

ESF Lord's day service message
3/10/2019

Fight the Good Fight of Faith
Joshua 10:1-15

.... 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.

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."

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." 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.

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."

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!

¹⁵ Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.

Battles are the reality of life. Our lives are filled with battles. But we never have to face them alone. In the day of battle, we have a promise of help from

the one who is, “our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). With that in mind, let’s join Joshua and the armies of Israel as they fight the good fight of faith. As we observe them in their day of battle, there are some very important lessons that we can learn to be victorious in *our* day of battle.

Take the battles as an inevitable part of life

When Joshua and the Israelites were approaching the promised land after destroying the city of Jericho and the city of Ai, the people of Gibeon came out to them and asked to make a treaty of peace. The city of Gibeon was about 15 miles away from Gilgal, where Israel camped after they destroyed the city of Ai. It was a city bigger than Ai, which had a population of 12,000. The men from Gibeon were mighty warriors, but they were afraid of Israel because they had heard that the Israel had the power of God and had defeated the strong armies of many nations. So, the Gibeonites wanted to make a peace treaty with Israel before they would attack them. They said they were from a distant country, and made their clothes, food and wineskins look as if they were. So, Israel made an oath with the Gibeonites that they would not attack Gibeon. However, before long, Israel found out that the Gibeonites were not from a distant country but were close neighbors. Israel was deceived by their lies.

Then the kings of five nations around Gibeon united together and attacked Gibeon. The defection of the Gibeonites was a great problem for them. They needed Gibeon in their coalition to fight against invading forces. Without Gibeon their coalition was severely weakened. So, in retaliation and because of the fear of a united power of the Gibeonites with Israel, the five kings moved against the city of Gibeon.

Faced with the armies of the coalition and certain destruction, the Gibeonites sent a messenger to Joshua and asked for help based on their treaty with Israel.

Humanly speaking, it was the perfect opportunity for Joshua to get rid of the Gibeonites. Why shouldn’t Joshua just ignore the very people who had deceived him? Why not let the coalition destroy them and rid him of the

embarrassment? There was a reason why Joshua and Israel could not do that. He and Israel had given their word to the Gibeonites and were bound to honor it. As believers of God, they should be a people of their word. They should live out the truth in Psalm 15:4 that says, a righteous person "keeps his oath even when it hurts." So, the Israelites went out to fight the five kings who attacked Gibeon. It was a great sacrifice for the Israelites to fight against the five kings.

There are constant battles in our lives. We cannot avoid battles. Especially, when we live out the truth and do the right thing, we may face oppositions and we must fight oppositions.

The Scriptures make frequent references to the warfare that marks the life of God's people. Ephesians 6 makes very clear that the believer's life is one of ongoing warfare. It's not just an occasional skirmish that we're engaged in. We are in a pitched spiritual battle with satanic evil and with the world system, which is violently opposed to the advancement of God's kingdom on earth.

Revelation 12 describes our enemy Satan as the deceiver "who leads the whole world astray," as "the accuser of our brothers," as one who "is filled with fury," and as one who "is enraged" (vs. 9, 10, 12, 17). His assaults are real. Satan uses many kinds of weapons to attack us. Satan always attacks us through our weaknesses. Satan attacks our -emotional weakness (unstable, depressed emotion), mental weakness (unconfident, doubtful, easily-tempted mind), and physical weakness (illness) to discourage us in following God's way.

The apostle Paul said to Timothy, his son in the faith, "*Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses*" (1 Timothy 6:12). Our confession of Jesus Christ as Lord is going to prompt opposition and struggle. At the end of his life as he awaited execution in a prison in Rome, Paul again wrote to Timothy, saying, "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*" (2 Timothy 4:7). It is a life-long battle.

When we choose to join in the family of Christ, we're automatically engaged in this battle against the forces of Satan.

So, we must not be surprised at all from the negative attacks of the Devil. We must expect the Devil's attacks and be ready to fight always.

Fight the battles with God's promise of victory

Prior to the battle, the Lord came to Joshua with words of encouragement *"Do not be afraid of them I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you."* God came to them and before they shot an arrow, before they threw a spear, before they drew out a sword, he promised them victory over their enemies. The promise boosted the morale of Joshua and his army greatly, and they were able to go out and fight the enemy forces with the confidence of victory.

God gives us the promise of victory in our battles- 1 Samuel 17:47, *"...it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."*

2 Chronicles 20:15, *"This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.'"*

We have promises of victory over Satan – *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7).

We have promises of Christ's Kingdom being extended- *"I will build my church and the gates of Hades (hell) will not overcome it"* (Matthew 16:18).

When we hold on to these encouraging promises, we can always be confident of victory in all the battles of our lives.

However, real victory came when Israel went out to the battle ground and fought the battle. Although they had God's promise of victory, that promise did not exempt them from their responsibility to go out and fight their enemies. In other words, the promise would only be fulfilled if God's people played their part and did their responsibilities. They should not passively sit

and wait for victory with reasoning – ‘well if God has said that he is going to hand these people over to us, if God has promised that by this time tomorrow all our enemies would be slain, then we won’t need to do anything, we could just sit back and watch God work.’

It is the same for us to live a victorious life. God has promised us victory in all our battles. But the promise can be fulfilled only when we get involved in battles. For victories to happen we must engage in warfare.

If the enemies of our soul are to be overcome, if the sins in our life are to be subdued, we must fight the power of sin as Hebrews 12:4 says, *in your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*

If the strongholds of Satan are to be torn down, we must resist and fight Satan as 1 Peter 5:8-9 says, *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

If the Kingdom of Christ is to be extended, we must go out to unbelievers and reach out to them. Only when we communicate the gospel to those around us, will people be saved. This was the point Paul was making in Romans 10:13-14, *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.... how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”* God has promised the salvation of the elect, he has promised that sinners will be saved, but he has also promised that they will be saved when believers preach the gospel to them. We receive God’s victory when we act on his promise.

Fight the battles with God’s intervention

While the Israelites were fighting against the united army of the five nations, God intervened through several miracles.

First, God threw the enemy into confusion before Israel.

During the Korean war in 1950, when United Nations army had pushed the North Korean army to the border between China and North Korea, the war seemed to be almost over. But on Nov. 25-26, 1950, Mao sent 300,000 Chinese soldiers to fight against the U.N. army. The 300,000 Chinese soldiers' offensive caught the U.N. forces off guard. At that time the Chinese army used loud speakers and instruments to make the U.N. army confused. And it worked. U.N. soldiers were confused by all kinds of loud noises and could not concentrate on fighting the enemy. Within a few days, the U.N. front line soldiers surrendered to the Chinese army, and all the other U.N. soldiers retreat to the south. Because of the Chinese army's powerful help, North Koreans won the battle which they could not have won by themselves.

That was what God did to help his people defeat the enemy. When we fight with faith in God, God prepares for our victory even before we engaged in fighting. Satan is a spiritual being. Satan and his evil forces operate invisibly. But they have power to rule the dark world. We don't have wisdom to figure out how to win over Satan's attack. But God knows who Satan is. Jesus has the authority to rule and crush the power of Satan and his evil forces. Jesus gave the authority to his disciples: *When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons* (Luke 9:1).

Jesus shatters the power of the devil and the evil forces while we engage in fighting against them. We are fighting the battle already prepared to win by Jesus. So, when you fight against any evil force, believe that Jesus crushes the evil force for you. Fight the evil force with the authority of Jesus.

Second, God hurled large hailstones down on the enemy forces, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.

God did more than Israel did. God is always doing more for our good than we are. The psalmist sung in Psalm 23:6, "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*"

God is actively pursuing you with goodness and mercy. What you can do for

yourself is very little when it is compared with what God is doing for you. You can't seem to get out of your mess, but God sees the outcome and is helping you to the goal. Always remember God knows your limit and weakness, and fights for you.

Third, God let the sun stand still and the moon stop so that the Israelites could destroy the enemy.

Joshua prayed to the God of the universe, the creator. The God of the universe listened and responded to the prayer of a mere mortal man. Joshua's plea for time was granted. Joshua wasn't afraid to ask God for something big. He's a big God, isn't He? God can handle it. He can handle a big request. In Jeremiah 32:27 God says, *"I am the LORD, the God of all mankind: is anything too hard for me?"*

God controls everything in the universe in order to respond to the cry of his people (Acts 12:1-19, 16:16-34). We serve the God who hears and answers our prayers and helps us always through his miraculous interventions.

So, while you are fighting battles in your life, boldly ask for his intervention. Pray to God for his supernatural intervention in your battles today. He will surely intervene in your battles and enable you to win.