



Text: Joshua 10:1-14<sup>1</sup>  
Series: Facing Life with Courage  
Title: Part 9 – The Lord Fights for Us!  
Date: September 13, 2009  
Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

**For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans  
10:13**

When you call for help you really want to be sure that help will come! When you call for help you want to be sure that the one you call can really help you!

This morning I want to read a call for help for you. To set the scene for this ancient 911 call, I need to step back and briefly recall for you an event that we read at the end of June as we studied the Book of Joshua together before the summer months.

The Book of Joshua records for us how God brought his people Israel into what is commonly called, “The Promised Land.” God gave very clear instructions to Israel on how they were to deal with the nations who lived in the land they were about to possess. God told his people that he did not want them to make peace with any of the tribes and nations living in the Promised Land. They were to be removed from the land by the edge of the sword because they were a morally and spiritually bankrupt group of nations. The war of conquest was not a war of genocide but a war of judgment. God was using the army of Israel to execute his judgment against these ungodly, immoral nations. God warned Israel that if they allowed any of these nations to live alongside them in the Land of Promise they would be a continual source of temptation to Israel to reject God and to engage in the immoral worship of idols.

But the people of whom we’re about to read, the Gibeonites, had been able to trick Israel into making peace with them. You can read the full story in Joshua chapter 9. By dressing in olds clothes and carrying moldy provisions, they pretended to be a nation who came from outside the Land of Promise and who had travelled a long way to make peace with Israel. Somehow, they knew that Israel wasn’t forbidden from making peace with foreign nations, but only with nations living in the Land of Promise. And so Joshua made peace with them.

The Gibeonites clearly engaged in deception in order to make peace but God expected Israel to honour the treaty, regardless of the deception. God expected his people to be people of their word. The story we’re about to read proves that

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.



God honoured the peace the treaty. And just to add a footnote: the Gibeonites never became a source of stumbling for Israel. In fact, quite the opposite. They became faithful servants to Israel, to the temple in Jerusalem and to God.

The peace treaty with the Gibeonites never caused Israel trouble, but it did cause trouble for the Gibeonites and that's what we're about to read. I'm reading Joshua chapter 10, verses 1 to 15.

**<sup>1</sup> 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, <sup>2</sup> 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.**

Notice the word "warriors." The people of Gibeon were courageous fighting men and were known for their courage and skill for centuries. Almost four hundred years later, King David included one of these Gibeonite warriors in his personal bodyguard. (1 Chron 12:4)

**<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> "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." <sup>5</sup> 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.**

Now comes the "911" call:

**<sup>6</sup> 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."**

Although the men of Gibeon were mighty warriors, they were men who knew when they needed to call for help. Sometimes we men get the false idea that being strong and courageous is all about not asking for help! Real men have the courage to call for help when they need it.

**<sup>7</sup> So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. <sup>10</sup> And the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel,**



who [OR and he] 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,

“Sun, stand still at Gibeon,  
and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.”

<sup>13</sup> And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,  
until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.

Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. <sup>14</sup> There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel.

Something incredible happened here. Something wonderful occurred here. Something supernatural and miraculous happened here. God fought for his people in response to prayer! In a moment we’re going to look at some of the specific ways in which God fought for his people, but I want us to notice what excited the writer of this story: **God answered prayer and stepped into history!**

Before we move on to talk about how God fought for Israel I want you to notice the word “heeded.” What moved the writer of this account was not the miraculous nature of God interventions on Israel’s behalf; what moved him was that God answered prayer! The word “heeded” is a very strong word. It carries the sense of “listen and obey.”<sup>2</sup> God listened to Joshua’s prayer and he

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<sup>2</sup> David Howard has an excellent comment on the significance of “heeded”: “*In what way was it true that the Lord had never listened to a man before this or since? After all, Moses had spoken with the Lord, and the Lord had listened to him. In the wilderness, for example, the Lord told Moses that he was going to destroy the Israelites and make a great nation out of Moses, but he was dissuaded by Moses’ prayerful intervention (Num 14:11–21). Also, Moses himself claimed that the Lord had listened to him (Deut 9:19; 10:10).*”

*The answer lies in the precise wording used here, which is šāma □ bēqôl, meaning “to listen to” or “to obey” (lit., “to listen [to] the voice”). This is a much stronger way of expressing obedience than merely to say that someone listened to or heard someone else (i.e., without qôl, “voice”). The wording used here is only found three times in the Old Testament with “the LORD” as the subject. In the first instance, the context is similar to that here, but the object is the nation of Israel, not an individual (Num 21:3: “The LORD listened to [šāma □ bēqôl] Israel’s plea and gave the Canaanites over to them”). The second instance is here in Josh 10:14, the first time this precise wording is found with reference to an individual’s voice. In the third instance, the Lord did listen to the voice of a man, as he had to Joshua’s, but it was many centuries later, after the writing of*



“heeded” him. I’m reluctant to say God “obeyed” him – I simply can’t bring myself to say that of God. But the mystery of prayer is imbedded in this word. God listens to and responds to our prayer. Joshua prayed that God would move to save, and God moved. The lesson we need to take from this little word is that we need to petition heaven on behalf of those we know who need God’s salvation and we need to ask him to move in grace on them.

We’re not told what Joshua prayed but we are told what the Gibeonites asked of him. They sent a message to Joshua 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.” Joshua 10:6**

Come and help us! Come and save us from our enemies who are gathered against us! Don’t forget us! Don’t abandon us! Don’t let us go! Save us! What’s so beautiful about these words is that they are so close to the appeals we read in the Book of Psalms.

**“...stir up your might and come to save us! Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!” Psalm 80:2-3**

**“But you, O Lord, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid!” Psalm 22:19**

**“Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!” Psalm 38:22**

These Gibeonites were new in their relationship with God. They could have turned to God themselves but they didn’t. But they did turn to someone they knew who knew God and they asked him for help. Joshua then took their appeal and laid it before God. God assured Joshua that he would help, that he would save, that he would come quickly to their aid. He told Joshua that he would give the victory into his hands. He told Joshua not to fear. And in response to Joshua’s prayer, God fought for Israel and for the Gibeonites.

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*the material here in Joshua 10. It involved another great individual, Elijah, when the Lord restored the life of a young boy on the basis of Elijah’s plea (1 Kgs 17:22).<sup>229</sup>*

*This response on the Lord’s part was indeed remarkable. He “obeyed” Joshua’s request. Not even Moses, the great leader whose shoes Joshua was attempting to fill, had received such an honor. The Lord honored Joshua in many ways throughout his tenure as Israel’s leader, but this was one of the most remarkable. David M. Howard, Vol. 5 Joshua, electronic ed. Logos Library System; The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1998*



How did God fight for them?

First of all, Joshua and his army marched all night from Gilgal to Gibeon and still had energy to fight all the next day. You need to know that the distance they covered was about 20 miles! In chapter 9, it says it took the army three days to cover this distance in a normal march but this march took only eight to ten hours! AND you need to know that the terrain from Gilgal to Gibeon is up hill ALL THE WAY! Something supernatural occurred to make this possible. God intervened!

Second, it tells us that the Lord caused the assembled armies to panic at the sudden appearance of the Israelites. They had to have been expecting Joshua and the army, but God did something in the hearts and minds of the kings and their armies to heighten the sense of panic and cause them to break ranks and run for their lives! God intervened!

Thirdly, it tells us that as they ran in panic away from the battlefield, God threw down hailstones that cut down the armies like a sword. Even though the armies were engaged in close fighting, the hailstones only killed soldiers of the pagan armies, not the Israelites who were pursuing them. God was fighting alongside the Israelites from heaven! In fact, the author makes a point to tell us that more died from the hailstones than from the swords of the army of Israel! God intervened!

In my study of this passage I didn't find any Bible-believing authors who differed on the nature of these three interventions by God. But there's a fourth miraculous aspect to this battle where there is a difference of opinion.<sup>3</sup> The account reads...

**“Sun, stand still at Gibeon,  
and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.”  
And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,  
until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.  
Joshua 10:12-13**

Did the sun stand still? Did the moon hold its position in the sky? In modern, scientific terms, did the earth stop its rotation to allow Israel time to defeat its enemies?

It seems to me less likely that the earth stopped rotating to allow for the day to be prolonged than that God prolonged the daylight by some other miraculous means. Having said that, we need to take note that there is another instance in the Old Testament when God used prolonged daylight as a sign of his power.

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<sup>3</sup> See David M. Howard's commentary on Joshua (loc cit) for an excellent summary of the range of interpretation on this passage.



In 2 Kings chapter 20 records for us the account of the healing of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah asked the Lord to heal him and when the prophet Isaiah assured him that the Lord would do so, Hezekiah asked for a sign to prove the truth of Isaiah's declaration. Hezekiah and Isaiah were in the royal palace near a set of steps called "the steps of Ahaz." Isaiah gave Hezekiah two options:

**"This shall be the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that he has promised: shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or go back ten steps?" 2 Kings 20:9**

Hezekiah reasoned that asking the Lord to move the shadow forward was, as Hezekiah put it, "an easy thing." And so he asked the Lord to cause the shadow on the steps of the palace to move backward.

**"And Isaiah the prophet called to the LORD, and he brought the shadow back ten steps, by which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz." 2 Kings 20:11**

How did God do it? I have no idea, but we worship a God who called day and night into existence by the simple expression of His Word. As the prophet Jeremiah prayed...

**'Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.'**  
**Jeremiah 32:17**

God could have altered the rotation of the earth or the transit of the sun and moon, but there is another ways to interpret this event and the words of Joshua. I want you to notice that the text is set in way that indicates that it is poetry. Is the writer using a figure of speech to describe God's supernatural intervention that isn't meant to be taken literally, but rather figuratively?

If you use the principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture, there is a strong argument to be made that these references to the sun and moon are to be interpreted figuratively. In Habakkuk's prophecy these terms occur in almost exactly the same form. Habakkuk praises God's great power to save his people as a mighty, heavenly warrior who comes again and again to save his people. Habakkuk wrote...

**You stripped the sheath from your bow,  
calling for many arrows.  
You split the earth with rivers.  
The mountains saw you and writhed;  
the raging waters swept on;  
the deep gave forth its voice;  
it lifted its hands on high.**



**The sun and moon stood still in their place  
at the light of your arrows as they sped,  
at the flash of your glittering spear.  
Habakkuk 3:9-11**

When Habakkuk says that “the sun and moon stood still” he isn’t intending that we take it literally any more than he expects us to believe that mountains have eyes with which to see or that the sea has hands to raise or a voice with which to speak. He means us to understand that the moon and sun stood as awestruck witnesses to the grandeur of God.

If we understand the terms to be figurative in Joshua, to what could they refer? The reference to the moon standing still could refer to the miraculous night-time march that Israel took from Gilgal to Gibeon. A march that normally took three days was accomplished in one night – almost as if time stood still! And the reference to the sun could be intended to be taken to refer to the daylight battle being carried out in supernatural strength and waged until the very last glimmer of daylight. The very last act of this battle, according to verse 27, was the burial of the rebellious kings in a cave...

**“at the time of the going down of the sun....” Joshua 10:27**

When interpreting a passage like this we need to remember three things if we want to do justice to Scripture.

First, remember to interpret Scripture by Scripture. Allow the Bible to be its own best interpreter. By comparing what the Bible says in one passage with others that share similar characteristics we are allowing the Bible to speak for itself.

Secondly, remember to interpret Scripture according to the type of literary form it is using. The Bible is made up of a whole variety of literary forms: poetry, history, proverbs, prophecy and law, just to name a few. Interpret history as history; interpret poetry as poetry; interpret proverbs as proverbs. Don’t confuse them or you will do a serious injustice to God’s Word.

Thirdly, remember that we worship a God of astounding power. He is the Creator of heaven and earth and nothing is impossible for him. The hinge of our faith rests on something that many people refuse to accept as a possibility – the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But Jesus is alive and the God who raised Jesus from the dead can add hours to our days just as he can subtract them from us if he so desires – he is the Lord God Almighty!

So whether you take the passage to tell us that God supernaturally prolonged the day and night to allow Israel time to win the battle or you understand it to mean that God supernaturally provided strength to Israel to march through the night and fight through the day, it holds true that...



**“There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel.” Joshua 10:14**

As I read this wonderful story of God’s battle to save the Gibeonites I found myself asking this question: **when has God fought for me? When has God intervened to fight for my salvation? What enemies, gathered against me, has God defeated for me?**

The greatest enemies we face aren’t people who need to be struck down by hailstones or lightning bolts. The Apostle Paul tells us that our struggle in life isn’t...

**“against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:12**

There are spiritual forces gathered against us and our human antagonists are really acting as unwitting pawns in the hands of these forces of evil. I love the phrase the Joe Aldrich coined. He said that those who don’t know Jesus Christ are not our enemies; they are victims of **our enemy, Satan**.

And we have **another enemy** within our own hearts that wars against us. The Apostle Peter called it...

**“the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” 1 Peter 2:11**

Paul called it **“the law of sin”** (Romans 7:23) that dwelled in him and waged war against his mind.

We wage a constant battle against sin in our own hearts and minds. Sin is the impulse that perverts our spirits, destroys our associations and kills our relationship with God.

And we face **a third enemy** gathered against us. Yesterday I attended a funeral down in Carstairs and even before I got home I received a call from a funeral home asking me to conduct a service for someone in the community. Death stalks us. As I checked my records, I found that I had conducted the service for this man’s wife about seven years ago. Death constantly stalks us. As it’s sometimes said of life on this earth: “no one gets out of here alive!” The Bible says that...

**“The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” 1 Corinthians 15:26**

There were five kings gathered against the Gibeonites and fought to save them and defeated their enemies completely and decisively. We have three great



enemies gathered against us: **sin, Satan and death.** What has God done to save us from these foes? How has God fought for us?

Listen to this incredible story of God's victorious defeat of our enemies. Writing to those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, Paul said...

**“In [Jesus] also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” Colossians 2:11-15**

What has God done to defeat our enemies? The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has completely defeated all three of them. God has fought for us. And as miraculous as God's intervention was to save the Gibeonites, his intervention for us is even more wonderful!

By his cross and his resurrection, Jesus defeated death. We don't need to fear death any longer because we will live, even though we die. Yesterday I celebrated the life of a godly woman at her funeral with her family and friends. There was sadness but no fear; there were tears but there was joy. She was a believer in Jesus and because of that we all knew we would see her again! Jesus fought for her, and he fought and won the victory over death for every one of us who believes in him.

At the cross of Christ, sin was defeated. Jesus took the record of our sin and nailed it to his cross. The Bible tells us that we deserve death because of our sin. But the great news is that Jesus died in our place. God's judgment against our sin was poured out on Jesus on the cross and it's gone – we are no longer guilty and under God's judgment for our sin. We have been forgiven because Jesus fought for us!

At the cross of Christ the spiritual forces gathered against us were defeated. Jesus “triumphed” over them in his death and resurrection. He humiliated them at his cross. The worst they could throw at him was death and he shrugged it off and rose to reveal their weakness and their eventual eternal destruction.

God fought for us at the Cross! There has never been a day like it before or since! Have you called on God to save you? God always saves his people when they call on him.



**For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans  
10:13**

Let me close this amazing story of God’s victory in the face of death and sin...

*Colin Chapman, in The Case for Christianity, quotes Ugandan bishop Festo Kivengere's account of the 1973 execution by firing squad of three men from his diocese:*

*February 10 began as a sad day for us in Kabale. People were commanded to come to the stadium and witness the execution. Death permeated the atmosphere. A silent crowd of about three thousand was there to watch. I had permission from the authorities to speak to the men before they died, and two of my fellow ministers were with me.*

*They brought the men in a truck and unloaded them. They were handcuffed and their feet were chained. The firing squad stood at attention. As we walked into the center of the stadium, I was wondering what to say. How do you give the gospel to doomed men who are probably seething with rage?*

*We approached them from behind, and as they turned to look at us, what a sight! Their faces were all alight with an unmistakable glow and radiance.*

*Before we could say anything, one of them burst out: "Bishop, thank you for coming! I wanted to tell you. The day I was arrested, in my prison cell, I asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart. He came in and forgave me all my sins! Heaven is now open, and there is nothing between me and my God! Please tell my wife and children that I am going to be with Jesus. Ask them to accept him into their lives as I did." The other two men told similar stories, excitedly raising their hands which rattled their handcuffs.*

*I felt that what I needed to do was to talk to the soldiers, not to the condemned. So I translated what the men had said into a language the soldiers understood. The military men were standing there with guns cocked and bewilderment on their faces. They were so dumbfounded that they forgot to put the hoods over the men's faces! The three faced the firing squad standing close together. They looked toward the people and began to wave, handcuffs and all. The people waved back. Then shots were fired, and the three were with Jesus.*

*We stood in front of them, our own hearts throbbing with joy, mingled with tears. It was a day never to be forgotten. Though dead, the men spoke loudly to all of Kigezi District and beyond, so that there was an upsurge of life in Christ, which challenges death and defeats it.*

*The next Sunday, I was preaching to a huge crowd in the hometown of one of the executed men. Again, the feel of death was over the congregation. But when I*



*gave them the testimony of their man, and how he died, there erupted a great song of praise to Jesus! Many turned to the Lord there.*

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Will you call on him now?

Confess your sin & ask him to forgive you.

Acknowledge that Jesus died your death on the cross.

Invite him to live in you and to take control of your life.

Enter into the victory that Christ has won for you!

- **Invitation to Prayer**
- **Final Song:** The Wonderful Cross
- **Benediction**