

Essentials for Battle

Joshua 10:6-14

Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow me as I read verses one to five, or I'm going to attempt to read verses one to five. Bear with me, there are some names here that are quite challenging. It begins in verse one, "Now it came to pass when Adoni-zedec king of Jerusalem...", little footnote, that's the first place you find Jerusalem mentioned in the Bible. "When he heard how Joshua had taken Ai and utterly destroyed it, and he had done to Jericho and to her king, so had done also to Ai and to her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon made peace with Israel and were among them. And they feared greatly...". Verse two, "...because Gibeon was a great city and was one of the royal cities and because it was greater than Ai and all the men thereof were mighty. Wherefore, the king of Jerusalem...", verse three, "...the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, they came, said to them, Come...", verse four, "...up unto me and help me, that we may smite Gibeon for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel. Therefore, the five kings of the...", excuse me, "...they gathered themselves together into...", verse five, "...and they went up and all their hosts and they encamped before Gibeon, and they made war against it."

Now you probably wonder why I even read those five verses. You go, what does that have to do with me? All of us are facing battles, amen? We all face battles. Someone said, be kind to everyone you meet because we're all facing battles. I thought about that this week. I was in a real hurry. Hasn't the traffic been outrageous? (congregation murmurs) I was at the 15 and Murrieta Hot Springs Road and wanted to cross over. It took me like 45 minutes to get over the freeway. I was starting to lose my sanctification. (congregation laughing) There was one spot after waking me, you know, inching, inching, inching, inching, the light turned green and I was the second car. There was a car ahead of me and they paused for a minute. They didn't get going. Now one of my pet peeves is when people honk at me a green light, when I'm trying to get, you know, give me a minute, give me a minute, I'll get going. I'm getting old here, you know, it takes a while for me to get my foot on the gas. So that's one of my things that really bums me out. Matter of fact, when I'm in the front and someone honks at me to go on a green light, I'm tempted to put it in park, get out of the car, go back to them and say, something wrong with your horn, you know? But I'm a little afraid that if I did that, they'd roll down the window and go, "Hi, Pastor John." (congregation laughing) Hi. (congregation laughing) Just thought I'd say Merry Christmas, you know. (congregation laughing) Wouldn't be good, right?

I was getting ready to honk at this person in front of me. Little confession, I'm getting ready to, oh, you know, come on, come on, get going. And I just started to honk and I thought, you know what, who knows what they're going through right now. Maybe they just lost their job. Maybe their wife just said I want a divorce, maybe their kids are on drugs, maybe, you know, who knows what they're going through. Maybe they just got diagnosed with terminal cancer. So I thought of that little saying, be kind to everyone you meet. We're all facing fighting battles. And we do fight battles. We fight emotional battles and spiritual battles. We fight financial battles. We

have battles at work. We have battles in our marriage, battles in our home. And so we all face battles. We need to learn how to face them victoriously, how to conquer in the battles of life.

So the book of Joshua is a book of battles. And we find in these first five verses that the king of Jerusalem, Adoni-zedec, he got these other cities. Now, you need to understand at this time, they weren't nations, they were city nations. Each city was its own entity, a little nation, and they had their own king. So each city had a king and they were city nations. And so this one king of Jerusalem says to these other kings, "Let's bind together and let's go fight Gibeon because they made a covenant with Israel." Now remember those of you that were here last Sunday, that the Gibeonites came to the Israelites and they had moldy bread, they had ragtag clothes, worn out shoes. They made as though they had come from a long distance away, but in reality they were their neighbors and in the next city they were to conquer. So they said, "Make a league with us, make a covenant with us." They tricked the Israelites. They fooled them into making a covenant with them and then it was exposed that they were their neighbors. So Joshua made them sawers of wood and carriers of water. They made them servants for the rest of their life.

This king of Jerusalem is upset the Gibeonites are now in covenant or league with the Israelites. So he gets five kings together and he says, "Let's go fight against Gibeon and let's take them and let's conquer them." But you know God is able to take our mistakes and to use them for our good and for his glory. Someone said he can take our blunders and turn them into a blessing.

Now the league with Gibeon was a blunder on Joshua's part, but God was going to turn it into a blessing. He, in one failed swoop, was going to be able to wipe out these five city kings and all of their warriors in one battle rather than months of a campaign in the south fighting against all these nations or all these city kings. Now, the lesson for us is looking at Joshua's conduct on this day, which verse 14 says, "There was no day like it before or after." The ingredients that are necessary to be able to stand in a time of battle. If you're taking notes, write them down. There are four things we need to do when we are battling in life.

Number one, we need to have a commitment to integrity. Now I know that some of these points are going to be repetitious of things I've touched on in the last several weeks, but that's because Joshua's character shines all the way through the book of Joshua. The lessons that we learn need to be repeated so that we can remember them. When you are facing battles, we need to have a commitment to maintain the integrity of our lives. Follow with me beginning in verse six down to verse eight, "And so the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua...". Now they're being attacked by these five kings. "So the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua in the camp of Gilgal saying, slack not thy hand from thy servants. Come up to us quickly and save us", which is interesting. The name Joshua is the name "Jehovah saves," same as Jesus. Joshua is the Old Testament equivalent to the New Testament Jesus, God saves. So they're crying out, "Joshua, save us and help us." And so all the kings and the Amorites that dwell in the mountains, "they are gathered against us." So what did Joshua do? Verse seven, "Joshua ascended from Gilgal. He and all the people of war with him and all the mighty men of valor...", that is the soldiers in Israel. Verse eight, "the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear not, I have delivered

them into your hand. There shall not in any man of them stand before thee." Now how easy would it have been for Joshua to honk his horn? For Joshua to say to the Gibeonites, "You tricked me. You lied to me. You deceived me. Now you made your own bed, lie in and I'm not going to come to your defense." I don't know that you can argue biblically that Joshua was responsible to defend them. They'd lied to him, they deceived him, their servants with him, and the covenant that they made with them was that they wouldn't attack him. There was nothing said in the agreement that if someone else attacks you, that that's cool. So Joshua was no doubt tempted to just sit back and go, "that's just too bad, you're going to have to fight your own battle. Let them wipe you out." You know when someone comes against you and someone attacks you, or you're fighting with someone, there's a tendency to want to resort to hypocrisy or duplicity or manipulation especially. And we want to take things in our own hands.

Joshua did not do that. What Joshua does at this point is he is a man of principles and a man of integrity. He did the right thing even though it was inconvenient. And here's my point. When you are in a battle, what should you do? You should maintain your integrity. You should never resort to hypocrisy or duplicity or trying to take care of the matter yourself. You should trust in the Lord and maintain your integrity. So Joshua does the right thing. You might be in a battle in your marriage right now. Maybe your spouse is trying to take the house and take the kids, maybe they've hidden money and they're ripping you off, and you want to battle, you want to fight, and it's okay to stand and defend yourself, but you don't want to manipulate to sinful behavior. You want to always continually maintain your integrity. Maybe you're getting blasted on the job. Maybe your boss or your employer's giving you a hard time, and you're under fire from the job. You need to maintain your integrity; do the right thing.

Now, how did Joshua know that it was the right thing to defend the Gibeonites? He wanted to have a clear conscience. That's an essential ingredient for the victories and the battles of life. He knew verse 8 because he had a clear word from God. Go back with me to verse eight for just a moment. The Lord said unto Joshua, isn't that great when God speaks to us? When we open the Bible and God speaks through what He's spoken, His word. What did God say? "Fear them not." In other words, "Don't be afraid, for I have delivered them into your hand, there shall not a man of them stand before thee." Joshua has a clear word from God. Guess what? When we are obedient to God's word, we can have a clear conscience and we can face the battles of life. So you open your Bible, here we go back to the word of God, open your Bible, read your Bible, say "God, how do you want me to respond to my spouse? God, how do you want me to respond to my employer? How do you want me to act on this job? What do you want me to do?" Knowing God's will, then you obey it and you practice integrity.

Now the opposite of integrity is what's called duplicity. Now integrity actually means wholeness or oneness. A metal that has integrity has no alloys, it has no mixture, it's a metal that's pure. A person that has integrity is not practicing duplicity. What is duplicity? It's hypocrisy, or we'll use the phrase "two-faced." You're familiar with that. You're one way with one person; you're another way with another person. There's no integrity, you're two faced. You're not the same person every day of the week. What kind of person I encounter with you depends upon whether you're in church on Sunday or work on Monday or a party on Friday night. You're living your life in

compartments. That's duplicity, that's hypocrisy.

God wants integrity. Tied into that concept of integrity is sincerity. Means no alloys, no mixture. We are true. We are one person all the time. Jesus spoke about integrity in Matthew 6, verse 22 to 24. He said, "The light or lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, if your eye be single or good, the whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad or divided, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee is darkness, how great is that darkness? For no one can serve two masters." Jesus said, "for you will either hate one and love the other, or else you will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon...", or money. That's what Jesus said. In other words, your single eye is on God: "I want to love God, I want to obey God, I want to serve God, I want to honor God, I want to do all that God wants me to do." You say, "Well, if you do that, you're going to get robbed, you're going to get ripped off; people are going to walk all over you, you'll be abused." That's in God's hands. Your responsibility, my responsibility is to always practice integrity. This is because when you're in the battle, you'll have a clear conscience. Nothing weakens you more than a clouded conscience or a guilty conscience: "I shouldn't have done that. I shouldn't have said that. I shouldn't be doing this. I shouldn't be doing that." Our conscience bothers us. But no matter how the battle rages around us, if we have a clear conscience, God says this in His word, I'm obeying God, I'm doing what God said, I'm going to trust Him with my life, then we can face the battles that we encounter in life. Are you practicing integrity as you face your battles?

The second thing we need in the battle is an utter dependence on God. Utter dependence or a total complete dependence on God. Notice in verse nine as the story develops, "Joshua therefore came unto them. And he went up from Gilgal all night." Now it's about 20, 25 miles from Gibeon where he was and he would have to go up the mountains at night, all night traveling with his soldiers to do battle the next morning. So Joshua went all night, verse nine, "and the Lord then discomfited...", verse 10, "...before Israel, and he slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon and chased them along the way that go down to Beth-Horon, and he smote them to Azekah and to Makkedah. And it came to pass that when they had fled from before Israel that they were in the going down to Beth-Horon and the Lord did cast down great hailstones from heaven upon them unto Azekah and they died...", that is the enemies of Israel. "And they were more which died from the hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

Now, a miracle that Joshua and his men could travel all night, and they get there in the morning and as the sun's coming up. These five kings are around the city and they attack them all at once. A miracle that they could have the strength and the stamina and the ability to do that. I want you to note what God did for them. In verse 10, "the Lord discomfited them." Then notice in verse 11, "the Lord cast down great stones from heaven." Now is that cool or what? I could have dug being in Joshua's army and you're out fighting with the sword and all of a sudden God starts throwing hailstones and bonking the enemy on the head. I would have put my sword back in the sheath and said "Lord, there's one over there." Bonk, bonk, bonk. "Get him. There's one getting away Lord." Knocks him out. "Good shot Lord." This is a miracle. They say the hail in that day could be like a weigh a pound. Big one-pound hailstones coming out and wham! Hit you on

the head. That's wicked. Remember years ago there was a Toyota truck commercial where meteorite came from heaven and hit the truck? You guys remember that commercial? How could you forget it? It was awesome. I love that commercial. Meteorite hits this Toyota truck. Boom! And the truck just drives off, you know. In this case, they didn't drive off, they lay dead. God sends these meteorites, these shower of hailstones come down and it's wiping out the enemy. And it's an intervention and a miracle of God. Verse 14 says, "The Lord fought for Israel." The Lord opened fire with artillery from heaven. I love that. God fighting for them.

In the battle, depend upon God to fight for you. Psalm 127, verse 1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain to build it. Except the Lord, keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Maybe it's your marriage this morning. Unless the Lord build a marriage. They tried to build it in vain without God. They, except the Lord, build your house, You wake us but in vain. Are you fighting a battle in the home right now? Are you fighting a battle in your marriage right now? Let God fight for you. Depend upon God, rely upon God, look to God.

They had a promise from God. They went out to fight the battle based on God's promises, but God intervened and began to rain down these hailstones. In Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10, "Be strong in the...", who?—"The Lord," amen? In the power of His might, put on the whole armor of God that then you may be able to stand against the wiles of the wicked one. So we need to maintain our integrity and we need to have a dependency upon God as we're in the midst of the battle. "Lord, give us Your victory, give us Your strength.

Here's number three when you're facing a battle. You need to have an effective prayer life. Never forget to pray. You pray before the battle, you pray during the battle, and you pray after the battle. The principle is pray, pray, pray, pray. That's what Joshua does in verse 12 down to verse 14. Follow with me. "Then spake Joshua to the Lord." Now earlier it said the Lord spoke unto Joshua, verse eight. Now Joshua speaks to the Lord. So we need God to speak to us through His word, and then we need to speak to God through prayer. So "Joshua said unto the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel. And he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher?"

So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven and the host and that went down about the whole day. Now this is a story that a lot of people have trouble with. How could the sun stand still? The sun doesn't stand still, the earth would have to stop rotating. I'll come back to that in just a moment, okay? You skeptics hang onto your hats for just a moment. First miracle, God rained down hail and began to wipe the enemy out. Second miracle, Joshua prays, and he says, "Sun, stand still." Prayer is [an] indispensable ingredient for meeting the [Lord] and winning the great battles of life. Prayer, James chapter 5 verse 16, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man or woman availeth much."

So what made Joshua's prayer effective? Number one, it was prayer in the will of God. Get these principles. God made a promise, verse 8. God said, "Don't be afraid. I have delivered

them into your hand. There shall not a man of them stand before you." When you pray, pray according to God's will. God answers prayer if it is aligned with His will found in His word. Best way to pray is on your knees with your Bible open, looking at the promises of God and pleading those promises to God: "God, you promise never to leave me or forsake me. I ask you to be with me. God, you promise to provide for me. Lord, I need you to provide. God, you said, as thy day is, so shall our strength be. Lord, give me that strength. Lord, you made these promises, now I plead them." So he was praying and pleading the promises of God and praying in the will of God.

Secondly, Joshua's prayer was effective because it was no doubt a prayer of faith. You imagine how much faith it took to ask God to stop the sun from setting. Now, here's the controversy. A lot of people say, well, how could that be? You know, the sun doesn't roll over. The earth is what turns and the sun stands still. How is God going to? Is he going to stop the whole universe and He's going throw everything out of whack to have the sun stand still? Joshua prayed in faith. When you pray, you must believe that God is able to do anything. Do you believe that this morning? -Yes. Do you really, really believe that God can do anything? -Yes. Well, it's pretty simple, right? God is God, right? I believe Genesis 1:1, first chapter first book, first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Now because I believe that, and because I know that many of you believe that, I don't have any problems with God stopping the earth. He created it, he can do what he wants. He can supersede His laws, He can change his laws, He can create a new sun, an old sun. He can make the sun stop, He can make the earth tilt, he can do whatever he wants. You know, if you go way up to the top of the globe, there's places up there where the sun shines all the time. Depends on where you are on the globe. God could have just taken the whole world and went, "Eek!" Tweaked it a little bit. So it was right under the sun, and it looked like the sun was stopped. But he asked God to stop the sun. Could God stop the sun? Yes, because God can do what? -Anything. I have no problem with that. But many critics of the Bible, "Oh, that can't happen. Oh, this is going to, how could God do this?" It's God, duh. Do you forget that the Lord's the one doing it? What an amazing miracle. I believe that this actually happened.

Now I've read all the arguments and how this worked and some people say it's poetic language. Didn't really happen, it's poetic language. Does the Bible use poetic language, yes. But it's determined by the context. I don't believe that this speaks of poetic language in this case. If it's poetic language, then were the hailstones poetic language? Was Joshua just poetic language? Did the man Joshua never exist? Did he never fight a battle there? I mean, is it all poetic language? Here's the problem with trying to interpret the Bible this way, is that you become the authority. Be very careful how you interpret Scripture. What happens is the authority shifts from the Bible itself to you. You become the authority to say, "This is inspired. This is not inspired. This is true. This is not true. This really happened. This didn't really happen." You become the authority rather than the Bible is the authority, and we believe it. God said it. I believe it. That settles it. I believe this is a historical narrative and this actually happened.

I know when I was a young boy and I was out in the yard wrestling and playing football and baseball when I was a, you know, 10, 11, 12 years old, I hated the sun to go down. I would love

to have God answer the prayer, "Let me play outside a little longer." My mom would call, "John, time to come in." I think, "Oh, no. It's getting dark. Time to come in." Stand still upon my street. My dad had a whistle, a particular whistle that was for us kids. If I heard that whistle, blocks away, I could hear him whistle. Really loud, that was the call, "You come immediately." If my dad ever whistled and I heard that whistle and I didn't come, I was in big trouble. But even today, if I'm out surfing in the afternoon and the sun is setting, the waves are good, I'm catching rides, I'm like "Lord, could you let the sun stand still a little longer? So I could get a few more rides before the day's over." I think what Joshua was doing was saying, "sun stand still so that we could finish off these kings, so we can finish off this job." He wasn't asking for a more hailstone, he was asking for God to just give him a little more daylight, a little more time to do the job, to finish the task that is at hand. Effective prayer is believing that God can do anything.

I want you to notice what God did. It said the "Lord harken," verse 14. This is my favorite phrase in the entire story. The Lord harken unto the voice of a man. The Lord listened to the voice of a man. Amazing. The God of the universe, the creator of everything, the eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere present God heard one man's plea, and he stopped the universe for him. Wow. You don't think God cares about you? You don't think God can help you? You don't think God will come to your aid? The Bible says, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." Whatever the length of your day, you have those days when you think this day is never going to end. God is your strength, God is your helper. But you have to cry out to him, you have to call out to him. He has the very hairs of your head all numbered. Not a one bird, sparrow falls to the ground, but what your Father knows, God attends the funeral of every sparrow. You are of more value than a multitude of sparrows. When you cry out to God, "Lord, I'm in the heat of the battle, Lord, this day is too long. Lord, I need your strength." God will give you strength, God will give you power, God will give you help to get through your day. The amazing thing to me is that the same God that stopped the universe for Joshua is the same God that lives in my heart, and he is my father in heaven. That's the thing that really blessed me this week to think about. The same God that stopped the sun and moon and linked them the day for Joshua is the same God that lives in my heart and loves me and sent his son to die on the cross for my sins. I can call out to Him, and God will hear my cry and he will fight for me. God wants to fight for you.

Here's my fourth and last point I want to make about the battles we face. We need to have a willingness to play our part. A willingness to play our part. If you read Joshua's prayer carefully, you will note that he doesn't ask God to send more stones from heaven. He asked God for more time to get the job done. We have a part to play. You say, well, wait a minute, Pastor John, "You just told us that we need to have an utter dependence upon God." That's right. We do need to have an utter dependence on God, but we also play a part in the victory of the battle. We can't just be passive instruments. We have to pray. We have to obey. We have to follow God's will for our lives, and God will come to us and rescue us. Joshua didn't say, "Hey, put up your swords. God, just send more hailstones. There's some over there, there's some over there. Wipe them out. Lord, you just do it." He just said, "Lord, give us a little more time. Give us a little more daylight. We haven't finished the job at hand. Help us to do what you've called us to do." I pray that God will help me in the lot of time. He's given me in my life to do all and everything He's called me to do until He calls me home. "Lord, I want to finish the race. I want to run my course.

I want to hear those words, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'" So we have a part to play.

If the Bible says, "Husbands, love your wife, as Christ loved the church," guess what you need to do? Love your wife as Christ loved the church. If the Bible says, "Do you wives buckle your seat belts." Doesn't say that, I'm just telling you to get ready. Says "wives, be subject to your husbands, as unto the Lord. For your husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the...", not the dictator, not the Gestapo, "the head," which speaks of provision and protection. But you submit to him, "Oh, I don't like that verse, I don't like that verse; that verse was written before my husband was born. (Congregation Laughing) Had he been alive when that Bible, that verse was written, it wouldn't be in the Bible today." (Congregation Laughing) No, it's in the Bible. Children, obey your parents. All the commands that are in the Bible that we don't like, we need to obey them. How can you expect God to fight for you if you won't obey him? We have a part to play. We practice integrity. We depend upon the Lord. We pray and look to His promises and His power. Then we get up and we do what He's called us to do.

You know, there's been days when I have to force myself to get out of bed. There have been Sundays when I have to force myself to get in the pulpit. Weeks when I'm beaten down or discouraged, and I got to put one foot in front of the other and another foot in front of the other. I don't glow in the dark, by the way. I put my pants on one leg at a time just like you do. I have sprinklers break; I have dogs dig under the fence. I have cars, I've had all these flat tires lately. What's with that? I'm a pastor, why should I get a flat tire? (Congregation Laughing) People cut in front of me in line; I don't want to yell at them, they might be from revival. (Congregation Laughing) I mean, what's with that? There's sometimes that, "Lord, I don't want to preach today, Lord," and I have to say, "Lord, I got to do what you've called me to do. I got to be obedient to you." It's not the need in front of me, it's the call behind me that keeps me going. I face battles just like you face battles, and sometimes the battles rage, and the battles are daily, and doesn't it feel like sometimes that you'll never be out of the battle? It's like, "will this battle ever end?" God will be with us.

So here it is in recap. We commit to integrity no matter what the consequences. Secondly, we are utterly dependent upon God to fight our battles for us. Thirdly, we rely on effective prayer, praying in the will of God, believing in the power of God. Fourthly, a willingness to do our part. Be what God wants you to be, and God will give you the string.

Now some say, "What a foolish story to think that the God of the universe would intervene and listen to one man's cry and stop the whole universe for him." Really? I think about the God of the universe that would love the sinful wicked world so much that he would send his only Son into the world to die for me. I believe that if you or I were the only sinner on planet earth, that God the Father and His great love would have sent his son Jesus to die on the cross for you, only you. You know when Jesus died on the cross? It wasn't just God so loved the world, it's God loved you. And He sent his Son for you, and he died for you, and he died in your place. The God of all creation, the God of all the universe would condescend to come from heaven to earth, take on the form of a man and die upon a cruel cross for my sin and your sin is more

than I can comprehend. Christmas is about the love of God. This story is about the power of God. Christmas is about the love of God. There's no greater love than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. Jesus laid down his life for his enemies. We were rebelling against him and running against him, but He died on the cross for us. Hearing His love, not that we love God, but that He loved us and gave His Son to be the sacrifice for our sins. Let's pray.