

The Conflict and the Conqueror

by A.B. Simpson

A.B. Simpson's sermon explores the themes of spiritual warfare, the necessity of purity, and the importance of unwavering faith in overcoming life's challenges.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10

Topics: "Victory in Christ", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the ongoing spiritual conflict faced by believers, drawing parallels between the battles in the Book of Joshua and the spiritual warfare described in Ephesians. He highlights the importance of not just fighting for the truth but truly living it, warning against the dangers of compromise and the need for purity in our walk with God. Simpson encourages believers to recognize their true home in Christ rather than settling for a life on the borders of the world, and he stresses the necessity of confessing sin to experience true victory. Ultimately, he points to Jesus as the Captain of our salvation, who empowers us to conquer our spiritual foes.

Transcript

Ephesians 6: 10-18.

The Book of Joshua is a story of conflict and victory. Almost every chapter echoes the thought of this picture in Ephesians of our spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers in heavenly places.

CONQUERING BUT NOT POSSESSING

"And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spoke Joshua, saying:

"Remember the word which Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you, saying: The Lord your God has given you rest, and has given you this land.

"Your wives, your little ones and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but you shall pass before your brethren, armed, all the mighty men of valor, and help them; until the Lord has given your brethren rest, as He has given you, and they also have possessed the land which the Lord your God gives them; then you shall return unto the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses, the Lord's servant, gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising." (Josh. 1: 12-15.)

Here we have the story of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh. They had chosen their inheritance on the wilderness side of Jordan, but they were required by the Lord to leave their wives and children in their inheritance, and pass on with their brethren and assist them in fighting their battles, and conquering the western tribes and nations. This they did; and not until Joshua had subdued the whole land did they return to Gilead and settle down with their families on their chosen heritage.

Now this, at first sight, looks like a brave and loyal course. They sacrificed the comforts of home. They separated from those who were dear to them. They risked their lives and exposed themselves to dangers and toils to fight the battles of the Lord. They crossed the Jordan and fought the giants of Canaan. Are they not examples of a high and holy consecration and a most unselfish victory?

This is all true; but back of it the fact remains that they had deliberately chosen their inheritance on the other side of the Jordan, in the land that bordered on the world, and they went back to it as soon as they were through their campaign, and made it their permanent home.

They are types of a great many people who believe in the truths of a higher Christian life, who testify for them, who contend earnestly for them, who fight their battles, who help others to enter into them, who lead, perhaps, hundreds of souls into deeper blessing, who pass through, in a certain sense, the experience of Jordan, and live for a time in the Land of Promise and know much of the deeper things of God; but they do not stay there; their chosen rest is somewhere nearer the world, and they always recognize their home and resting-place as on the wilderness side.

It is possible to know all about these things in theory, it is possible to have a certain experience of them for a time, and yet to be sojourners, not residents; to be working for the truth rather than enjoying it, and living it; and to settle down at last, not, perhaps, in the world, but on its borders, and find, as these trans-Jordanic tribes did in the end, that the world, beside which they so willingly sat down, at last sweeps over them and finally almost blots them out of existence.

Where are we living? Where are our interests and affections invested? Where have you got your money? What is your real home and the center of your life?

It is not enough to be fighting for the truth and helping others to receive it. Are you yourself living it, and wholly committed to it? Which side of Jordan is your home?

FIGHTING AND NOT PREVAILING

"Israel has sinned and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.

"Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, . . . because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more, except you destroy the accursed thing from among you." (Josh. 7: 11, 12.)

We here see the hosts of Israel for the first time turned back before their enemies. There was no lack of faith, apparently, for their confidence was so great that they attacked Ai with a small contingent, and expected it would be an easy victory. But they were ignominiously routed and defeated. The reason was very plain: they had sinned, and sin always brings defeat and failure. Faith cannot live except in an atmosphere of purity; the slightest disobedience will wither it and leave us exposed to the successful fury

of our foes. God was obliged to dishonor even His own cause rather than countenance evil. One enemy in the camp is worse than a million in front. We must keep pure and walk in obedience, or we shall always fail. "Holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away [that is, a good conscience], concerning faith, have made shipwreck."

RISING OUT OF FAILURE AND DEFEAT

"And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be you dismayed: take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up into Ai: see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land." (Josh. 8: 1.)

Here we see the army which yesterday was flying from their pursuers, today marching forward with undismayed, victorious tread, and carrying all before them.

The secret was very simple: they had put away their sin, and God had also put it away; and now He meets them with a yet bolder assurance of victory and blessing.

There is still for us the same remedy. When sin has come between us and the Lord, there is but one thing for us to do: it must be definitely recognized and utterly put away. We must go right back to the very thing, however hard, and deal with it definitely and thoroughly, and then all the train of sins and sorrows that came with it will pass away, and God will start afresh with us, as if it had never been. The simple direction in the New Testament is, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

This one little word "confess," is explicit and unambiguous. It does not mean merely to ignore it, or even to be sorry for it, but to recognize it, identify it, and call it by its right name.

What God wants is to bring the evil to light, strip it of its disguises, force it out of its hiding place and bring it into the light of His Holy Word, so that it can never again deceive us. And therefore we must confess it to God, to ourselves, and, if anyone else has been wronged, to the one we have injured. Then God will immediately forgive it, cleanse it, and clear away all the avalanche that has accumulated around it.

If I have a thorn in my finger, it will fester; my hand will swell, my arm will become involved, and gradually my whole body will suffer, and I will die if the trouble continues. What am I to do? Treat the finger, the hand and the arm with lotions and plasters? No, take out the thorn. Until you do that all the treatment is vain; but the moment you remove the irritating thorn the trouble will cease.

Back of all your defects, temptations, and wrongs, there is one little fault in which all the trouble began. Go back at once, lay your pride in the dust; don't be afraid to confess that you have lost your sanctification. You have not lost Jesus, but you cannot touch Him again until you recognize this thing and lay it on the sin-offering. Then, in a moment, He will become your righteousness, and go on with you as before.

You may hang on to the fiction of your sanctification all you please, but ever back of it lies the fact of your unconfessed sin, which will explode all your hopes like a sunken torpedo.

A friend said publicly, a few days ago, "Almost all our troubles and spiritual difficulties would be removed if we would just call things by their right names."

There is a whole world of truth in this simple thought. God is utterly upright and honest, and we must deal honestly with Him and with ourselves, if we would "walk in the light." "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin."

We need not be afraid of the light and all its disclosures, because the blood is ever there to cleanse.

Let us welcome our great High Priest, who comes to us with the lamp in one hand and the hyssop in the other, wherewith to cleanse the sin that He reveals and to keep us by the sprinkling of His blood, so cleansed and purified that we shall not fear the light, but gladly come to it, that our "deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

THE WILES OF THE DEVIL

Our great adversary does not usually make his attacks openly. He is a master of strategy, and his greatest art is to hide his hand and to attack us in disguise. His choicest argument is to try to prove to people that there is no devil. Nothing pleases him so much as to lose his identity, and when he comes to us, persuade us that his insinuations and suggestions are the voice of God, or the thoughts of our own minds. He loves "to call evil good, and good evil." He is an adept in mixing moral principles and compromising things. He is a great diplomat, and our greatest need of a divine equipment is that we "may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

We see all this very finely illustrated and typified in the conduct of the Gibeonites, in the ninth chapter of Joshua. They found they could not resist Israel in open warfare, and so they resorted to subterfuge. Disguised as travelers from a far country, arrayed in old clothes, and carrying provisions that seemed to have been brought from distant lands, they pretended that they were a company of pilgrims from afar, and before Joshua had taken time to counsel with the Lord, he was entrapped into a league with them, contrary to the divine command, and was obliged to keep them in Israel under honorable protection, through all the coming centuries. True, they were degraded to the rank of servants, but their presence and influence were there all the same, and they became snares and sources of temptation which eventually led to loss of the national separation, and the judgments of God upon their backsliding.

Oh, how many Christians have been led into similar compromises! Some evil course has been presented to you under the guise of harmless indulgence, or possibly divine revelation. Some compromise with evil has been made under the plea of doing good to someone and obtaining an influence over him for his spiritual benefit. Some business partnership has been formed which has entangled you in all your financial affairs for the rest of your life, and put your money at the disposal of the devil and the world, because you allowed yourself to be drawn into this compromise under some plausible pretext.

How many times a Christian girl has allowed herself to become attached to an ungodly man in order to save him, and given her life to him in marriage, and the result has been that either both are lost, or she is held back and embarrassed in all the future by his unholy influence.

The Church is full of Gibeonites today, and they are leading her into backsliding and imbecility.

What is the remedy? It is very plain. "And the men took of their victuals and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord."

They are not blamed for exercising bad judgment, they are not condemned for lack of wisdom, for it was a case where their wisdom was wholly unequal to the emergency, and where they were absolutely dependent upon the will of God; but, confident in their own good sense, they did as sensible people so often do, relied upon their own judgment and made a fatal error.

Oh! how true it is that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err," but "He takes the wise in their own craftiness."

In this heavenly life we are insufficient even to think anything as of ourselves, but we must ever depend upon the mind of Christ, and the counsel of the Holy Ghost, or we shall fall into continual error, and be involved in the most fatal mistakes.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding."

"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your steps."

"He that trustes in his own heart is a fool, but he that puts his trust in the Lord, he shall be safe."

TREADING ON CONQUERED FOES

"Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.

"And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.

"And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near and put their feet upon the necks of them." (Josh. 10: 22-24.)

This is a picture of our attitude toward our great adversary. We are not equal to the conflict if we allow him to get on our level. If we meet him breast-high, we shall be struck by his dragon wing. But if we keep him under our feet, we shall be upheld.

"The very God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet."

"Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and on the whole power of the enemy."

Christ has conquered our enemies and He brings them forth to us and bids us put our feet where He has already put His, and we must not fear to do so. We must boldly take a stand, and we shall have victory. We must not give place to the devil.

Nothing encourages him so much as fear, and nothing dwarfs him and drives him away so quickly as audacity.

If you for a moment acknowledge his power, you give him that power. If you for a moment recognize that he is in you, you will find that he is in you. If you let the thought or consciousness of evil into your spirit, you have lost your purity. If you "reckon yourself dead indeed," you will find that you are "dead indeed." If you recognize him as in your heart, he will stay in your heart. If you put your foot upon his neck and stand in victory, shouting, "Thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ," you shall hold your

victorious stand, and be "more than conqueror through Him who loved you."

UNCOMPROMISING WAR

"There was not a city that made peace with Israel save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all other they took in battle." (Josh. 11: 19.)

This was a war of extermination, or should have been. These Hivites should never have been admitted to peace. They were the Gibeonites who made the forbidden league with Joshua.

There was no possible meeting ground between Israel and the Canaanites. One was the seed of Satan, the other the seed of God. And so in our spiritual warfare there is no place for compromise.

God can do more with a single, uncompromising Christian than with a whole nation of mixed people.

There is no more extraordinary spectacle than the contrast between the kingdom of Judah and the men of Babylon.

For more than six centuries God tried through Judah's kings and priests and prophets to magnify His name among the heathen, but they always failed Him.

There was much good in them. There was a Jehoshaphat, a Hezekiah, a Josiah, an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, a Hosea, and many a holy prophet; but there was a mixture of worldliness, idolatry and sin which always checked the perfect blessing, and qualified the best service.

Consequently, Judah failed, and at last even the temple had to fall, and the name of God was blasphemed among the heathen, and Nebuchadnezzar glorified his gods because they had triumphed over the God of Israel.

Then God rejected the nation and selected the individual.

He took out a Daniel, a Shadrach, a Meshach, an Abednego; and, first of all, he separated them from the evil of their time, and gave them a purpose and a principle which refused to compromise with anything contrary to the will of God.

The secret of their victory was all expressed in two single sentences:

"Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat."

These men answered: "We are not careful to answer you in this matter, O king. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up."

This was the gage of battle, and the battle was short, but decisive. Such men must ever be victorious.

Before the story of their life was all told, God had humbled Babylon and Persia, and the two proudest kings of antiquity had issued a decree that there was no God like Jehovah, and even provided for the restoration of Israel and the return of the captives to Jerusalem.

Four uncompromising men were stronger than all the kings of Judah and all the pride and power of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. These are the men that God wants in these last days, wholly consecrated and utterly uncompromising men who will stand where God has placed them, and on whom heaven can wholly depend.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S HAND OVER THE HAND OF OUR ENEMIES

"For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favor, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses." (Josh. 11: 20.)

It must often have seemed discouraging to Joshua and his brave followers, after each successive victory, to see still before him fortress after fortress, and foe after foe, and to find the campaign renewed again and again, until slowly the whole land was successfully subjugated. But as each enemy came with fiercest hate and strongest force, we are told that "it was of the Lord to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle."

God sent each one of them in turn, -- not a single one was accidental. Every one of these tests was needed, and, unconsciously to themselves, they were fulfilling the Word of God, and becoming tributary to His great purpose.

There are two ways that God can use a man. One is with the intelligent and loving consent of the man, as a fellow worker with God. The other is, to be used in spite of himself, by the sovereign will of God, overruling his life in mighty power for the glory of God and the good of others.

It is a very awful thing to be used in this way; but God will use everything, even the wrath of man and the hate of Satan.

Some people are called to go as angels on missions of love; some are called to be street scavengers, sewers, or files, to keep God's people pure and sweet. If that is your business, go ahead and do it. God can use you to teach His people patience. But God have mercy on you when He is done with you!

Everything that comes in our life is permitted of God, for our complete training. Everything that reveals itself in your own heart and life is a part of God's final plan, to show you that thing in order that you may be saved from it, be strengthened against it, and be made a better man through the discovery.

When you find anything wrong in your heart and life, rejoice that you find it. Take victory over it, and go on praising God for His faithfulness.

When you meet an enemy that is too strong for you, rejoice and fall back on God, who will give you power to come back a victor, and stronger for that temptation.

"Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to them that love Him."

Do not attempt to run away from your life, but let it make you run to God for more of His fulness and grace, and you will often sing,

Happy for me was the thorn that stung,

And sent my heart crying to Thee;

Thanks for the sorrow that taught me to find

Thy grace all-sufficient for me.

THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION

The secret of victory is all found in the vision of the Captain.

"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, Are You for us, or for our adversaries? And he said: No, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, What says my Lord unto His servant?" (Josh. 5: 13, 14.)

We are accustomed to think of Joshua as the type of Christ, and Moses as the type of the law. But I believe this is a mistake. Joshua is simply the pattern of a man of faith, and Christ Himself seems to be revealed, in this book, not in Joshua, but in the Captain whom Joshua met as he stood over against Jericho.

This was none other than the Son of God, our victorious Leader, who wants to bring us also into the Land of Promise, if we, like Joshua, will die to our own strength, and accept Him as our leader and our Lord.

Have we done so?

All our experiences, all our toils, all our failures are meant to teach us our utter insufficiency. It is not His help we need; it is Himself as our All in All.

We have proved the promise, "I will strengthen you," but that is not sufficient.

We have tested the great word, "Yes, I will help you," but even His help has not been enough. We have come to the end of all this, and, fainting at His feet, we have sunk in utter despair.

Then it is that the greatest promise comes, "Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness."

This is something more. This is His upholding altogether, when He takes us in His very arms, and carries us Himself, and we just trust and see Him triumph.

Then, indeed, we shall accept the testimony of the Apostle, "I am not sufficient to account anything as of myself, but my sufficiency is of God"; and of this greater word, "Thanks be unto God, which always leads us in triumph, through Jesus Christ."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ab-simpson/the-conflict-and-the-conqueror/>

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