



6 | JOSHUA 5

PREPARING FOR VICTORY

Great victory awaits those who, though they be weak, trust in the Lord.

Outline

Not by Might, but by My Spirit

1. A TENDER HEART (5:1-9)

The Mark of a Tender Heart (5:2-7)

Marked for God

Meaning: Circumcised of Heart

A Tender, Humble Heart

A Test for a Tender Heart (5:8)

A Mindset of Victory for the Tender-Hearted (5:9)

2. EYES ON CHRIST (5:10-12)

Remember Christ's Goodness in Salvation

Remember Christ's Goodness in Provision

The History of Passover in Israel

3. FEET TO OBEY (5:13-15)

Get Off Your Feet and Worship

Your Feet on Holy Ground

Celebrate Christ

Call to Worship

Isaiah 40:31, But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Songs

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)

Come Ye Sinners

Holy, Holy, Holy

O Great God

Lord I Need You

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOME: Welcome visitors

GIVING: You can still give over Zelle through your bank with no fees. We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center.

MEMORIAL: Service for David Beakey August 22, Saturday 10am.

Introduction

Key thought: Today we continue in a series in the book of Joshua called “Footsteps of Faith.” We are going to learn that when we are at our weakest, God is at his strongest. When we feel like giving up in the Christian life, that’s often the very dawn of a breakthrough. Though you are weak, if you trust in the Lord, you will find great strength.

Isaiah 40:31, But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

We’ve entitled the message: “Preparing for Victory.” Three significant events happen here that show us the pathway to victory in the Christian life. God guaranteed victory for his people over the Canaanites if they would trust him. And we are guaranteed the power to live in holiness: the power not to be controlled by anger, despair, fear, or foolishness, but instead be controlled by the Spirit. How do we get there?

Three events lead us there:

1. First, we have the covenant of circumcision. No one was circumcised in the wilderness. We’re going to talk about circumcision, and how it pictures the true circumcision, that of our hearts. If we want victory, we need tender hearts.
2. Second, we have the celebration of the first Passover in the Promised Land. This points to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. If we want victory, we need our eyes focused on Christ.
3. Third, we are going to be introduced to the Captain of the Lord’s angel armies. And we will learn that if we want to have victory, we have to give up our own agenda and will and surrender to the Lord. We need feet that obey.

Not by Might, but by My Spirit

The children of Israel had just crossed the Jordan River. The nation of Israel arrived safely on the other side of the Jordan River. Their crossing was a great miracle, and it sent a great message to the people of the land (5:1). The Canaanites were already afraid (2:9–11), and now their fears totally demoralized them.¹ God’s people were in a place of great strength, but they weren’t ready.

Joshua 5:1 | As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Strong*, “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 56.

until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.

The victory seemed certain. They should strike while they're hot. Nope. God says wait. They can go and take Jericho so easily. It's easy pickins! We have momentum. God says, no. Stop. Wait. Don't get ahead of yourself. Don't get ahead of me. We need to remember God is in sovereign control. He knows what they need. They need to prepare themselves through dedication, specifically, circumcision.

You see, everything in your life can seem in order. It can seem good. But if God's not in it, it will not work.

Psalm 127:1, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

Jesus said in **John 15:5**, “Without me, you can do nothing.”

God said through the prophet Zechariah, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” **Zechariah 4:6**

If you want to have a true full victory, then you need all of God. Put self and selfish desires aside. It doesn't matter how you feel. Don't be led by the emotions of your deceptive flesh. You need the humility to hear God reveal himself to you.

“How do I get there?” you ask. You begin with a tender heart. That's what circumcision represented.

1. A TENDER HEART (5:1-9)

After triumphantly crossing the Jordan River, the nation of Israel had to pause at Gilgal while the men submitted to what in essence was painful surgery. Why did God command this ritual at this time?

THE MARK OF A TENDER HEART (5:2-7)

Circumcision was the covenant mark for God's people. It was God's mark of ownership. Israel is a covenant nation—an awesome privilege God has given to no other nation on earth (Rom 9:4–5). God gave circumcision as the sign of the covenant to Abraham and his descendants (17:9–14, 23–27). **The men of the nation need to make an outward profession of an inward reality of faith.** That's what circumcision is all about. Israel was to be a nation of tender-hearted people, marked by God through this ritual.

Joshua 5:2-7 | At that time the Lord said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time.” ³So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth [*another name for Gilgal*]. ⁴And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt. ⁵Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised. ⁶For the people of Israel walked forty years in the

wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord; the Lord swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey.⁷ So it was their children, whom he raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.

Marked for God

Through this ritual the Jews became a “marked people” because they belonged to the true and living God. This meant that they were under obligation to obey him. The mark of the covenant reminded them that their bodies belonged to the Lord and were not to be used for sinful purposes. Israel was surrounded by nations that worshiped idols and included in their worship rituals that were sensual and degrading. The mark of the covenant reminded the Jews that they were a special people, a separated people, a holy nation (Exo 19:5–6), and that they were to maintain purity in their marriages, their society, and their worship of God.

Today, we, God’s people, the church, is marked by God by the Holy Spirit. We are given the seal, or imprint of God in our hearts. It’s a seal and mark of ownership.

When you “believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (**Ephesians 1:13-14**).

Even the Old Testament speaks of this reality of God transforming and circumcising the heart.

Meaning: Circumcised of Heart

This physical operation on the body was meant to be a symbol of a *spiritual operation on the heart*. Circumcision pointed to regeneration of the heart – having a tender heart toward God because it has been renewed by the Holy Spirit.

“And the LORD your God will **circumcise your heart** and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (**Deut 30:6**).

“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn” (**Deut 10:16**).

Theologians call this transformation of heart regeneration. No amount of external surgery can change the inner person. It’s when we repent and turn to God for help that he can change our hearts and make us love and obey him more.

Paul teaches the same thing.

Romans 2:28-29, “For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.”

Sadly, over the years, the Jews came to trust in the external mark of the covenant and not in the God of the covenant who wanted to make them a holy people. They thought that as long as they were God's covenant people, they could live just as they pleased! Moses warned them about this sin (Deut 30:6), and so did the prophets (Jer 4:4).

Jeremiah says the same: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. **4 Circumcise yourselves to the Lord;** remove the foreskin of your hearts" (**Jer 4:3-4**).

When John the Baptist called them to repent, the Jewish spiritual leaders said, "We have Abraham as our father" (**Mt 3:9**). They were not unlike some people today who feel sure they're saved and are going to heaven because they're baptized, confirmed, and participate regularly in Communion. As good as these religious rites can be, they must never become substitutes for faith in Jesus Christ (*cf Rom 2:25-29*).

Have you experienced regeneration of your heart? Has the Spirit circumcised your heart? That's where tenderness begins.

A Tender, Humble Heart

Over and over in the Scriptures, we are told to have a tender heart. That begins with regeneration, but daily you have to humble yourself. You can't seek your own way. Put away anger. Put away trying to control people around you. Stop punishing people when you don't get your way. That's all idolatry. It's usurping God from your heart. Let God be God. Walk in the Spirit. Surrender to the Holy Spirit.

A TEST FOR A TENDER HEART (5:8)

This ritual of circumcision was actually a great test. They were essentially to be disabled in enemy territory. They were to trust God implicitly when they felt very vulnerable.

Joshua 5:8 | When the circumcising of the whole nation was finished, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed.

Israel was camped in enemy territory, just a few miles from Jericho. Now they were going to temporarily disable *every male in the nation*, including every soldier in the army! What a golden opportunity for the enemy to attack and wipe them out (*cf Gen 34*). It took total trust in God for Joshua and the people to obey the Lord, but their obedience to the Scriptures was the secret of their success (Josh 1:7-8). In their weakness they were made strong; and through faith and patience they inherited the promises (Heb 6:12).

After we've experienced an exciting victory of faith, God often permits us to be tested. We get a target on our back. Satan hates the victory of faith. Think about it.

Abraham arrived in the land of promise and was confronted with a famine (Gen 12).

Elijah triumphed over Baal and was threatened with death (1 Kings 18-19).

After **Jesus'** baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (Mt 3:13-4:11). Since great victories can lead to great pride, God allows us to be tested in order to remind us to depend on him.

A MINDSET OF VICTORY FOR THE TENDER-HEARTED (5:9)

Circumcision was ultimately a mark of God's already promised victory. He had cut away their reproach. God's people had been defiled by idolatrous practices that their parents brought from Egypt. That could stop them in their tracks. This circumcision was not just a rolling away of the flesh, but a rolling away of their reproach.

Joshua 5:9 | And the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

The sins and idolatry of their former lives were rolled away. The walls of the Gilgal camp, if you recall, was in the form of a shoe. They were to trample the enemy and conquer the land.

The circumcision of heart gives us a mindset of victory. Do you have that victory mindset?

Romans 6:14, For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Do you have a tender heart? Are you surrendered to the Spirit, or do you want to legislate your holiness through doing things your own way?

Galatians 5:22-23, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The moment you leave from these things, you are walking in the flesh. Have you lost your first love? Have you lost your joy? Your peace?

Humble yourself. Surrender. *Soften your heart!* Give up on your plans and trust God completely.

Transition: The men were now marked with circumcision, the sign of a tender heart. But now they would have a celebration of the Passover. This was a sign of their faith in the coming Messiah.

2. EYES ON CHRIST (5:10-12)

"Forgetting those things which are behind" (**Phil 3:13**) is wise counsel for most areas of life, but there are some things we must never forget. That's what the Passover Feast was all about.

REMEMBER CHRIST'S GOODNESS IN SALVATION

In his farewell address to the nation, Moses repeatedly commanded the Jews to remember that **they were once slaves in Egypt** and that the Lord had **delivered** them and made them his own people (Deut 6:15; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22). This great truth was embodied in their annual Passover feast. They were never to forget that they were a

redeemed people, set free by the blood of the lamb.² God commands them through Joshua to celebrate the Passover and remember the goodness of God.

Joshua 5:10-11 | While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho. ¹¹ And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.

Exactly forty years before, Israel had celebrated the Passover on the night of their deliverance from Egypt (Exo 11-14). They also celebrated Passover at Mt. Sinai, before leaving for Kadesh Barnea (Num 9:1-14). But they never entered into the Promised Land and all died in the wilderness. The new generation had so much to be thankful for. They were in the Promised Land by the blood of the lamb.

Do you remember the moment you were born again and realized that all your sins were forgiven in Jesus?

REMEMBER CHRIST'S GOODNESS IN PROVISION

The manna ceased the day after they ate the produce of the land. The produce would have been the first Feast of firstfruits in the land.

Joshua 5:12 | And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

No more manna! That's a good thing. Now they get to eat the fruit of the land of Canaan. On the day after Passover, the manna ceased; and thus ended a forty-year miracle (Exo 16). Isn't God good to provide for all our needs?

Talk about the verses in the Bible that tell us God will provide for all our needs.

Philippians 4:19, And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Psalm 37:25, I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

You keep your eyes on Christ, and you will see his goodness! He's saved you. He's sanctifying you. You have everything you need in Christ.

Psalm 34:8, Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

Pray that the Lord will give you eyes to see the goodness of God in everything!

Romans 8:28-29, We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

² Ibid., 63.

Good, good, good! Our God is good. If you doubt it, look to Christ. He's the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!

The History of Passover in Israel

Praise God for this Passover celebration that reminds us of Christ. By the way they would celebrate the Passover pretty consistently until the time of the Judges. They did this between Gilgal and Shiloh among other places. In fact, the Tabernacle would rest at Shiloh for 369 years, and each year they would joyfully celebrate the Passover. But then as a judgment on Eli the priest's disobedient sons, the Lord sent the Philistines to discipline them, and the Philistines burned down the Tabernacle.

From that time until the time of Hezekiah and later Josiah, the Passover was not celebrated (2 Kings 23:21-22).

Oh, I want eyes to see Christ! In Christ all the promises of the Old Testament are Yes and Amen! In Christ I have everything I need for life and godliness! In Christ, I have a full and free forgiveness of sins. In Christ I have the promised Holy Spirit so that I can be clothed with power from on high. In Christ I have the victory!

In Christ, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper”
(Isaiah 54:17).

The secret to victory is not to talk about your problems until you are blue in the face. You need to fix your eyes on Christ. You don't need to fix your spouse or fix your job or fix your church. You don't need to fix your problem. Fix your eyes on Jesus! Seek first his kingdom! May Christ, and Christ alone have the pre-eminence in your life.

So, we said, for victory, we need tender hearts. We need eyes fixed on Christ. But thirdly, we need feet to obey.

3. **FEET TO OBEY (5:13-15)**

So often, we have heads that are swimming with Bible knowledge, but we have very little application and very little victory. You can have knowledge without having Christ. We need Christ. That's what the end of Joshua 5 is all about. They get a visit from “the commander of the Lord's army” (5:14). And we learn something from him.

GET OFF YOUR FEET AND WORSHIP

The commander of the LORD's army is Jesus. We see him right here in this text. We know this is Jesus because when Joshua sees him a worship service takes place.

Joshua 5:13-14a | When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” ¹⁴And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped...

This paragraph records one of the pre-incarnation appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ recorded in the Old Testament.

- To **Abraham** the sojourning shepherd, the Lord came as a traveler to share in a friendly meal (Gen 18:1–8).
- To **Jacob** the schemer, he came as a wrestler to bring him to the place of submission (32:24–32).
- The **three Hebrew young men** met him as their companion in the furnace of fire (Dan 3:25).
- And **Joshua** met him as the Captain of the Lord's armies. Our Lord always comes to us when we need him and in the way we need him.

In **John 15:5**, Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

YOUR FEET ON HOLY GROUND

Joshua 5:14b-15 | ... Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” ¹⁵ And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Joshua was told he was on holy ground. When Joshua discovered the divine Visitor was the Lord, he fell at his feet in worship and waited for his orders. It's so easy to move forward with new and fresh and bold ideas that come from human wisdom. For a while they may seem like they bear fruit.

Conclusion

I want to be led by Christ, the Captain of the Lord's angel armies.

Celebrate Christ

Title slide (Preparing for Victory): When I see Joshua following after Jesus, the Captain of the Lord's armies, I have to affirm that I have a General. I have a Captain. That's my Jesus. He's King of all kings and Lord of all lords. John and Isaiah both call him “the first and the last, the Almighty”. I call him my Lord and my Savior.

If Jesus is your captain, then when you are weak, you will be strong. If he's your captain, he'll take a difficult marriage and turn into a distinctive and divinely touched marriage that expands his kingdom. Do you want him to be your Captain and commander?

Stop trying to control your life. Let Christ lead you!