

Title: Men of War
Text: Joshua 5: 1-15; 6: 1-5
Date: October 24, 2013
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Our text is Joshua 5: 1-6: 5. Notice this, phrase, “Men of War” in Joshua 5: 6 and in Joshua 6: 3. I realize it means men 20 years old and up. But we have a picture here of fleshly men of war and how God makes his spiritual men of war.

This passage shows us the necessity of God delivering his children FROM the wilderness-death of unbelieving-disobedience INTO the promised-land of believing-obedience—from being “men of war” in fleshly strength to being “men of war” in Christ our Strength.

Believers are called and assembled by Christ to be used of Christ our Head to preach his mighty person and works.

Our strength is not ourselves but Christ the Power of God. Before Christ ascended to the Father, he told his disciples, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28: 18) Christ goes forth in the midst of his people using us as his mouthpieces to preach the gospel. And Christ breaks down the gates of hell and delivers his elect.

We see it pictured. After Christ made his presence known, he gave Joshua the order to go to Jericho. Seven priests blew seven trumpets as they carried the ark around Jericho—a picture of the preaching of the gospel. Through that means, Christ broke down the walls and called out one elect child, a harlot, named Rahab.

But our text declares what must be done before Christ will use us in that way. This point is of utmost importance. It is our focus tonight.

Proposition: Christ makes us his spiritual men of war sending us forth to call his elect out of Jericho only after he has circumcised us in heart and brought us to the obedience of faith, wherein he makes Christ our Captain our only Strength.

I. FIRST, GOD MUST DELIVER HIS ELECT CHILD OUT OF THE WILDERNESS OF UNBELIEF.

God delivered the children of Israel over the Jordan River into the promised land. And when the mighty enemies on this side of Jordan saw what God did for them, **Joshua 5: 1, says, “their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.”**

Yet, God did not send them forth immediately to conquer Jericho and deliver Rahab. Why? It was because they had not been circumcised and partook of Christ the Passover. To send them without this work, would have been like sending forth unregenerate, unbelieving sinners to bear witness of the Lord Jesus and his power, whose power they had never experienced and who they did not know. Unregenerate men can never accomplish anything but only war with each other after the flesh and choose other means, rather than being Christ’s men of war in obedience to him. We see this in their father’s in the wilderness.

Joshua 5: 4: And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. 5: Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. 6: For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth

with milk and honey. 7: And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.

A Form of Godliness

Their fathers are an example of unregenerate sinners with a form of godliness. Physically, God delivered them out of Egypt. But God did not deliver them all spiritually. Those fathers were indeed circumcised in their flesh by man's hands, but not in their heart, spiritually, by God.

The rebellious fathers were like unregenerate sinners who have been brought out of places where they have no gospel into a place where they now have the gospel. But who, as of yet, have not been delivered by God from spiritual death by circumcision of the heart in regeneration.

Many have a form of godliness who have never experienced the power of God in the heart. Believing in sound doctrine does not mean one has been circumcised in the heart. Neither does baptism or joining a church. Switching from false doctrine to true is not repentance or faith in Christ.

When circumcised in the heart Christ becomes All and the believer becomes nothing—we renounce all our former confidence as nothing but dung—we do not do this word only but in deed. The believer becomes one with God in Christ and one with his brethren in Christ. By the Spirit of Christ, in the inward man, we are made to hate warring in our fleshly strength—being fleshly men of war. Beholding, Christ our only Strength we desire for him to have all the glory. We see ourselves as the least, as the chief of sinners and no longer want men's faith to stand in the power of our flesh. Something becomes more important than “big I” and my feelings and my way—it is Christ and my brethren.

Fleshly Men of War

We see what it is to be fleshly “men of war” in those rebellious fathers. We see why God will not send us forth to Jerico to sound the gospel trumpet until after he has made us his “men of war” in spirit.

Those rebellious fathers warred against God constantly by warring against God's servants and their own brethren. Every time Moses and Aaron said, “Do it this way.”; they said, “No, we will do this other way.” They constantly brought accusations against Moses and against their own brethren. They exalted themselves over Moses and Aaron, saying, “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?”

Such fleshly men of war will never be used in Christ's holy war because this is what they will do. At the boarder of Canaan, they refused to enter themselves. Plus, they brought an evil report discouraging their brethren from entering. All of this because they looked to their own strength rather than believing God.

Matthew 23:13: But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Against God the Authority

All of their rebellion was against God's Authority and Power and salvation of the Lord. They desired to have his Glory. It was God who put Moses and Aaron over them; it was God who commanded Moses what to preach to them. In every detail, it was God using Moses to tell them what was best, not only for their personal good, but for the good of the whole congregation. Yet, as fleshly “men of war”, they only wanted what they saw to be best for self. Such is the case with unregenerate men that will not have Christ reign over them.

Such was the case with you and I brethren—and this fleshly spirit is still with us in our old man. We have to be aware of that constantly. I am not infallible, nor was Moses. But try to understand that in the pulpit, as well as out,

you will not hear me say a word if there is no danger of causing an offense. But if I say, “This might be a better way to do that” then you can be certain it is because, I am aware of something, that perhaps you are not. And I’m looking out for the good of the whole congregation. And what is for the good of the whole congregation is for your personal good. If sinners take offense, we want them to do so because of the gospel, not because of us. We cannot totally prevent that, but it is my responsibility to lead this congregation in the way that will not make something the offense, other than the gospel of Christ. That is what Moses was doing in everything he said to them.

But thankfully, God has delivered us from that wilderness of sin and death and shall continue to do so.

Missed Blessings

Brethren, when we find ourselves in unbelief and in the path of disobedience, don’t you always find that it makes us burdened and to wander aimlessly in the wilderness. And we miss so many spiritual blessings that God is giving through faith in Christ?

As far as I can tell from the scripture, while in the wilderness, they only observed the Passover once. Unbelief makes us cease partaking of Christ our Passover.

Also, while in the wilderness, they circumcised none of their children—God promised to cut them off—and so they ceased even pretending to worship God. Outward circumcision is a picture of God’s inward work of regeneration, a picture of God making his everlasting covenant in our hearts. (Rom 2: 28-29) So we could look at their children not being circumcised as a picture of God giving them no conversions while they walked in rebellion and unbelief.

Do you see why God regenerates and why he delivers us from being “men of war” after the flesh? It causes us to miss out on the blessings that are in Christ through faith. Unbelief causes us to war after the flesh—against God and our brethren. So before we will be used of Christ, we must be delivered from our flesh, from our wilderness of sin and unbelief and made Christ’s “men of war.”

II. SECONDLY, WE SEE THAT THE UNBELIEF AND REBELLION OF SINNERS DOES NOT HINDER GOD FROM WORKING THIS WORK AND DELIVERING HIS CHILD FROM THAT WILDERNESS.

After consuming those fleshly men of war, God delivered their children through the river Jordan by sending the priests, holding up the ark of the covenant—**Joshua 5: 7: And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.**

Salvation for God’s Elect Only

God’s grace does not run in bloodlines. God did not deliver the father’s into the promised land but God raised up their children in their stead. Those rebellious fathers were in Israel but they were not of Israel.

Romans 9: 7: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8: That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

God sent forth his Son, Christ Jesus who is our great High Priest and our Ark of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace to put away the sin of his elect only! When God laid the iniquities of his elect on our Substitute, Christ stepped into the river of death which separated us from our God just as those priest bearing the ark did. The Lord Jesus dried up the river of death for each elect child he represented and delivered us to the other side.

Hebrews 9:12: Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Hebrews 1: 3:...when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Christ's Redeemed Must Be Born Again

God raised his elect in Christ when he raised Christ from the dead for the purpose of showing each of his elect the riches of his grace toward us in Christ.

Ephesians 2: 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6: And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Therefore, for the sake of Christ, God shall deliver his redeemed from the wilderness of our spiritual death. We see it typified in our text. Joshua brought each of these children through that river of death personally to enter into the promised land and circumcised their hearts to partake of Christ. Likewise, Christ our Savior does the same for each of his children, personally. He said it is a MUST!

John 3: 2: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3: Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4: Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5: Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7: Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

John 4:24: God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Likewise, God's word is spiritual, and we are carnal, sold under sin. Therefore we must be made spiritual by the Holy Spirit and given spiritual discernment.

1 Corinthians 2: 14: But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15: But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

Romans 8:9: But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

This work of the Holy Spirit is irresistible. Christ told Nicodemus,

John 3: 8: The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

If God purposed it, God shall do it. If it pleases God, the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in Christ's hand. (Is 53: 10) And without faith it is impossible to please God. So Christ shall bring it to pass.

Infants, that God takes home, are the only exception as David said of the infant who died—"I can go where he is." (2 Sam 12: 23) But even John leaped in Elizabeth's womb when he heard the report of Christ. The secret things belong to God. We do not build our doctrine on exceptions but on Christ's "except ye"

Christ's Work of Regeneration Through the Holy Spirit

Those children who had been born in the wilderness were uncircumcised. So God told Joshua to circumcise their hearts. God gave that power to Christ our Savior as our Head that he might fill all in all. (Eph 1: 23) The hearts of their enemies were melted within them—likewise Christ binds the strong man—all our enemies.

Mark 3:27: No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

Joshua made knives—Christ sends forth the Holy Spirit with the sharp knife of his word and circumcises our hearts.

Romans 2: 28: For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

New Creatures in Christ

From that day forward we are made new creatures—**Joshua 5: 8.** “they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. **9: And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.**

By circumcising our hearts inwardly, for the first time we abide in our place—in Christ Jesus. In Christ we are whole—ye are perfect in him. And we abide in him until one day when he shall make us altogether whole, in ourselves, when we see him face-to-face. By this work in the heart, bringing us to faith in Christ, the LORD has rolled away the reproach of the curse from off.

Romans 8:1: There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Partakers of the Fruits of Righteousness

Then we begin enjoying the fruits of Christ's righteousness—**Joshua 5: 10: And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.**

They kept the Passover as God commanded. Likewise by this work of God, through faith, the believer begins partaking of Christ our Passover. Likewise, Christ and his gospel becomes something entirely new to us—**Joshua 5: 11: And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day.**

The day after they partook of the Passover they began eating the “old corn of the land”—meaning corn of the promised land—fruit they neither planted nor harvested themselves. Likewise, when God circumcises our hearts, bringing us to believe Christ, from that day forward, we begin receiving all spiritual blessings from Christ, for which we did not labor, but for which he labored on our behalf.

Joshua 5: 12: And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

The manna in the wilderness ceased. Remember, God gave them Manna to prove them whether they would obey God or not. (Ex 16: 4) Christ told us the manna was a type of himself and his gospel. (Jn 6: 28-71)

But while in that wilderness of unbelief they disobeyed God's ordained manner of taking the manna and partook of it selfishly, as they would. Just as men followed Christ selfishly—for their earthy gain—their bellies—but then walked no more with him once he made them hear.

Brethren, until we were circumcised in the heart by God, we only attended the preaching of the gospel for selfish reasons. We did so as we willed. But when God made us walk by faith, Christ and his gospel ceased to be manna whereby God proved our disobedience. Now, Christ has become Life and his words are the words of life which we cannot do without. We begin truly eating the fruit of heavenly Canaan, cheerfully partaking of Christ as God commands, saying, "Lord to whom shall we go thou hast the words of eternal life and we believe and are sure thou art that Christ."

Let's see on scripture in the New Testament where Christ's work of circumcision was performed for us and where this work of circumcision is performed within us.

Colossians 2: 9: For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10: And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: 11: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 12: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. 13: And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14: Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Drop to verse 19, for our last point, then, through faith, we behold Christ our Head present with us.

Colossians 2: 19: [Christ is that] Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

III. THAT IS OUR LAST POINT, THEN CHRIST—OUR GODMAN MEDIATOR—MANIFESTS HIS PRESENCE IN OUR HEARTS—Joshua 5: 13: And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? 14: And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.

Lord willing, we will be here on Sunday. For now let me just say this.

Christ our Strength

When God works this work, revealing Christ presence in our hearts, he makes Christ to be our Strength. Joshua saw Christ with **his sword in his hand—the power is of God not of us.** (2 Cor 4: 7; 1 Cor 1: 24) Joshua heard Christ declare himself to be **captain of the host of the LORD—he is the captain of our warfare.** (Is 55: 4; Heb 2: 10; Rev 19: 11-16)

Effectual Result

This is the sure effect—**Joshua 5: 14: And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? 15: And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.**

None of us is one with Christ and his people as long as we are fleshly men of war in our fleshly strength. For then we will wage war on one another—accusing God and God's people—everyone except ourselves. We will separating ourselves to wander in the wilderness alone; left in our flesh we will be an accuser and discourager of God's people from believing only on Christ. But after God circumcises the heart and brings us into the obedience of faith, after he manifests himself in our presence, after he makes us know he is our Strength—the Captain of the hosts of the LORD. Then we hit our face, seek his command and obey him.

Then We Are Sent to Jericho

That is how Christ makes us his spiritual “men of war”—by making us behold our strength is Christ in our midst, the Captain of the hosts of the Lord. This is how he brings us to be of one mind and one spirit, through faith in Christ. Then Christ sends us to Jericho with the promise of victory

Joshua 6: 2: And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. 3: And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war,...

Amen!