

## **Called into Warfare - Joshua 10:16-43**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

What's on your mind this morning? What have you been thinking and praying about most today and during the past week? What battle in your life is consuming most of your mental energy right now? As we continue our study of Joshua today, I'd like you to keep your most current and challenging battle at the forefront of your mind. This will help you apply God's truth to what you're actually facing right now in your life, because God's Word is meant to be applied and lived, not just studied and stored in our minds. And if you weren't here last week, I want to encourage you sometime this week to listen to last week's sermon on our website. You can also get a CD version from the guys at the sound board. It has some really important truths that are needed for correctly understanding the book of Joshua and the message it has for us today.

Today we're going to dig into our next section of the book of Joshua. We'll be in chapter 10, verses 16 through 43. Turn there in your Bibles, if you would. We're picking up this historical account of the Israelites' conquest of the Promised Land by God's power, just after God has given them a miraculous victory over five Amorite kings and their armies who had come together to attack Israel's new ally, the Gibeonites. As God's people kept the promises they had made to the Gibeonites and boldly risked their lives under the direction of the Lord, they experienced a very one-sided victory brought about by the Lord himself.

As his people took courageous action under his direction, God created a massive panic attack within the Amorites, threw down large hailstones from heaven on their fleeing armies, and in response to the prayer of Joshua, actually extended the daylight hours so the Israelites could fully carry out his judgment on the Amorites. Through this battle, the Israelites learned in an unforgettable way that God is completely sovereign over all aspects of his creation and that he himself fights with awesome power on behalf of people who will call on his name and walk in his counsel. So incredible and memorable was this experience, in fact,

that the writer of Joshua wrapped it all up with this statement found in Joshua 10:14:

***There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord obeyed the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.***

The Lord fights for his people and there's no limit to the power he makes available to those who call on his name.

Well, after this one-of-a-kind day, we're told in Joshua 10:15 that Joshua and all Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal; that place where God had rolled away their reproach as they returned to full obedience and full surrender to him. And this is where we pick up today in our journey through Joshua.

## **II. PURSUING THE FLEEING ENEMY WITH CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD (Vs. 16 to 21)**

Let's begin by reading verses 16 through 21 of Joshua, chapter 10, which I've labeled in your sermon notes: *Pursuing the Fleeing Enemy with Confidence in the Lord*. In these verses, we find the five Amorite kings on the run. The kings who had so proudly chosen to fight God and his people by attacking Gibeon, were now showing their true colors. Let's begin reading in verse 16:

***16 These five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. 17 And it was told to Joshua, "The five kings have been found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah." 18 And Joshua said, "Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave and set men by it to guard them, 19 but do not stay there yourselves. Pursue your enemies; attack their rear guard. Do not let them enter their cities, for the Lord your God has given them into your hand." 20 When Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished striking them with a great blow until they were wiped out, and when the remnant that remained of them had entered into the fortified cities, 21 then all the people returned safe to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah. Not a man moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel.***

Self-preservation had taken over for the five kings. Their armies had been utterly defeated by the power of God, but still they deceived themselves into thinking

they could hide from him and escape his judgment. In the face of unmistakable evidence that the one true God is real and powerful and was fighting on behalf of the Israelites, the kings still weren't ready to surrender to him but preferred to hide in a dark cave hoping to just escape with their lives. But as we all know, hiding from God never works, and the five hiding kings were soon discovered and their discovery was reported to Joshua.

Now it could have been very tempting for Joshua to get distracted by this discovery of the five kings. Immediately eliminating the leaders of these five powerful city-states might have seemed like a really important priority. But Joshua, as a good and godly commander, kept his eye on the bigger picture and refused to get distracted by a tempting rabbit trail. Knowing the Lord had given the Amorite people into the hands of the Israelites and had commanded a complete destruction, Joshua ordered large stones to be rolled against the mouth of the cave and posted a few guards to prevent the kings' escape.

But the rest of the warriors Joshua kept on task, carrying out God's judgment on the fleeing Amorites. Keeping God's purposes and commands at the forefront, Joshua avoided a tempting distraction that would have kept the Israelites from fully fulfilling God's prime directive.

So what happened as God's people stayed focused on the main goal in obedience to the command of the Lord? Well, a small number of the enemy did manage to escape into the fortified cities, but much fewer than would have escaped if Joshua had turned his full attention to the five kings. But did you notice the three big things that did happen as God's people stayed focused on his purposes in full obedience? 1) They struck the enemy with a great blow until they were wiped out; 2) All the people of Israel returned SAFE to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah; And 3) not a man moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel. Those are some powerful results, wouldn't you say? God gave them everything they needed to completely and utterly defeat the enemy. All Israel returned safe to camp. Not a single Israelite casualties is reported anywhere in chapter 10. And finally, the people in the land were in awe of the power of God fighting on behalf of the Israelites. No one dared to even speak a word against them. They were probably all wondering: Are we next?

### III. LEARNING FROM GOD'S DEFEAT OF THE FIVE HIDING KINGS (Vs. 22 to 27)

Well, after the Israelite army had completed God's prime directive, Joshua was ready to return to the secondary issue: dealing with the hiding kings and using them as an illustration to build the faith of the Israelites and remind them where their victory would come from. Let's read verses 22 to 27 which I've labeled: *Learning from God's Defeat of the Five Hiding Kings.*

***22 Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me from the cave." 23 And they did so, and brought those five kings out to him from the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. 24 And when they brought those kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings." Then they came near and put their feet on their necks. 25 And Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight." 26 And afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees. And they hung on the trees until evening. 27 But at the time of the going down of the sun, Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and they set large stones against the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day.***

These five kings, who so recently had been the powerful and respected leaders of five strong cities, compelling thousands of warriors to risk their lives to preserve the kings' power and wealth and majesty, now found themselves in abject humility, exposed as ordinary human beings dependent on God for life and breath and everything just like the rest of us. They found themselves locked in the very cave where they had tried to hide from God after fighting against him failed.

Well, Joshua commanded his men to open the cave and bring these five kings out. And as they brought them out of the cave, Joshua called the Israelites to gather around for a lesson. The previously proud and powerful kings were ordered to put their heads to the ground while the chiefs of the Israelite men of war each put a

foot on the kings' necks. Then Joshua declared to all Israel that this is what the Lord would do to all of their enemies against whom they would fight. God would cause even the most proud and powerful kings of the earth to be utterly defeated and humiliated at the hand of the Israelites...to become a footstool for them. And this knowledge, that the Lord would fight for them and defeat even the most powerful of their enemies, is what would enable them to reject fear and be strong and courageous in fighting the enemy. God's people would most certainly need to actively fight and risk their lives and sacrifice and engage fully in battle, but victory would not come from their own strength and power. It would only come from the Lord who fights for his people as they courageously follow him into battle.

Please don't miss the truth here that God would do this to their enemies against whom they fight. In other words, he's not going to do this to their enemies while they sit back in camp comfortable and taking no risks and enduring no inconveniences. No. He's going to dramatically defeat their enemies as they are willing to risk their lives to courageously engage in battle under his direction. I've been reading a book on World War I recently and one thing is obvious: war involves great sacrifice and inconvenience and risk taking and leaving the comforts of home. The picture God's giving us here is not of us sitting around praying and waiting for God to drop victory into our laps. Instead, it's a picture of active warfare and diligent activity and self-sacrifice as we seek to follow God's direction and fulfill his purposes by his power. When we walk this way, get ready to see God's power in action! Get ready to put your feet on the neck of your enemies!

Well, having given the Israelites a powerful lesson and a memorable image of the victory God would bring, Joshua then proceeded to carry out the judgment on the Amorite kings that God had decreed. He put them to death, hanged them on five trees until evening, and then at sunset, had them thrown back into the cave where they had tried to hide themselves. The entrance to the cave was then permanently blocked with large stones which were still in place the when the book of Joshua was written down.

*Matthew Henry's Commentary* has a really well-put statement about the deeper significance of this sad situation with the five kings. It says: "...[this] shows how those not only deceive themselves, but destroy themselves, who think to hide

themselves from God. Their refuge of lies will but bind them over to God's judgment...If these five kings had humbled themselves in time, and had begged peace instead of waging war, they might have saved their lives; but now the decree had gone forth, and they found no place for repentance, or the reversal of the judgment; it was too late to expect it, though perhaps they sought it carefully with tears." God wants to show all people his mercy, but his mercy can only be given when we stop hiding...when we come into the light acknowledging our sin and our need for him and trusting him to deal with our sin through the shed blood of Christ. And there will be a day when God's offer of mercy is gone and it's too late. Don't delay if you're still trying to fight against or hide from God. I'd love to help you in that process if you want to talk to me afterwards.

A final observation on verses 22 to 27: It's interesting to notice that even in the way Joshua carried out God's judgment on these kings, he was walking in full obedience to God's Word. Back in Deuteronomy chapter 21, verses 22 to 23, Moses had said this:

***22 "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.***

Even in the execution and hanging of these kings, Joshua was committed to completely following God's Word.

#### **IV. PUTTING LEARNING INTO ACTION WITH POWERFUL RESULTS (Vs. 28 to 39)**

Let's look now at verses 28 to 39, which I've labeled in your notes: *Putting Learning into Action with Powerful Results*. Having taught the Israelites a valuable lesson about the Lord's commitment to fight for his people as they engage in battle, Joshua immediately calls them to put what they've learned into action. Verses 28 to 39 record God's faithfulness to bring the victory he promised as his people followed him courageously into battle. Let's read what God accomplished

in a very short period of time in six different cities of the southern region of the Promised Land:

***28 As for Makkedah, Joshua captured it on that day and struck it, and its king, with the edge of the sword. He devoted to destruction every person in it; he left none remaining. And he did to the king of Makkedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho. 29 Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Makkedah to Libnah and fought against Libnah. 30 And the Lord gave it also and its king into the hand of Israel. And he struck it with the edge of the sword, and every person in it; he left none remaining in it. And he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho. 31 Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libnah to Lachish and laid siege to it and fought against it. 32 And 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. 33 Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish. And Joshua struck him and his people, until he left none remaining. 34 Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Lachish to Eglon. And they laid siege to it and fought against it. 35 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. 36 Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron. And they fought against it 37 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. 38 Then Joshua and all Israel with him turned back to Debir and fought against it 39 and he 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. Just as he had done to Hebron and to Libnah and its king, so he did to Debir and to its king.***

These verses sound a bit repetitive, don't they? When God brings the victory it's assured and is very one-sided and complete. To sum these verses up, the cities and kings of Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron and Debir, along with the warriors of Gezer with their king, Horam, were captured and struck with the edge of the sword, and all the people in their cities were devoted to destruction just as had been done to Jericho.

The time for God's judgment for the great sin in the land had come, and his judgment when it came was complete. These verses represent the fulfillment of Joshua's statement from verse 25: ***"thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight."***

Of course our battle today is not against people, and we're not charged with carrying out God's judgment for the sin in the land. Jesus will take care of all that in the last day. Our battle today is against the ruler of this world who's actively deceiving people into fighting against God and experiencing his judgment, rather than surrendering to him through Christ and experiencing his mercy...our battle is against the one who's actively trying to keep us from trusting God, from fulfilling God's purposes by his power, and from growing in the likeness of Christ. But our victory in these battles today can be just as complete when we trust and live God's Word and actively engage the enemy by the power of his Spirit within us. God will also enable us to put our feet on the necks of our enemies.

#### **V. REVIEWING THE RESULTS AND THE REASONS (Vs. 40 to 43)**

So let's look at our final four verses for today, verses 40 to 43, which review the results and the reasons for what we've seen taking place today in chapter 10. Beginning in verse 40:

***40 So Joshua struck the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings. He left none remaining, but devoted to destruction all that breathed, just as the Lord God of Israel commanded. 41 And Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, as far as Gibeon. 42 And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. 43 Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.***

Several things stand out in these final verses of chapter 10. First of all, the Israelite's victory was overwhelming. No Israelite casualties are reported and the phrases used indicate that no one was able to stand against the Israelites and they took complete control of the land conquered. Secondly, the Israelite's practice of devoting all the people in these cities to destruction was not because they were blood-thirsty and cruel, but because God had decreed that it was time

for judgment on the great sin in the land. They devoted the people to destruction in obedience to the command given by the Lord through Moses before they had even crossed the Jordan River. In Deuteronomy 20, verses 15 through 18, Moses had said this:

***15 Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. 16 But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, 17 but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, 18 that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the Lord your God.***

Joshua and the Israelites were simply walking in obedience to God's command and trusting in his justice and wisdom in what he had decreed.

And finally, in these closing verses of Joshua chapter 10, we're again reminded, in case we missed it, that the reason the Israelites were experiencing such great and one-sided victory over their enemies was because the Lord fought for his people. That was the only explanation for the success and victory of God's people in taking the Promised Land and defeating their enemies. Joshua was able to capture all these kings and their land at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel...plain and simple. Only God could bring about this kind of profound and complete victory!

## **VI. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION**

Well, as we begin to wrap up, let's return to our own battles we're each facing today. Let's consider how we can put our feet on the necks of our own enemies by the Lord's power. As we do that, the first question that we each need to ask is this: Who am I viewing as the enemy in the battle I'm facing today? There could be few things more tragic than investing all our energies and prayers in fighting the wrong enemy. Who do you view as the enemy in your battles today? I'll tell you this: If it's a person...a spouse...a co-worker...a boss...a parent or other family member... someone who's hurt or abused you...or even yourself...If you've come

to view a person as the enemy whose neck you'd like to put your foot on...you're fighting the wrong enemy.

Without a doubt, there are people in this world who look like our enemies... who've hurt us deeply...who seem to be focused on making our lives miserable... whose poor decisions are causing great problems for us...who may even consider us an enemy and are actively doing things to harm us. But the truth of the matter is: our battle in the kingdom of God is never against people. Jesus will one day take care of the injustices and abuses we've endured at the hands of people, and it's not our job to execute his punishment and justice. If we're trying to put our feet on the neck of a person, we've lost sight of the big picture. We've gotten sidetracked with the five hiding kings and are letting the forces of the enemy escape into the fortified cities.

Scripture gives a very interesting picture of what's really going with people who seem to be our enemies and offers some very clear instruction about how we're to relate to such people. Listen to the words of 2 Timothy 2:24-26:

***24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.***

People who are functioning as enemies of God and his people have fallen into the devil's trap and have been captured by him to carry out his will. In fact, anyone who's not in relationship with God through Jesus Christ is caught in the snare of the devil and is often unwittingly being used to accomplish the devil's will. Our true enemy is always Satan and his lies and the goal in our battles is never to destroy and conquer people, but rather to love and pray for them...to be kind to them even when they're harsh to us...to try and correct them, but always with gentleness...to never seek revenge...and to do all of this with the prime directive of freeing them from the snare of the devil and planting seeds that God can use to lead them to repentance and a knowledge of the truth. In our battles we must identify the true enemy and keep our eyes on the bigger of what God's prime directive is: leading people to repentance and salvation and freedom through

Christ. But for the grace of God, we would all still be stuck in the devil's trap. Let's offer that same grace to others.

Secondly, having identified the true enemy and remembered God's bigger purpose in it all, we need to actively engage in the battle by the Lord's strength. Life in the kingdom of God is not a comfortable, passive, risk-free life of no sacrifices, where we sit back and watch God do everything for us. God calls to engage in the battle with him. He calls us to take risks; to be strong and courageous in fearful situations; to do and say things that are hard and uncomfortable; to patiently endure difficult challenges and injustices in life; to work hard at a great cost to ourselves; to put our full effort into knowing and understanding his Word and applying it to our lives. In other words, God calls us to active warfare that's going to cost us and stretch us and require continual dependence on his strength, power and wisdom. Are you engaging fully in the battle with him today, or are you asking him to go take care of it all while you remain comfortably at home?

And finally, in order to be strong and courageous and fully engage in the battle, we must truly believe in our hearts that God himself really is fighting the battle with us. We are not alone and we are not the source of our victory. We have the full power of God himself actively working to empower us and accomplish his purposes as we are willing to pick up our sword and engage the enemy. Do you believe that today and does it show in the way your living your life? Only in believing that the Lord is truly fighting the battle with us and that ultimate victory is assured, can we leave fear behind and be strong and courageous to face the enemy and begin destroying his lies. Today, let's believe the words of Paul in Romans 16:18:

***20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.***

Satan doesn't stand a chance when God's people engage him in battle with trust in the Lord!

To help us in growing this true heart belief that God himself with his full power is actively and constantly fighting with us as we're willing to engage in the battle, I want to close today with some encouraging thoughts from Charles Spurgeon

about God's commitment and ability to help us in the battles we face. This is from a devotional on Isaiah 41:14 which says: ***"I will help thee, saith the Lord."***

*This morning let us hear the Lord Jesus speak to each one of us: "I will help thee." "It is but a small thing for Me, thy God, to help thee. Consider what I have done already. What! not help thee? Why, I bought thee with My blood. What! not help thee? I have died for thee; and if I have done the greater, will I not do the less? Help thee! It is the least thing I will ever do for thee; I have done more, and will do more. Before the world began I chose thee. I made the covenant for thee. I laid aside My glory and became a man for thee; I gave up My life for thee; and if I did all this, I will surely help thee now. In helping thee, I am giving thee what I have bought for thee already. If thou hadst need of a thousand times as much help, I would give it thee; thou requirest little compared with what I am ready to give. 'Tis much for thee to need, but it is nothing for me to bestow...' I will help thee."*

*O my soul, is not this enough? Dost thou need more strength than the omnipotence of the United Trinity? Dost thou want more wisdom than exists in the Father, more love than displays itself in the Son, or more power than is manifest in the influences of the Spirit? Bring hither thine empty pitcher! Surely this well will fill it. Haste, gather up thy wants, and bring them here—thine emptiness, thy woes, thy needs. Behold, this river of God is full for thy supply; what canst thou desire beside? Go forth, my soul, in this thy might. The Eternal God is thine helper!*

## SERMON APPLICATION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Read Joshua 10:16-43, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read. Look at the surrounding verses, take your time and talk to God as you read and meditate on it. Think through the following, writing notes and thoughts and looking up related Scriptures as needed:**

Write down from the passage or from what was shared in the sermon: 1) a truth that stands out to you; 2) anything you believe God is showing you or telling you personally through it; 3) any related Scripture that comes to mind; 4) any questions you have.

Joshua refused to get sidetracked with the five hiding kings, but stayed focused on the bigger picture of accomplishing the primary mission God had given them. Think of a battle you're facing in your own life. What would you say is God's primary mission for you in that battle? What are some tempting issues to get sidetracked with in that battle?

After asking the chiefs of the men of war to put their feet on the necks of the five kings, Joshua said: ***“Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.”*** What applications does Joshua's statement have to your life and battles today?

One of the central truths of Joshua chapter 10 is that the Lord fights for his people who will actively engage in the battle under his direction. As you think of the current battle you identified above, what are the ways you are engaging personally in that battle? In other words, what are some of the things you're doing to fight it with the Lord?

Carefully read Ephesians 6:10-18. What can you glean from these verses that will help you in the battles you're currently facing?

**Write down any other thoughts, notes or applications below:**