

(Men Who Saw God) 4. Joshua

by Roy Hession

Jesus is the true captain of the host of the Lord, and when we recognize His sovereignty and surrender our own self-initiation and self-effort, we can trust in His plan and power to accomplish the task.

Duration: 54:42

Scripture: Joshua 6:20, Isaiah 6:1, Zechariah 4:6, Matthew 6:33, Luke 24:36-43, Acts 9:3-6, Revelation 2:17

Topics: "Joshua"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Joshua and the battle of Jericho. Joshua, feeling inadequate with his small army, encounters a man with a drawn sword who reveals himself as the captain of the host of the Lord. The preacher emphasizes that victory is never in doubt when God is the captain and His spirit is at work. He encourages the audience to have a personal relationship with God and to surrender their own ideas and initiatives to His guidance. The sermon also includes a testimony of revival in South Africa, where churches experienced a transformation when they let go of their own efforts and allowed God to work through them.

Transcript

The Book of Joshua, chapter 5, verse 13. 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, all on edge, went unto him and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, which means neither, 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 saith my Lord to his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, You'll have to go a bit lower than that. Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua kicked them off.

He did so, and prostrated himself there. Now Jericho was narrowly shut up, because of the children of Israel. None went out, and none came in.

And the Lord said unto Joshua, Joshua had said, What saith my Lord unto his servant? This is what his Lord says to his servant, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of Ella. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of ram's horns. And the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times. And the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

And it shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout. And the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up, every man straight before him. Hathim, when I saw him, We've considered what happened when Isaiah saw him, what happened when Saul of Tarsus saw him, and what happened when the disciples, so downcast, saw Jesus risen from the dead.

Now this morning, when Joshua saw him, and we've read the story as it's written down briefly for us in this passage. God had marvelously brought them through the Jordan River. That was a glorious miracle.

And at long last they had set their foot on the long promised land. And they began to eat of the old corn of the land. And they'd finished, it seemed, with their wanderings in the wilderness.

But they'd only just put their foot on the land, for there, straight before them, was this fortified city of Jericho, with its great walls barring their progress. And quite obviously, the next thing to be tackled, now they'd got through Jordan, was Jericho. And I like to think that one evening, as the sun was setting, Joshua got away from the rest, and he paced up and down in some secluded field.

A very much worried man. How in the world were they going to tackle this great city in their way? And I believe that day that Joshua was very much captive. And the host at his command he felt to be very inadequate.

There he was, could we say, biting his fingernails. Very much captive, with a pathetic little army against this mighty fortified city. And he knew they couldn't go further until this was captured.

But how? And then suddenly, he lifts up his eyes, and there's a man over there. He's got a sword drawn in his hand. Joshua's tense enough already, and he's all on edge.

And he goes to him, and he says, Are thou for us, or for our adversaries? Which means, are you on our side, or are you on their side? And the answer that this one gave to Joshua was, Nay. Which means, neither. I'm not on your side.

And I'm not on their side. But Joshua, you're on my side. I've come as captain of the host of the Lord.

You thought you were captain. You thought if I came at all, I'd be here to help you. Nothing of the sort.

I'm captain, and you, Joshua, with your pathetic little army, are on my side. And so I suggest to you that that vision meant that two things. First, as I've already suggested, that this one had come as captain, where up to then, Joshua had been captain.

And it also means that he was captain, not only of that little army of Joshua's, but of the host of the Lord. Infinitely greater. Myriads of forces were back at him.

Infinitely greater than the forces that Joshua had. Now, who do you think this one was who appeared to Joshua? It wasn't merely an angel. Because the moment Joshua fell down and began to worship, he didn't do what angels normally do, don't worship me, worship him.

He not only accepted Joshua's worship, but he said, you take off your shoes from off your feet, for the ground whereon thou standest is holy. In other words, this one claimed deity. And I believe we are right in believing it was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who appeared to Joshua.

There are strange appearances of such a one at a few points in the Old Testament. More than an angel, and yet not said to be Jehovah himself. And Bible students believe that these are appearances of the eternal Son of God before he ever came in the days of his flesh.

Indeed, such appearances of Christ in the Old Testament are called by Bible students Christophanies. And here is one. Perhaps one of the greatest and major ones in the Old Testament.

Your Lord Jesus appeared to Joshua in his desperate need and inadequacy as he faced this great business of entering on the promised land. And Joshua isn't the only one who needs to see Jesus like this. You do.

And you know, these visions of him come to us in strange ways. His normal way is through his word. And you know, sitting under the word is a very special thing for the Christian.

The speaker isn't putting on a performance. Are you under the word? What a lovely thing it is to sit under the word for this is his instrument of power to do for us this sort of thing. And so often it is through, as we sit under his word, we get beyond the meeting and the speaker and we have revealed to us again in an authentic way the one of whom someone is speaking.

A first-hand vision. Sometimes it's through other ways. Somebody's testimony.

Sometimes on your own. But I believe so often it is as we sit under his word. May it be so this morning.

Yes, we need this sort of vision of Jesus as much as Joshua did. Because like Joshua, we're facing various Jericho's. Maybe we've been brought so far.

Maybe we can praise God how he's brought us through some sort of a jaunt. But there, barring our progress to further blessing, to living the Christian life, barring our progress in the work of God that he's given us to do in a church or fellowship, there stems some great Jericho. Maybe the deadness of the people to whom you minister.

Beyond that dead fellowship there lies a needy world. And unless God can revive his saints, what chance is there of the needy world hearing what a Jericho many a minister or Christian worker faces? It may be something in our personal lives that's really in the way, defeating us. And unless God can do something about this Jericho, we don't see how we can really move on in a satisfying and victorious life.

The question is how can our Jericho be taken? And as we contemplate whatever is our Jericho, very often we're like Joshua, we're very much captain. The ball's in our court. We seem to be responsible.

But we feel so weak. As weak and as inadequate as poor old Joshua felt that day. And the resources which we had, our gifts, our capabilities, are completely inadequate against what stands in our way.

It is so often at that place where man knows he's baffled and beaten that Jesus reveals himself to him. Maybe there stood this man before us in this conference and you haven't quite known what to make of this Jesus in the way in which he's appeared to us. And maybe like Joshua you say, what does all this mean? And you've been in effect saying, is he against me? Is he come to read me a lecture? To tell me once

again what I ought to do but which I know I can't do? And therefore because I can't do it he'll only minister condemnation to me.

Is he against me? And some people really in effect see him as against them. Because if all he's come to do is to tell you what you ought to do, bless you if you do it, censure you if you don't, then he certainly is against you. Because you're not going to do it.

And all you're going to get from him is censure. And you might say, is what I'm hearing going to be the old, old story and I'm going to go home once again like a whipped dog only to fail again? Is he against me? Or could it possibly be that he's on my side? And I suggest to you that some of us, the most that we can conceive is of Jesus being on our side. That Jesus is going to really help us in our battle.

All right? You may in effect be saying something like Joshua did, is he against me? Or on my side? And do you know what Jesus would say to us this morning? Neither. I'm not against you. And I'm not on your side.

You are on my side. I have come as captain of the host of the Lord. And you and I have got to see that in our very anxiety we've been captain.

And the most we could hope from Jesus was for him to help us to be a better captain. He says, nay, I'm not on their side nor am I on your side. You, dear Joshua, are on my side.

I am captain of the host of the Lord. So that great word means the same two things for us as it did for Joshua. First, he's come as captain.

Not to help us. Not to help us, but to take over from us. And secondly, he's come as captain, not of your pathetic little resources, captain of the infinite hosts of the Lord.

Now I've said very deliberately that Jesus has not come to help us, but to take over from us. Because when Pam and I were in Canada in March, I happened as an aside in a certain message to say that, not intending it to even be the main thrust of the message. But that phrase God used to transform the life of our hostess.

It was life to her. She had a husband who wasn't easy. The trouble was she wasn't easy either.

All her reactions to him, how she was battling with him. And I think the most she could think of was Jesus helping her in this situation. But that day she saw something more.

He hadn't come to help her. To take over from her. And even now she dates a new seeing of Jesus fighting her battles for her from the day she consented no longer to look to Jesus to help her, but to take her over.

And take over the situation. And of course Jesus was well able to cope, and she found there was a new attitude, a new situation. Not that she didn't have to repent, she needed cleansing, but from another level! She saw Jesus as captain of, not merely her little strength, hosts of the world.

They're more with us, did you but know it, when he's captain, than those that are against us. So this is this great word. I've come as captain of the host of the Lord.

I want to look at it more closely, and I want to look at it negatively first. Indeed, not even first. I'm going to look at this word negatively, because very often in scripture the positive is put in contrast to the negative in

order to highlight the positive.

Take the new birth, children of God are born not of blood, blood relationships, not of the will of the flesh, you making up your mind, not of the will of man, otherwise somebody else persuading you, but of God! And those three negatives only highlight the positive. And so I want to look with you at this in that light, and I want you to see in this word three glorious negatives. I believe when the Lord said this to Joshua, it meant, the taking of Jericho is not your idea, it's mine, for I'm captain.

Now, he had in mind, of course, the taking of Jericho, and he really thought it was his idea! And the Lord said, nonsense. If I'm captain, it's not your idea, it's mine. Secondly, when the Lord said this to him, that I've come as captain, it means not only is the taking of Jericho not your idea, but it's not going to be done by your power, nor in your way, because your army is only a tiny little bit of the forces engaged in this engagement.

I'm captain of the host of the Lord. It's not going to be by your little army, but by mine. And what is rather interesting is, you know the great phrase, the Lord of hosts? Which, of course, comes all the way through Scripture.

Here is the first occurrence of the phrase in the Bible. Here. I looked it up in my concordance.

In other words, there was a new revelation of Jehovah here. Jehovah, who was the God of Israel, had been progressively revealing himself. And here was a new one.

There Jehovah was the God of armies. Heavenly armies, infinitely ones. And there afterwards they never forgot it.

To them he was always Jehovah of hosts. What a great relief that was. He was happy to give up the captaincy.

And give up the whole thing being his idea. Because if it was his new captain's idea, the new captain had infinite resources with which to implement them. And then I think it means, too, that that which is going to be done, Joshua, if I'm to be captain, is not going to be for your glory.

You're not going to have one of your flags put in Windsor Chapel. You know, the great victory of Jericho. You're going to get nothing out of this, Joshua.

I'm going to be the one who gets the glory. And for this reason, it's going to be done in such a way, such a crazy way, such a non-military way, that it will be obvious to everybody that I being the doer of it. And as a sign of the fact that man was not going to get the glory, but only the Lord, they were told that everything in the city was to be devoted.

Certain things, they were to be devoted to destruction. Even human life. And the beautiful clothes.

And works of art. The fire. And other things like silver and gold were to be devoted, not to destruction, but to the Lord.

In other words, Israel were not going to be enriched through this victory. They were going to get nothing out of it. All the glory was to go to the Lord.

And this really brings us back to those three forms of the self-life about which we were thinking the other day. He is captain of the hosts of the Lord, which means it's not going to be of self-will. That which is going to be done.

The taking of Jericho, we're to see, is really not our idea. It's His. You've been thinking that the victory, the need, whatever it is, is your idea.

Maybe your PCC got together to plan some outreach or something like that. Or maybe you feel that this in your family has got to be dealt with. And it's our idea, the Lord says, I'm captain.

It's not your idea. It's mine. We are not to be the initiators of that which is done.

But the captain is. Oh, self-initiation. I've fallen to this again and again.

I went to Canada, Pam and I went to Canada. We saw God working in revival. I said, why is that happening here in England? I tried to initiate that the same sort of thing would happen here.

And I was captain. He says, I'm captain. What to be done is going to be my idea.

And you know, even the son himself took this low position with the father. He said, the son can do nothing of himself. He can initiate nothing.

If he did, he wouldn't be the son. The position of the son is a subject position. The son can do nothing of himself but what he sees the father do.

And what things whoever he sees the father do, that he does likewise. And if that was his relationship to the father, how much should it be your relationship to him? And when he comes to show himself as captain, he comes to rebuke our self-initiated service. Even the things that are good and right and obviously needed.

It can still be regarded as your ideas. In those cases, nothing of the sort is mine. And this can come as a tremendous release.

Some years ago, a missionary in the South Africa General Mission told me how revival came to a number of their stations. The churches on their stations at that time were in a terribly dry, needy condition. There was no life there.

And under the surface, all sorts of sin was going on. Nothing they could do seemed to make any difference. And the churches were so dry.

And they came on a visit to South Africa. A certain man, he's dead now, from South Wales, who himself had been involved years before in the Welsh revival and who was used of God afterwards in a rather special way. And he came to South Africa, I imagine not to preach, and he came to visit these missionaries and to work with them for a little while.

And he said, we were together, the missionaries and our visitor, on the veranda of a certain bungalow, having had a time of fellowship, and we were talking in a break between the sessions. For long before this, we'd prayed for revival to come to these churches, but nothing seemed to happen. We were rather despairing.

Well, we were talking together. And as we were talking, and as his brother was sharing various things, all of us had a sort of vision. A new revelation came to us altogether, that the very thing we wanted to happen, which was our idea, which we were praying for, but didn't seem to happen, wasn't our idea at all.

It was God's idea to revive his church. And instead of trying to conquer his reluctance, somehow we were free. We saw he'd come to do this very thing.

It wasn't our idea at all, it was his. We laid hollowness with readiness. And as those meetings took place, every one of their churches was visited by deep conviction of sin, and many turned to the Lord, and Christians were revived, and there was a new situation.

It's a lovely thing. When the thing you want to happen, you're praying for it to happen, is that you're being captain. When I'm captain, you'll see it's not your idea.

It's my idea to do precisely that. Because until you see that, we all of us are trying to conquer some fancied reluctance in the Lord to do it, when really what he wants you to do is so to see him as captain that this is his idea, that you lay hold on his willingness. Well, this is a very big theme.

We pass on. Yes, the second form of the self-life we saw was self-effort. And when he comes as captain of the host of the Lord, he says, that which is going to be done, which is begun with me, is going to be done by me.

Not by your power, your effort, your expedience. Oh, how I need to see this. What begins with him.

When he's initiator, he says, I'll implement my own plans. There's that great verse, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit. I'd like to turn to it in Zechariah.

That's the one from the last book of the Bible. Zechariah, chapter 4, verse 7. There it is in verse 6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, here's your negatives, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.

And this oft-quoted scripture has much more meaning for us when we see it in its context. The people of Israel had come back from Babylon to rebuild their ruined temple. And that by command of Saras.

And it was indeed the promise of God it should be done. And they got back and they began to build. But the people of the land who'd moved in when Israel was taken captive, of course resented this.

And they sent a slanderous report up to headquarters in Babylon. And the king had changed by then. And they said, this has been a rebellious people.

You look back in the record. And here they are starting to build again. And they looked back in the record and it was exactly as they said.

They'd had a record of rebellion against Babylon for a long time. And so they got the order back, stop them! And so the people of the land came with power and strength and said, stop. And they had no option, it seemed, to comply.

And for years, I haven't done my homework enough on this little bit, I don't know how many years, the house of the Lord lay waste, just the foundations no more, while they went on with building their own

houses. And it was only through the prophesying later of Haggai and Zechariah that they were challenged about this fact. Their own houses were built with even ceilings on them.

Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast wind it in either direction. Their own houses were built with even ceilings on them.

And the Lord's house lay waste. Little wonder their crops were not being blessed. But they said, how can we do otherwise? We've been forbidden to.

We haven't got the power or the might to defy these people and get on with the building. There's a great mountain in the way. And Sir Robbable, he's a pretty pathetic leader.

And the word of the Lord came to the people. It said, who art thou, O great mountain, before even Sir Robbable, thou shalt become a plain and that, not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit. And it's very interesting, the might and power doesn't mean the same.

It means not by the might of many, nor by the power of one. We haven't got an army, and we haven't got a leader. So often what we feel is numbers is the thing to push the old chariot along.

Or if it isn't numbers, it's a great leader, a Billy Graham. And God says, my work is going to be done not by the power of many, nor by the might of one. Another way altogether, by my spirit.

And they dared to believe the promise, and they proceeded with the building. We can't stop to tell you the story. In the most beautiful way, the mountain did become a plain, without them having to lift a blow.

And they ultimately brought forth the top stone of the temple with shoutings of grace, grace unto it. When he's the captain of the host, it's his idea, not yours, to be implemented by his spirit, and not by our expedience. When he's the captain, do you know, I want to tell you, I've got to tell myself, victory is never in doubt.

And this is for each one of us. Will you turn to Revelation 2, 17? Something very, very personal, different for everybody, but too good to be true for each one of us. Revelation 2, 17.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. He gives to each of us a stone.

We needn't bother to think of what the illusion is, perhaps some ancient Grecian game or something, we needn't worry. A stone with a new name written, which no man knows, saving he that receiveth it. And I interpret it simply this way.

You're given a stone, a special something, a plan, with your name written on it, and he whispers to you what he thinks for you, what he's planned for you, what he sees you to be, join to himself, him as captain, you at his feet. He says you better not mention this too much to other people, because it's so good, they might be jealous. No man knows it.

And you know he's whispered things to each one of us, or he wants to, which are astonishing, what he plans for you, too beautiful for words, what he sees you to be. You feel so spathetic, but join to him, if you knew it, terrible as an army with banners, what he plans for your service. No one knows, saving he that receiveth it, and you better not tell anybody else, lest he might make the others jealous.

The only thing is that everybody else has got a similar stone, with a different name, a different plan. And they're told you better not tell the other people too much. It's something very, very private, just between you and Jesus, and dear one, it's too good for words, and it's going to be implemented, not by might or power, not by efforts, but by his spirit, when he's permitted to come, as captain of the hosts of the Lord for you.

And then it also means, not for self-glory. It's going to be done in such a way, that it should be obvious to everybody, that God's the doer and not you. And we're not to take the glory.

That of course was the thing that went wrong at Jericho. One man did. And he took for himself, what had been should have been devoted to God.

And the victory stopped. And at the little village, next time terrible defeat came. Until it was put right.

And I want to tell you, nothing's going to stop the blessing, so much as the intrusion of self. And the blessing and the victory will stop, until it's put right. But such is the power of the blood of Jesus, it can be put right.

And on you go, chastened, humble, but just as joyous as before, to the next thing that he's got for you. And so we see, this great word, nay, neither, as captain of the hosts of the Lord am I come. As we saw the other day, of him, this blessed captain, through him, and for him are all things.

So then that was something of the vision, that Joshua saw and that we may see of Jesus. Captain, of the hosts of the Lord. Do you see him as that? Or frankly, are you very much captain? Struggling with your Jericho, knowing you haven't got a chance, defeated before you begin.

Oh, don't you think you need to lift up your eyes, I need to, to see him as captain. And to see the issue when he's captain, is never in doubt. Someone has said, God has no problems, only plans.

And that will be implemented by divine power, not by us. Now what was the effect of this vision, on Joshua? Well, going back to that passage, Joshua 5, turn back to it. And Joshua, verse 14, fell on his face to the earth.

What does that mean? See what it meant that this captain had come. He resigned his own commission. He sent in his resignation, in favour of this other one.

Pathetic little tinpot captain, of a little tinpot army. He fell on his face. He made this beautiful surrender.

It's interesting, that before the walls ever fell down, Joshua had to fall down. This is where revival begins. One can spend time in tracing the beginnings of spiritual movements.

The revival in East Anglia, in Lorstof, don't forget what year it was, under Douglas Brown. What a story it is. It began with a Baptist minister in London, falling on his face, not knowing anything about Lorstof.

That there was a strike of the fishermen, that the situation was terrible. But the Christians were praying for God to visit them. The story is that two of their number felt they must go to London.

Didn't know where to go. I think they looked at the evening paper, saw some churches advertised. The Spirit said, go there.

Douglas Brown was preaching. They didn't know, that the day before he'd fallen on his face, in a new way. And he was asked, where did he come? This respectable preacher, who'd never been known to call sinners openly to repent.

And seen in a vision, himself doing that thing, and all his respectability, rebelled against it. But he fell on his face. And the next day, will you come to Lorstof? And God visited Lorstof up there.

I don't know when it was, 1917 possibly. And so many were saved. And the songs of Zion filled the town.

And then the fishermen went up, in their fishing up to Scotland, and where they went they testified, and blessing came there. And at that time, Douglas Brown was called upon to give the Bible readings at Keswick. Some Bible readings.

I read them. They were burning, scorching words. And it was in those Bible readings, that this man said the phrase, perhaps you've heard often repeated, revival is not going down the street with a big drum, it's going back to Calvary with a big sob.

And he'd done it. This is the biggest prerequisite, ere the walls of Jericho fall down, that we fall down, before the captain of the house of the Lord. It may be the Lord is calling us, to a much deeper surrender, of self-will, self-effort and self-glory, to Jesus, than we've ever made before.

It'll often need to be repeated, but there's a beginning. And maybe you've never allowed, him to touch self at any deep level. This is the beginning.

This is the effect. Fell down. Really surrendered.

I feel I need this. I need to go deeper here. Really to part my ideas, and my wishes, to see that, his ideas are so much bigger and better than mine.

The life of the Christian church is marked, by self-initiated service. Begun in the flesh, carried on in the flesh, and of course flesh gets the glory, with all the consequent division. He fell down.

A little lower. Deeper. Right down.

So that he really is, in a much deeper way than ever before, Lord. And the situation, has been handed over to one, much more able to cope, than your I. And the second effect it had on him, was that he said, What saith my Lord to his servant? He was telling the Lord. Do you know I have difficulties about prayer? Because sometimes my prayers are almost blasphemous.

I'm telling the Lord. As if I'm more anxious about things than he is. Yet we're called upon to pray.

But surely there must be this deeper, deeper falling down. What are you saying? You're the Lord. I'm the servant.

I'm just the errand boy. I'm no longer responsible for the situation. I'm no longer in charge.

You are Lord. I'm no longer vicar, or minister, or the evangelist conducting the meetings. I'm no longer the leader of the Bible class.

I've been trying to be, and what a mess I've made of it, and how tense I've become. Then we have this new meeting with Jesus. And what does he say to us? What did he say to Joshua? Oh my goodness.

Something more you could ever imagine. Joshua, this is what I'm going to say to you, now I've got you at my feet. I have given into thine hand Jericho, and its king, and its mighty man of valor.

Not I will, I've done it. It's yours. And you know, that's how the Lord wants to speak to us.

He wants to give us his promises for the future, in a past tense. I have. I have.

That's what this hymn talks about. Fighting, winning without a blow. Before the battle lines are spread, I've got the victory when he's captain, and I'm down there, if faithful but received.

Years ago, Leith Samuel, whose name many of you will know, and I were very closely associated in many, in evangelistic work, and we, I remember, conducted a campaign in the Dudley Town Hall together, and other things. And God had given my dear brother Leith, at that time, an extraordinary gift of faith that helped me very much. And we'd be praying together, and I'd hear him say, Lord, thank you, this is in the morning, for the souls you have saved tonight.

Isn't that scriptural? What things soever ye desire, when you pray, believe you have received them, because the promise is given you in that tense. And when Leith got lowered down, and he's initiated, you begin to find him moving you in to his own plan. Faith can come up to his promises.

Not always do we rise there, but that's the privilege. You go in with confidence. Before the boasting foe is dead, Jesus says me now, strong in his word, I meet the foe, and shouting, win, without a blow.

I think I need a renewal of that sort of faith. But I tell you, it can be in the flesh, unless you're right down there trying to get God to do your plan, but when you know, he's kept and he's led you into something. Why not? This shouting faith.

You know, at that time when God gave us this great spirit of faith, our prayer meetings used to be noisy. Someone objected to somebody, me banging the chair. Now that wasn't emotion.

It wasn't emotion. It wasn't sort of tremendous worship. We'd been so burdened about the thing we were doing, and then we saw the cat and the host, and we thought, we've got it! We've got it, Lord! We're there! Well, you don't sort of, you're so relieved that that which was burdening you, the victory's won.

Well, you might say, well, we're good. All right, so what? It wasn't we were trying to be big, but it was the relief. Now don't try and do that, that won't do anything.

But I just mentioned the blessedness of coming into a place of confidence. I want to tell you, God's an optimist. Who is nearer God's heart, the optimist or the pessimist? The optimist.

The optimist whose optimism is grounded on faith in Jesus, the new captain of the situation. Oh, you surrender your ideas, how he's going to do it? But you know he is no longer yours, business but his. And the second thing he said was what they had to do.

What they had to do. I have given... Now, this is how you get to act. And it's about the craziest thing you've ever heard of.

Who ever heard of a mighty fortress city being taken by simply marching round the city seven days and seven times on the last day? With the walls all manned. The people of Jericho were amazed, what an extraordinary thing. And then giving that great shout, shout! For the Lord has given you the city.

Now, I want just to say this thing as we are drawing to a close. He'll show you what to do. Oh yes, you've got to do something.

You've got to cooperate with your new captain. It doesn't just leave less sitting back. It's not self-initiated service, but when that's been put right, as best you see it, with the Lord, then he tells you what he wants you to do.

Well, you're going to do something, but it's going to be a simple cooperation with your new captain. Now, what he's going to tell you to do may seem very funny and almost irrelevant. But if it comes into your heart that this is what he wants you to do, you do it.

Because very often he's going to do his greatest things in such a way that it's obvious that those things, the thing you do, has not produced it. You may get up, he says, well, go and give your testimony. Oh, dear me.

I'm scared. May I ask you to go to your boss and put something right? Oh, what will happen? That's not going to count for anything. He'll finish with Christianity when he hears that I, a Christian, have failed.

Maybe that's the thing. Crazy. It might lead to that man's conversion.

He might do anything. Whatever it may be. Anything that's suggested.

As far as you understand, by the Spirit, now at the church's feet, that's your cooperation with God. There are sometimes things which after the event you say, well, that was exactly the right thing to do. That was exactly designed, designed, as I now see, to produce that result.

As in the case of Gideon. You know what he was told to do? He was completely at the end of himself. Three hundred men.

What can we do? Jehovah was captain. I said, I know what you want to do. Give them all pitchers and a flaming torch inside.

Scatter round the hill. At the given moment, smash the torches. Hold up the, hold up the, smash the pitchers, hold up the torches and shout, the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

And, of course, the people thought there was a mighty army around them in the dark. And they fled. With hardly a blow.

And afterwards Gideon said, isn't that extraordinary? I never thought of that one. It was exactly the best thing to do. I say, we'll try it again next time.

Would they be let down? And sometimes what he shows you to do proves to be exactly the thing most obviously designed to affect a certain purpose that didn't occur to you. You know, the law's wonderfully original. Very original.

He's not sailing. But won't be tied to you if you say, well, that was a good one. Let's try it again.

You're riding for a fall. Of course, it would be you that time. And so we come to this whole question of cooperation with God.

Where does self-initiated striving end and a right cooperation with God begin? Because it's the man who's doing things in both cases. I want to tell you, I do not know. God has to show me on each occasion.

I can give you no formula how you can tell, well, is this me planning it or is it the law? Very often before the real thing's done there's a new brokenness. But even so, we cannot tell one another. You've got to be educated by the Holy Spirit himself to know what is me or what is me cooperating with him.

Sometimes the very same thing could be in the flesh. On another occasion, that simple method can be so absolutely right. It's a cooperation with the Lord who's the doer of all.

You and I have got to learn and he will teach us. And my last word is simply this. He's not on your side nor on the side of your adversaries.

You are on his side. But do you know, Isaiah 63 gives us a rather frightening possibility that there are occasions when he might return to be our adversary. Isaiah 63, verse 9, and I'm going to read it and do a little more than that and then close.

In all their adversity, Isaiah 63, verse 9, and this is the revised margin. I'm sure it's the correct translation. In all their adversity, he was no adversary to them.

Just because you're having a bad time don't think that means he's against you. Rather, you'll find the angel of his presence will save you. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them and bared them and carried them all the days of old.

But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit. Therefore, he was turned to be their enemy and fought against them. But only till you repent.

Only long enough to get you back to the cross. To be your adversary, this is strange work. Only when to show you where the wrong things come in.

Long enough for you to get to the cross again. All is well. And then, he's not on your side nor against you.

You are on his side. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we want to tell you we do want to see you like this again.

I need to see you like this. Apart from a constantly renewed vision of thee as the captain of the hosts of the Lord. I resort to my own ideas even in holy things to my own strivings and secretly for my own glory.

And I get nowhere when I'm trying to do it by might or power. But we thank thee for this other way by thy spirit. And Lord, I want you to get me to those feet of thine again.

To be confessing where I've been the captain. Where I've been the one. Lord, there's a deeper place at thy feet for all of us.

Thank you, you're showing us the next place down. Lord, we'll leave the further steps to thee later on but right now we want to take that immediate step down to thy feet of surrender which thou has shown us. And we thank you that when we break anew the victory in our situation and circumstances and service and in our personal lives is never in doubt.

And we thank you we're going to do it in ways we never thought of. Sometimes fighting wind without a blow so that we're left with nothing but songs of praises to thee our conquering Lord in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Shall we sing perhaps in prayer thine be the glory risen conquering sun endless is the victory thou or death as one. Thine be the glory endless is the victory Of course, I know it isn't. It should be in our hearts.

It's in every French book A toi la gloire and in the German books. What's it in German? I can't remember. Oh, I tell you at Easter there are some young people at that conference there I've never heard it sung.

But thank God we've got the translation of the whole hymn. But just the chorus is Thine be the glory risen conquering sun endless is the victory thou or death as one. And for your benefit you're singing Handel in singing this tune.

All right. Thine be the glory risen conquering sun endless is the victory thou or death as one. Once again.

Thine be the glory risen conquering sun endless is the victory You're dismissed.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18642.mp3>

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