we learn that Hebron had a king.
 1. This may have been a new king who succeeded the late Hoham (cf. 10:3).
 2. But not even a new king was of much help.
 3. Israel utterly lays waste to the city.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Where did Israel attack after Lachish? (2) What did Israel do to Hebron?

VII. The Conquest of Debir (10:38, 39)

- A. After Hebron, Israel turned back to *Debir*.

B. Scholars believe that Debir lay around twenty-four kilometres southwest of Hebron.

C. Once again, Israel is victorious.

1. Joshua “captured it with its king and all its towns. And they struck them with the edge of the sword and devoted to destruction every person in it; he left none remaining.”

2. Then comes that now familiar formula: “Just as he had done to Hebron and to Libnah and its king, so he did to Debir and to its king.”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) After Hebron, where did Israel attack next? (2) What did Israel do to Debir?

VIII. Summary of the Southern Campaign (10:40-43)

A. Verses 40-43 summarizes the southern campaign: “So Joshua struck the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings.”

B. The destruction was also complete: “He left none remaining, but devoted to destruction all that breathed, just as the LORD God of Israel commanded” (v 40).

C. Verse 41 tells us about the sphere of Israel’s new influence:

1. “And Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, as far as Gibeon.”

a. Kadesh-barnea is an oasis south of Canaan.

b. Gaza is the coastal region facing the Mediterranean sea.

c. Goshen is not where the Israelites lived in Egypt (Gen 45:10; 46:28); it is the city in the southern hill country of Canaan (Josh 15:51).

d. Gibeon is in the region north of Jerusalem.

2. Israel has basically encircled a large portion of southern Canaan.

D. But lest future generations of Israelites misunderstand, verse 42 brings us back to reality.

—Israel won “because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.”

E. And then verse 43 closes this record with Joshua returning “and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is Israel’s sphere of influence and control now after the southern campaign? (2) How was Israel able to win the battle?

IX. The Lord Fights for Us: Promise and Challenge

A. Our Father has a promise for us here: He will fight for us whenever we fight for him. He is working on our behalf whenever we seek to advance his rule in the world.

- B. Our Father wants us to receive it as *encouragement* to sustain us in our ongoing battle.
1. Whenever we do the good works that God calls us to do—whether it is seeking the Lord in the Scriptures and prayer; or resisting temptation; or killing our own sins; or sharing the Gospel to others—our Father is working with us and in us, and also for us.
 2. We see this truth in operation in Joshua 10:42.
 3. We also learn this truth from Philippians 2:12-13: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”
 4. Do you wonder whether or not God is with you? Do you desire greater assurance that God is at work in your life?
 - a. Some questions to ask yourself:
 - Do you desire greater love and obedience to God?
 - Are you reading Scripture?
 - Are you praying?
 - Are you growing in holiness, in greater obedience to God’s Word?
 - Most importantly, are you resting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation?
 - b. If you are doing these things, in some measure—not perfectly, but just in some measure—you can be assured that God is with you.
 - c. Richard Sibbes: “The eyes of our souls cannot be towards him unless he has cast a gracious look upon us first. The least love we have to him is but a reflection of his love first shining upon us” (*The Bruised Reed*, 66).
 - d. Do you have “the least love” for Christ? If so, be encouraged: God is with you. And God will grow your love for his Son.
- C. Our Father wants us to receive it as a *challenge* to fight the sin that he hates.
1. A phrase that appears throughout the text is “devoted to destruction.”
 2. This phrase appears five times in our passage alone: verses 28, 35, 37, 39, and 40.
 3. If God were to call us to physical warfare today, how would we respond?
 - Would we be strong and courageous to do what God has called us to do as our Israelite forebears were?
 - Are we so caught up in the universal mood of tolerance that we forget that the war is not over yet, that this fallen world still resists the Kingdom of God?
 4. While God does not call the Church to take up physical arms, God calls us to take up the weapons of his Holy Spirit to demolish the influences of the devil.

- a. 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5: “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”
 - b. Although the Church is not an army with tanks and guns, we are still an army nevertheless—we are *God’s* army.
 - c. Do we therefore resist sin and the World with the same zealous, militant spirit that our Israelite forebears showed when they conquered the nations of Canaan?
5. This is difficult for us today for several reasons.
- a. It is hard for us to show hatred toward enemies we can’t see. —We are not in an age that takes demonic powers seriously.
 - b. The greater emphasis in the Church is not on warfare, but on love.
 - i. Love is the priority God wants us to have.
 - ii. Our Lord Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who hurt us (Mt 5:44).
 - iii. Paul calls love the “more excellent way” (1 Cor 12).
 - iv. If our minds are focused on love, it’s hard to think about hating anyone.
 - c. For those two reasons—the seeming invisibility of our enemy on the one hand, and the priority on love on the other—a military spirit in the Church seems out of place in this day and age, at least in the minds of some Christians.
6. While God calls us to show love and mercy and not wage war, that doesn’t mean that the aggressiveness, discipline, and zeal of the soldier is not in our hearts.
- a. Consider:
 - Second Timothy 2:3, 4: “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him”
 - 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5: “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”
 - i. Based on those words, our heavenly Father—the same Father whose heart is filled with love for each one of us in Christ—is teaching us that he wants his children to be soldiers.
 - ii. God wants us all to have the heart of military men and women.
 - iii. Unlike the soldiers of the world who are disciplined and aggressive in their killing, the holy soldier of today is to

be disciplined and aggressive in doing good; in showing love; in bringing our own thoughts and bodies under the rule of the Lord Jesus.

- b. Holy warfare is not incompatible with God's love.
 - i. All evil is against God's holy, life-giving love.
 - ii. God's love is therefore against all forms of evil.
 - ii. God's love requires a hatred of sin and evil.
7. The holy military spirit is demonstrated in our hatred of what God hates.
 - Are we aggressive in dealing with sin in our lives?
 - Are we quick to ask God for mercy when we sin?
 - Are we diligent to ask God to purify our hearts and make us willing to do his will?
 - Are we diligent to check the thoughts that habitually go through our minds?
 - Are we careful not to entertain and feed evil thoughts?
8. Ultimately, hatred of sin is a gift only God can give.

—We must ask God to unite us more and more to his heart, so that we will hate what he hates and love what he loves.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the Father's promise to his people in this Scripture? (2) How is this an encouragement to those of us who seek assurance that God is with us? (3) Richard Sibbes wrote: "The eyes of our souls cannot be towards him unless he has cast a gracious look upon us first. The least love we have to him is but a reflection of his love first shining upon us" (*The Bruised Reed*, 66). Discuss. (4) How is this a challenge to us? (5) Why do some Christians find it hard to have a military mindset toward sin? (6) Why does divine love actually require the hatred of evil? (7) How do we nurture a deeper hatred of sin?

X. The Lord God Has Fought and Won for Us in Jesus Christ

The Lord has fought for us and won salvation for us. We speak about the Lord Jesus Christ and what he accomplished for you and me by his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension. The whole of our Lord's life was God's hand-to-hand combat with the devil and all the forces of evil on our behalf. By his life of total and unbroken obedience to God, Jesus our Lord has gained victory and salvation for us. The resting in God that we are able to experience—the growing love for holiness; and the growing hatred of sin—where do you think all these things come from? They come from Jesus himself. To God alone be the glory. Let us trust in his promises.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How has the Lord won salvation for us through Jesus? (2) "The whole of our Lord's life was God's combat with the devil and all the forces of evil on our behalf." Discuss. (3) "By his life of total and unbroken obedience to God, Jesus our Lord has gained victory and salvation for us." Do you believe this?