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The God Who is For Us

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Joshua 10:1-11 (ESV)

As soon as Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had captured Ai and had devoted it to destruction, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, he feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were warriors. So Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish, and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, "Come up to me and help me, and let us strike Gibeon. For it has made peace with Joshua and with the people of Israel." Then the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered their forces and went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it.

And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, "Do not relax your hand from your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the hill country are gathered against us." So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you." So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. And the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.

Well, what a great God we serve! Friends, this is the God who is for us—a wonderful, merciful Savior. He's a mighty God. When we talk about Him and look at His story—the story He's inspired for us down through history—and we read about what He's done for humankind, there's no other thing we can say except that God is for us. He loves us. He loves humanity. He grieves when humanity suffers, strays away from Him and His ways, and adds extra pain to our lives in a fallen world.

But, as we've seen in the context of Scripture, God is merciful, kind, and patient, and His strong arm comes to rescue us again and again. We've seen Him do this with Adam and Eve, with Noah, with the calling of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. We've seen Him free His people from Egypt and guide them through the desert. Though they lacked the faith and obedience to fully follow God, they eventually entered the Promised Land. He told them to be strong and courageous, reminding them many times that He would be with them, that they would have victory, and that no one would stand against them.

Of course, when they entered the Promised Land, they found enemies waiting there, just as God had said—enemies of God's people.

There is a war going on behind the scenes, friends, and this war is very real in the unseen realm. Just as God said, when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they faced opposition. In our text today, there's a list of seven groups—seven cities, each with a king ruling over its region. God said they would resist Israel. By this point, Israel, along with Joshua and the others, had already conquered Jericho and Ai, two of the cities. Now, there were five other cities still standing against them, and one that had made a pact with Israel, a treaty so they would be spared because the fear of God had entered the hearts of all these enemies.

These enemies were known as the Canaanites, descendants of Noah's son Ham, along with the Amorites, who were also descendants of Ham. The Jebusites held the capital city of Jerusalem at the time. The Hittites, who scholars think may have come from the region now known as Russia, were also among them—Esau married a Hittite woman, connecting them with humanity's history. This spiritual battle has raged since the Garden of Eden and continues in our world today. Also listed are the Girgashites, also descendants of Ham, and the Perizzites—though little is known about them. The Philistines were there as well, and the Hivites, who were the ones that made a treaty with Joshua.

So, when Israel entered the land, they encountered very real physical enemies in the Promised Land. But, friends, let us remember that the Bible often describes two dimensions: the seen and the unseen. We are to fix our eyes not on what is seen, which is temporary, but on what is unseen, which is eternal. Scripture shows us that behind the scenes, a spiritual battle rages—a battle around what God is doing and what evil resists, a battle against God's goodness and righteousness. This spiritual war continues. In Ephesians 6, Paul explains that, although it sometimes manifests in physical conflicts and tensions in the world, we are not truly wrestling against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers of this dark world.

Paul describes it this way in Ephesians 6: "Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

We, too, have enemies in our lives, friends. Those of us who want to walk with God, who want to please Him and move by faith in Him, face opposition. The devil hates us. The Bible says he

comes to steal, kill, and destroy, but we can take our stand against his schemes. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, even when it may look that way because evil can capture people's hearts and minds. Ultimately, our battle is not with people. It's against the rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

We fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. What is seen is temporary; what is unseen is eternal. Although we may witness this battle in physical ways, we also face spiritual battles—real enemies. One enemy is the flesh, which rises up against us, tempting us to disbelieve God, to shun His Word, and to turn from what pleases Him. This is the battle against sin. Our flesh may incline us toward immorality, but our souls can also fall captive to discouragement, doubt, despair, fear, worry, or lack of faith. Anything not done from faith, Scripture says, misses the mark—it is sin.

This is our enemy, friends. We're fighting spiritually every day to be victorious in this life. There are real enemies. We can see this in the Old Testament—when God moves in the world, there is always resistance to Him. If you want to live a Christ-like life, a powerful life in God, a victorious life empowered by the Spirit, you and I are going to face resistance—from sin within, from Satan, and from the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. These forces tempt us and try us. This is why the Lord told us to pray for protection from evil, to not be led into temptation, and to be guarded from the evil one.

The Bible tells us that Satan is constantly trying to hold people captive by fear, especially the fear of death. And sometimes, we see this take hold of entire groups of people. Think back to the time of Covid, friends, when the fear of death seized the world. You can't help but think that some of that wasn't demonic. We're constantly in a spiritual battle against sin, Satan, and death—real enemies to the Christian life. Sometimes, these forces of darkness capture systems and authorities, becoming authoritarian and instilling fear. All of this can happen at any time in our world. But you and I, friends, are not to fear.

Just as He told the Israelites, these things are not to overcome us. We are not to be overcome by timidity or fear. God gives us a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind.

In Joshua 10:7, when the enemies came against the people who made a treaty with Joshua and the Israelites, Joshua went up from Gilgal, along with all the people of war with him and all the mighty men of valor. The Lord said to Joshua, "You're going to fight with these people against these other enemies. Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you." God was saying that He had already conquered them. And God has made this same promise to us as well—against our enemies of sin, Satan, and death. When Jesus came into the world and hung on the cross, He took our sins upon Himself and conquered sin. As He hung on that tree, He conquered Satan, who thought he had the victory. For three days, Jesus lay in the grave. But then, the Spirit of God entered that body, laying in that tomb some 2,000 years ago, and resurrected Jesus from the dead, conquering

once and for all sin, Satan, and death. Through this victory, the sin within us has been conquered, so that you and I can be lifted out of the pit, crucified with Him, and resurrected with Him to a new life empowered by His Spirit.

This is the life God wants you and me to live. Friends, the Old Testament foreshadows this truth. All that happened in the past reflects God's pattern. He repeats His themes and echoes them down through history. The coming out of Egypt is like being saved from enslavement to sin. The wandering in the desert symbolizes the confusion of faith for humanity. But the entrance into the Promised Land shows God stirring His people to courage—to walk in faith, to live in freedom, to live in victory, and to conquer sin, Satan, and death. Certainly, these events happened in a physical form back then, but they also teach us how to live victoriously in a spiritual sense today.

We see that when God's people moved in faith, obeyed Him, and surrendered at any time, in any place, and at any cost, God fought for them. And let me assure you, friends, the Lord has never lost a battle.

After the Lord told Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you," Joshua came upon his enemies suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal.

The Lord threw the enemies into a panic before Israel, confusing them. Israel struck them with a great blow at Gibeon, chased them by the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled before Israel, while going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the Lord threw large stones from heaven upon them as far as Azekah, and they died. More died from the hailstones than from the swords of the Israelites. The Lord fought for them.

Friends, I want you to hear this today: the Lord is for you. In the Old Testament, God chose His people, the Israelites. But under the New Covenant, when Jesus paid the penalty for human sin, the doorway flung open to all people, everywhere, and for all time. Through Christ, anyone can become a friend of God and have Him as the champion of their life—the one who fights for them. Paul wrote about this in Romans chapter eight, saying, "What shall we say to these things that come against us in this life? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, with Him, graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's people? It is God who justifies."

Who else could condemn? Christ Jesus, the one who died—more than that, who was raised and is at the right hand of God, interceding for us. He's praying for us! Friends, you are deeply loved by God. He paid a price for you. He is for you. The Bible says this: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation in this life, hardship, distress, this internal tension, these spiritual battles we face, persecution, external resistance to following God, or famine,

nakedness, danger, or sword?" Can any of these worldly sufferings conquer us? No. Paul says, through the power of God's Spirit, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

In his faith journey, Paul had become convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation can separate a person from the love of God in Christ, once they have been grafted in through the forgiveness of Jesus. Friends, know this: no matter what happens, God is for you. Even in death, nothing can separate you from His love. He has conquered it all—sin, Satan, and death. If you know Jesus, you're on your way home to eternal life.

This is the goodness of God. This is the power of God. He has never lost a battle, and He has won these battles for us. We can walk in that victory by faith. Friends, the God of the Bible is for all people. If we come to Him, humble ourselves, repent, turn from our wicked ways, and put our faith in Him, He will respond. He will come to us. He will heal our land. He will redeem us, empower us, and strengthen us.

So I ask you today, friend, is this you? Are you obeying Him? Are you walking by faith in Him? It took the Israelites a long time to get out of the desert and start moving into the Promised Land. They didn't do it perfectly. They didn't always have great faith. But they picked themselves up and started moving. As they trusted Him and as they went, this God—who is for us—fought for them. He fights our battles, and He has never yet lost. Oh, I wish more people could tap into the power of God, the goodness of God, to feel the strength of God working for them in their lives as they join with Him in self-denial and crucify their flesh, then are resurrected by His Spirit into new life, feeling His empowerment in life.

Friends, it's a glorious thing. I sure hope you are tasting of it today, that you are asking Him for it, and that you long for Him to bring more and more of it to you.

Let's pray together:

Father, thank You for this chance to look into Your Word. Thank You for the great picture that unfolds through the Old Testament of Your hand constantly reaching out to humanity, being gracious toward us, calling us to You, asking us to follow You no matter where we've come from, no matter our past, no matter how badly we've messed up. Through the forgiveness of Your Son, Jesus, we can know no condemnation before You. We can be cleansed and sprinkled clean in our hearts, then invited to follow You and be transformed in our inner being. To walk in a new way—a Spirit-empowered way, a victorious way, a way that, in a sense, Father, is supernatural, because it is You in us, doing something we couldn't do for ourselves: redeeming us, empowering us, strengthening us.

Give us ears to hear, faith to believe, and courage to walk in this by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and His willingness to go to the cross and pay that price for us so all this is possible. It is in His name, the name of our Savior Jesus, we pray. Amen.