

Preparing For A New Beginning

Sermon 9 – Something Special, Joshua 10

Pastor Roger Ridley, Gretna Baptist Church, May 21, 2006

Has God ever done something really special in your life? Back in August 1979, my wife and I packed all our belongings and moved to Chicago...

Has anything like that ever happened to you, when God has done something special to meet a need in your life? It doesn't happen every day, but when it does happen you never forget it!

Joshua had a day like that. A day so special that Joshua 10:14 says that there was no day like it before or after. What was it that was so special about that day? And what can we learn from it that you and I might enjoy the special blessing of God in our lives as well?

Open your Bible to Joshua 10. Look at verses 13-14...

Wow! Can you imagine that? As Joshua fought against his enemies God caused nightfall to be delayed and sunlight to be extended about the space of a day in answer to prayer to meet a need.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking: Was such a thing really possible? Or, did it just seem like the battle was that long? I've had some days like that, which seemed like they would never end. Haven't you?

Well, let me say this first, it is presented here as a historical fact. If God's Word says it happened, then it happened. From personal experience I have learned to trust what God's Word says. I have also been around long enough to see many things proven true that others have questioned. So let's not waste our time with such foolishness. If god's Word says it happened, it happened!

God intervened in the affairs of men to meet a need. We call that a miracle. Miracles do not have material explanations; they defy explanation, that's why we call them miracles.

If I did not believe such a thing was possible, then there would be no reason to open the Bible; it is filled with such stories! If I did not believe such a

thing was possible, then there would be no reason for me to pray. For God to answer my prayers He would need to intervene in the affairs of men, and that takes no more and no less of His effort than Joshua's long day. Consider that when you go to prayer. Your smallest request takes no more of His effort than your biggest request.

Here's what I think we need to get from this chapter: Just as God did something special for Joshua, He is ready to do special things for us as well.

But there are some factors you and I need to understand.

I. We don't have to be perfect to receive special blessings from God, but we do need to recognize our imperfections.

Look at verses 1-8...

There are a couple of things we need to notice in these verses. God said to Joshua: fear not. As we have seen on other occasions, on this occasion also Joshua was afraid. He had reason to be. Had he only done what he was supposed to begin with he would not have been in this situation.

Remember what happened in chapter 9...

Do you see who is pleading for help in chapter 10?

Have you ever done dumb things like that and made a mess for yourself? As a result you were hesitant, you were afraid to do what you said you would do, to talk about it with God, and to trust God to see you through it, because you figured you made the mess and God was just going to step back and let you suffer the consequences. Had I been Joshua I would have been afraid too. I would have figured it's punishment time.

But God is not like us! Aren't you glad? He blesses us even when we don't deserve it. We don't need to be perfect to receive special blessings from God but we do need to recognize our imperfections.

Joshua did that. Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6, and 1 Peter 5:5 all tell us the same thing, "*God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble.*" To the one

that recognizes his/her unworthiness before God, He gives the very opposite of what they deserve. If you are a Christian you have already experienced that, Ephesians 2:8-9...

Do we deserve God's grace? Do we deserve His special blessing? No. But when we humble ourselves before Him we get what we do not deserve.

Joshua was hesitant and for good reason. As a result, as he humbled himself he received encouragement from God, *"Do not be afraid, I will see you through this. I have delivered them into your hand."*

Without hesitation I know you and I can trust God to do the same for us. 1 Peter 5:6, *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."* Verse 7 adds, *"Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you."* The Lord God cares for us more than we can imagine and when we humble ourselves before Him, even when we don't deserve it, He gives us what we don't deserve.

Now I also want you to notice in our passage a second factor involved in Joshua's special blessing.

II. God is more than ready and able to bless us in a special way, a big way, but we need to ask Him to do so.

Look at verses 9-15...

I don't want us to miss a point, which is very striking in these verses. Joshua came upon the Canaanites and took them by surprise. As they began to fight the Canaanites fell by their sword, and before long they were running for their lives.

I suspect that if that had been one of us that would have been good enough. Joshua was doing his best and was winning the battle but for Joshua, his best was not good enough, he wanted God's best in his life, so he sought God's blessing. That strikes me as something different than the norm.

Usually when things are going bad, when we're experiencing difficulties, and life isn't going our way, then we call on God for help. But when they are

going our way, when we're getting what we want, we often fail to call upon Him. When in fact, He has so much more to give!

The enemies were on the run, hailstones from heaven were killing them faster than Israel could reach them, and Joshua still wasn't satisfied, he asked for more. You and I are too easily satisfied when it comes to the blessing of God in our lives. Quite often, we don't have more because we haven't asked for more. James 4:2, "*You have not because you ask not.*"

Notice also that Joshua was very specific in his request. There was no mistaking what he asked for. He asked that God would hold the sun and the moon in their place.

Sometimes our prayers are so general that even when God does answer we don't realize it because we don't know what to look for. We say things like bless all the missionaries, bless our church, or bless me and my family, but how do we know whether He has or not?

Most of God's greatest blessings in our lives have gone unnoticed because we have not specifically talked with Him about them. Specific requests bring specific answers. So that both others and we can rejoice in what God has done and is doing.

Notice also that his request was no small thing. It was as big and bold as we can possibly imagine. He asked that God extend the sunlight.

I'm going to be honest with you, I have never asked for anything close to that. Have you? I'm not saying I haven't asked for big things, I have, but not like that. Usually we try to keep our prayers small enough so that if God doesn't answer them we can still find a way to make due. But that doesn't take much faith. What Joshua prayed, that takes faith!

Someone might say though, that was another time and another place, and Joshua was one of the great leaders of Israel, God wouldn't answer such a bold request for me. Oh no? Ephesians 3:20...

1 John 5:14-15...

God is more than ready and able to bless us in a special way, a big way, but we need to ask Him to do so.

And then there is a final factor I want to bring to your attention.

III. The special work of God in our lives does not negate our responsibility.

I want you to notice throughout this chapter just how thoroughly the battle, the miracle, the victory belonged to God: verse 8, verse 10, verses 11, verse 14, and verse 42...

God was the One to who belonged the glory. He was the One that was working through Joshua and the people of Israel. It was His ability, power, and strength that enabled them to win the battle and that fact did not escape Joshua's notice. Look at verse 19 and verse 25...

Joshua understood that apart from God he could do nothing. No less is true for us today. Jesus said in John 15:5...

I'm afraid that in our day we are too quick to take credit for what God alone has done and we need to be careful because what He gives He can also take away. Whatever blessings we enjoy let's never forget, it comes from Him. To Him belongs the glory! However, that does not take away personal responsibility.

Even though the battle, the victory was totally God's work, Joshua was not inactive but understood he had a responsibility to fulfill. He marched from Gilgal to Gibeon. There he fought with the enemy and he kept fighting until enemy was completely destroyed, even down to the five kings. God's sovereign work and blessing in our lives does not exclude our personal responsibility.

Only God can save a soul but it is through the foolishness of preaching that He does it.

Only God can establish a local church but it is only as each one of us makes use of the gifts He has given us.

Only God can equip and empower us to fight against the enemy of our souls but we have to put the armor on!

God won the battle for Joshua and the people of Israel but they had to engage the battle. There is no doubt that God is able and willing to bless us in the battles of life but to enjoy it we must be engaged!

Just as God did something special for Joshua, He is ready to do some special things for us as well. As we humble ourselves before Him, as we ask Him to help us boldly going before the throne of grace, and as we do our part, fulfilling His will in our lives.

Invitation...