

Five Kings in a Cave

by J. Wilbur Chapman

God's promise to deliver us from our sinful nature and the world's influence gives us the strength and courage to overcome our struggles and achieve victory.

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, Joshua 1:5, Joshua 6:1, Joshua 8:1, Joshua 10:8, Joshua 10:12, Romans 8:31, 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 4:7, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Victory Over Sin"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the practical and helpful illustrations from the history of the children of Israel, emphasizing the importance of learning from their story as examples for us today. He delves into various incidents such as the crossing of the Jordan River, Rahab's faith, the warning from Achan's sin, the deception of the Gibeonites, and the victory over the Amorites. Chapman highlights the sure deliverance God provides in our battles against sin, drawing parallels between the struggles of the Israelites and our own battles with our old nature, the world's influences, and individual sins. He concludes with a call to put our sins at the feet of Jesus, expecting complete deliverance and victory.

Transcript

TEXT: "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. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight."--Joshua 10:24-25.

The history of the children of Israel is one of the most fascinating stories ever written. It abounds in illustrations which are as practical and helpful as any that may be used to-day, drawn from our every-day experience. God certainly meant that we should use their story in this way, for in the New Testament we read that the things which happened to them were as ensamples for us. The word "ensample" means type, or figure, or illustration.

To appreciate this text and the story of the five imprisoned kings we must go back a little bit to the place where the leadership of Moses had been transferred to Joshua. God is never at a loss for a man; his plans are never frustrated. If Moses is to be set aside Joshua is in preparation for his position. Doubtless Joshua may have felt somewhat restrained, as he was kept in a position of not very great prominence, but he certainly realized when he stood as the leader of the children of Israel that all things had been working

together for the good of his leadership, and doubtless he praised Jehovah for his goodness to him. There are many incidents in connection with the immediate story of the children of Israel which should be mentioned here.

When they were ready to move towards Canaan Joshua told them that when the soles of the feet of the priests touched the water of the Jordan the water would stand on either side before them and they could pass dry shod into Canaan. Suddenly the marching began. They stood within three feet of the waters, which ran the same as they had been running for years; then two feet, then one, and then six inches, but there was no parting of the waters before them. Let us remember that God had said, "When the soles of the feet of the priests touch the water they shall separate." And it was even as he said, and on dry land the children of Israel passed over to the other side. It is a perfectly natural thing for one who is unregenerate to say, "Why insist upon confession, and the acceptance of Christ, and how can the mere acceptance of the Savior save me from the penalty and the power of sin?" But a countless multitude will rise to-day to say, "It was when we stepped out upon what we could not understand and what seemed as impassable and impossible as the parting of the waters of the Jordan that God gave us light and peace."

When once they were in Canaan what an interesting story that is in connection with Rahab of Jericho! The spies had entered her home and a mob outside was seeking them that they might put them to death. Rahab promised them deliverance, only she exacted from them a promise in return that they would save alive her father and her mother and her loved ones; and when she let them down by means of a cord from the window of her home they said to her, "Bind this scarlet cord in the window and gather your loved ones here and they shall be saved." And when the children of Israel had marched about Jericho and the walls were about to fall, suddenly they lifted their eyes and they saw the red cord fluttering from the window, and while all else was destroyed Rahab and all her loved ones were saved.

What a little thing evidently stood between them and death--just a red cord! And yet as a matter of fact it is only a red cord that is between us and death--namely, the blood of the Son of God; for, as in the Old Testament times when God saw the blood and the destroying angel passed over the home, so in these New Testament times the blood which has been received by faith insures us our safety and we are set free from sin's penalty and sin's power.

The story of Achan is a note of warning. It is rather singular that when the children of Israel had taken Jericho they failed at Ai, and yet not singular when we realize that one man had sinned in all the company. He had taken gold and silver and a Babylonish garment and had hidden the same in his tent, and this was in direct disobedience to the commands of Joshua. The sad thing about sin is that we cannot sin and suffer alone. Our friends suffer, our kindred must bear a part of the woe with us. When Achan sinned the children of Israel lost a victory. Sin is progressive. In the seventh chapter of Joshua and the twenty-first verse, we read, "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." And you will notice that, first he saw, then he coveted, then he took. It is always thus; a sinful imagination will lead to outbreking iniquity, and a small sin encouraged will ultimately mean disgrace.

The story of the Gibeonites is also interesting. They had heard of the power of the children of Israel and were afraid of them; but they made up their minds to deceive them. So, lest the Israelites should think that they came from a near by territory and therefore should turn against them they put on old clothes, wore old shoes upon their feet and carried musty bread in their baggage. Then they stood before Israel and said,

"We have come from a far country; look at our clothing, it is worn out; and at our shoes, they are in holes; and at our bread, it was fresh when we started, it is musty to-day."

And Joshua said, "We will make them hewers of wood and drawers of water," and they were saved from death but they served in bondage. Let this be remembered always that deception inevitably means bondage. One is in bondage to his conscience, for it constantly reproves him. He is in bondage to the one he has deceived, for he can never stand honestly before him. He is most of all in bondage to his sin, for he will surely be found out.

The Amorites were against the children of Israel and they were a great company. It is in connection with their struggle against this power that the text is written.

I

The Israelites started in this conflict with a mighty power against them, as we have seen. But so have we. There are first of all the tendencies of our old nature against which we must fight, for just as with the law of gravitation if I take my hand away from a book or a stone it falls to the floor or the ground because this law pulls it downward, so there is a law in my members and has been in the life of every man since Adam's day pulling me away from the true to the false. It is for this reason that it is easier to do wrong than to do right, to be untrue than to be true. Then there is against us the very world in which we live. Its atmosphere, its business, even its social life is tainted with that which is sinful or to say the least questionable, and he who lives in the world and is in any sense of it has a hard battle to fight. But there are two special things which are against us.

First: The sins which we have encouraged. It may be in the beginning very small, but Satan is perfectly satisfied if he can have the least hold upon the life of the one whom he wishes to wrong. I read in a Chicago paper the story of a woman who was making a heroic struggle against an awful curse. She had become addicted to the use of morphine. For fourteen years she was a consumer of the drug. Apparently she could not shake off the habit. Building up a resistance to the action of the drug, her system became accustomed to enormous quantities of it. She could not eat, nor sleep, nor work without it. Most of her scanty earnings went to purchase it. She was a seamstress, and by toiling many hours a day managed to get enough money to buy it. Some years back she had been a happy wife and mother. Her husband loved her; she was devoted to him and to their two children. She lost him; she lost the care of her children; rapidly she drifted away from them. The powerful narcotic helped to deaden her pain. When her anguish became unbearable a double dose of it would enable her to drowse away the hours.

"I will never again touch or taste morphine, so help me God!" she said. Immediately she discontinued the use of the drug wholly. She could get no sleep; she could not swallow food half the time or retain it. She was beset by horrible visions. She was racked by an inexpressible longing. But she held on. Those who knew her and watched her agonizing battle with astonishment and sympathy told her that she was killing herself. "It may be," she would answer, "but I shall die true to my oath." "But," they would urge, "a habit like yours, which has obtained for years, should be broken gradually." "I will master it. I have blotted it from my life," she would answer. "I shall quit it this way even if I go into the grave. It has mastered me; it has cost me my home, husband and children; now I will master it." She started at shadows, her nights were nights of horror; she would bury her nails in the palms of her hands and compress her lips to keep from screaming. There was no rest for her. Still she tried to work and grew weaker. "You cannot give me that," she said, "I remember my oath. Give me any medicine you choose save opium. God would forsake me

now if I forsook my promise to him." The physician remonstrated with her, but in vain, so he gave her a substitute which failed of its effect, as he knew it would, and she died. Even when the hand of death had clutched her grimly, though her terrific sufferings would have been allayed by the poison, she refused to take it. Any person in the room would have bought it for her and administered it gladly, so that she might pass away in peace, but she would not prove traitor to herself. She was a friendless woman except for acquaintances recently made. Her life had been sad and hard. Held in the grip of an enemy that set its mark upon her, she was shunned and went her downward way alone. Those who were with her say that just before the end came she smiled, knowing that she had won her fight; and yet years ago she began to trifle with sin, and it had mastered her.

Again, we have against us sins which not only have been encouraged but have been committed again and again until they have become a habit of our lives, and he who has such a sin as this finds himself in the grip of one who is a tyrant.

In a city paper the other day I came across the story of a man who once had some prominence in the world but began to go wrong, naturally drifted towards the evil and finally found himself surrounded by the lowest of companions. Because of his natural ability he easily assumed leadership.

The particular form of crime they practiced was administering chloral to those who sat at the bar in the saloon to drink. They did this by attracting the attention of the man who was to drink to something else in the room and then the deadly knock-out drops would be administered and they would rob the man. One night the dose was too strong and the victim died. The one who caused his death came before the city authorities recently to give himself up and pitifully ask that he might be quickly sent to death to pay the penalty of his crime for, said he, "From that moment my mind has never been at rest. I wandered about town for two or three days trying to get rid of the sight of that fellow's face; but at night was when I suffered. The moment I dozed off I could see him in my dreams beckoning and laughing as he dragged me over some cliff, and I waked up cold with fear. No one knows what I suffered. I left the city. I went to Denver. I went to Butte. I traveled everywhere, but wherever I went night and day that dead man was hovering around me. I couldn't sleep and my mind began to weaken. One night I went into a gambling den. I thought the excitement might drive that vision out of my head. I played roulette. I bet on the black; the red won. And right before me I saw that printer's face just like I see you now, grinning as the dealer dragged in my money. I ran out of that club like a crazy man and wandered about town till I saw a freight train pulling out of the yards. I climbed into an empty box car and lay down in the corner to rest. For a few moments the face was gone. Suddenly a flash of lightning lit up that car as bright as this cell, and there, just a couple of feet from me, I saw that man I'd killed plainer than I see you. He reached out and caught me by the arm. I screamed and jumped out of the car. They found me next day lying beside the track; and when they got me to a hospital, as I hope for pardon, that thing's black and blue finger marks showed on my shoulder. I've been in a lot of places since that but I never got over it. Finally it got so bad I couldn't stand it and I came back to Chicago to confess." And just as we have all these things against us so the children of Israel had the Amorites against them and the five kings were unitedly arrayed to fight them.

II

But there was a sure deliverance for Israel and there is a sure deliverance for us. God promised to be with Joshua and his people. Joshua 1:5, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Even the things that were impossible he helped them to accomplish. Joshua 6:1-2, "Now Jericho was straitly shut up

because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given unto thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor." Even where men had failed him he gave them victory. Joshua 8:1-2, "And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land; and thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it." Even where the forces were combined against them it made no difference. Joshua 10:8, "And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee." So it is with us. God has promised to deliver us, and over our sinful nature, the atmosphere of the world, sins encouraged and sins committed, we may expect a complete victory. Everything is at man's disposal if only God is with him. In connection with the children of Israel even the day was made longer that they might fight their battles. Joshua 10:12-14, "Then spake Joshua to 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 hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel." The weak were made strong that the enemy might not triumph over them. "If God be for us who can be against us?" In this struggle with the Amorites Israel won the day.

III

The victory of the Israelites over the Amorites was like the general deliverance which God has given us from the power of sin, but there are certain sins which may pursue us, and from these we ought to be set free. When the children of Israel started from Egypt and had passed through the Red Sea certain of the Egyptians started after them, the waters of the Sea came together and they were put to death. The next day the Israelites camped upon the shore and they could easily go back. Doubtless more than one could say as he turned over the body of a dead man to see his face, "Why, this is my old tax master who used to beat me. He will never have power over me again." Is such a deliverance as this from individual sins possible? I think it is. I can think of five sins which stand in the way of men and which maybe likened to the five kings shut up in the cave.

First: Sinful imagination or secret sins. I doubt not but that almost every one whose eyes may light upon this sentence has been guilty at this point. He may have said again and again, "I will never do this thing again," and he has put the king into the cave and rolled the stone against the door.

Second: Impurity. It may be that some one who reads this sentence will plead guilty at this point, and he may have said, "This sin which is now my defeat began with only a suggestion of evil which I encouraged; but I will never be guilty again," and he puts the sin into the cave and rolls the stone against the door.

Third: Intemperance, not simply in the matter of drinking strong drink, but it may be intemperance in the matter of dress, or eating, or pleasure; in other words, it is the lack of self-control. This has been the defeat of more men than one, and as you stop and think you say, "I will never lose control of myself again," and you put the sin within the cave and roll the stone against the door.

Fourth: Dishonesty; not simply in what you do but in what you say, for one may be dishonest in speech as well as in appropriating that which does not belong to him. If you should be condemned just here and have determined never to fail again at this point, by an act of your will you consign this king to the cave and close up the entrance.

Five: Unbelief, which is the greatest sin of all and is the last and greatest sin to be put into the cave. As a result of such an action there may be temporary relief, but not permanent, for the kings may break away from the cave and organize their forces against you once more and you go down. Here comes in the power of the text. Bring the kings out, every one of them, and put your feet upon their necks and stand in all your right and dignity as Christian men, and expect deliverance not so much because of what you are but because of the fact that from the days of the first sin it has been said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

Near Toledo, Ohio, there used to live an old doctor noted for his infidelity. He was violent in his opposition to the church. One day he called Robert Ingersoll to the town where he lived and paid him two hundred dollars, that he might by means of his lecture break up the revival meeting. Everybody was afraid of him. He heard of an old preacher back in the country who was a stranger to the schools but not a stranger to God, and he asked his friends to make it possible for him to meet him. Finally they met, and the infidel with a sneer said, "So you believe the Bible, do you?" and he said, "Yes, sir; do you?" "And you believe in God, do you?" and he said, "Yes, sir." "Well, I want you to understand that I am an infidel, and believe none of these things." The old minister looked at him and said simply, "Well, is that anything to be proud of?" and it was an arrow that went straight through the unbeliever. He went back to his office and began to think it over. "Anything to be proud of," he said, and he finally realized that he was not in a favorable position. Then he thought of an old Christian he knew and said, "If I could be such a Christian as that I would come to Christ." He went to tell the minister, and the minister said to him, "Get down on your knees and tell God so," and he began to tell him, then broke down and sobbed out his confession of sin. His cry for deliverance was heard, and he rose up a free man in Christ Jesus. From that day till this he has been freed from every one of his sins, is preaching the Gospel and counts it his highest joy to contribute in every possible way to the enlargement of the bounds of the Kingdom of God. So there is deliverance from every form of sin if we will but move in God's way.

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