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## Victory Through Faith

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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The book of Joshua commences in this way:

"Now it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister..."

In order to get the real value of the book of Joshua and its message for us, we have to remember that it has a counterpart in the New Testament in the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians. They are two sides of one thing. The letter to the Ephesians is the letter of life in the heavenlies. The letter to the Colossians is particularly the inheritance in Christ Jesus. When we remember that, and bring these two things back to the book of Joshua, we know that we are dealing with the heavenly life in Christ and when we recognise that, we are equipped to appreciate Joshua himself in his training and in the purpose which he subsequently fulfilled. We just take one or two things out of the life of Joshua which will explain that for us.

Joshua in an active way came out in relation to the conflict of the Lord's people, and the very first battle that Israel ever engaged in was led by Joshua. Moses did not immediately and directly lead the battle, neither did Aaron. They were in it, but Joshua was the leader.

That gives us the first touch as to what Joshua represented and represents in God's purpose, that is, the possessing by conflict and conquest of the place of Divine appointment for His people. The letter to the Ephesians touches upon that very much. In the book of the Revelation you have a much fuller

and larger unfolding and uncovering of the truth that there is a great realm called "the heavenlies", which is intended by the Lord to be the realm of the life, the government, and the reign of the people of God. That realm at present is occupied by other forces, which are opposed to God and to God's people. That place, in the appointment of God, has to be taken by conflict and conquest and many a severe battle lies in the direction of the spiritual attainment to the place and purpose of God for His own. We, of course, know something about that already, but Joshua is the man whose life is characterised and marked all the way through by warfare. His very mentality is warfare. He went with Moses as Moses' minister into the Mount when the law was given, and when Moses came down the Mount and heard the noise in the camp, the singing, and the dancing, and the general confusion as they worshipped the molten calf, Joshua immediately interprets it according to his own mentality, and says: "There is a sound of war in the camp". It was not war in that sense, but here is a man in whose blood, it seems, is battle and everything he sees is battle. That is the man, and that is why he was chosen and appointed in relation to Israel's battles, and it is very significant.

Joshua represents the spirit of battle, essential amongst the Lord's people if they are to arrive at the place of His appointment. We shall find as we go on that the Lord will constantly demand that we stand up spiritually and fight. We have to, of course, learn as Joshua had to learn, but we have not reached that point yet. The Lord must have a fighting spirit in His people and when the spirit of battle goes out of anyone they are done so far as the higher purposes of God are concerned. So you have in the New Testament these numerous exhortations: "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might"; "be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus". Joshua speaks to us of the necessity for a fighting spirit in the people of God, not for warfare with flesh and blood, as Paul says in Ephesians; not fighting people, but definitely standing up in spirit to resist, to take ascendancy, to refuse to be submerged and subdued. The Lord cannot really come in until we are on our feet. That is, to put it in another way, the Lord can do nothing with an Elijah under a juniper tree. F.W.H. Meyers, in his glorious poem of Paul just puts it this way:

"God shall forgive thee all but thy despair."

So Joshua comes into view, in the first place in connection with the warfare of the people of God, and speaks to us of the spirit of battle.

You will remember that the first battle which Israel fought, and of which Joshua was the leader, was against Amalek. The Lord said of Amalek that He would wipe out the memory of Amalek and utterly destroy them. That was good encouragement for Joshua, that was something for Joshua to work upon, not only in the case of Amalek. Amalek always stands in the Old Testament as a type of the flesh, and that was the first battle of Israel, and the Lord's attitude toward Amalek, the flesh, was and always is, that He allows nothing to remain. There must be an utter wiping out. That is the Lord's position with regard to the flesh, and again it is significant that Joshua should come in in relation to that.

This first battle was a part of Joshua's training. Later when you come into the book which bears his name and reach chapter 5, you will remember that the Lord commanded that all that generation of Israel should be circumcised afresh. That was a basic condition for the conquest of the land. When we turn to the letter to the Colossians, which is a part of the New Testament parallel of the book of Joshua, we find that in chapter 2 that is explained from the Divine standpoint: "The circumcision of Christ", which is "the putting off of the body of the flesh". It is interesting that when you come to the book of Joshua that has first to take place, and Joshua has been drawn into this spiritual law, that to

possess the heavenlies the whole realm of the flesh has got to be put away, Amalek (the flesh) must be wiped out, and there can be no hope of full triumph if there is any lingering or lurking element of the flesh.

Then another thing is seen in connection with that first battle. It is the spiritual principle which was behind Joshua's warfare. He had to learn this, that his warfare was not something which he alone was accomplishing. In fact, it was not something that he was accomplishing at all. He was but the instrument being used. Up there on the mountain was Moses. On either side of Moses was Aaron and Hur, holding up the hands of Moses. While those hands were kept upward, heavenward, linked with heaven, bringing heaven into this thing, Joshua prevailed. Before they supported those hands they became weary and dropped, and Amalek prevailed. Joshua had to learn that down there, where he was in the battle, his triumph depended entirely upon something that was going on behind up there. He was really working out something that was being worked for him.

When the people of Israel came into the land, Joshua 5 tells us that Joshua saw someone standing with a drawn sword and said to him: "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" The answer was: "Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come". And Joshua bowed himself to the ground. What was that intended to signify for Joshua? That all these future conquests were going to be carried through by an unseen Commander. He (Joshua) would be in the foreground as the instrument, but there would be One unseen working it out. That is what happened with Amalek long before. There was One unseen away in the mount. He was accomplishing the thing, and Joshua was working it out.

This is a great thought for the spiritual conflict. We are not left to do this thing, to initiate it, and consummate it in our own strength and resource. This whole thing is really being fought out higher up. This is a very practical illustration of that word of the apostle: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which works in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure."

We have to launch into the battle, we have to rise up and make the stand, we have to go on. But what is our going on? How can we stand? How can we persist? It is just the result of something that is going on in us secretly, deeper down. We can never go on in the Lord because it originates with ourselves. No one has ever yet made any spiritual progress which originated in themselves. Try and grow spiritually, and see how you get on! Try and overcome, and see how you get on! If the Lord is not doing something deeper down in you, all your effort will be in vain. But the Lord does not make that Divine energy so manifest as to take away the necessity for your rising up and moving on. If you rise up and move on, you find you can because there is something more than yourself.

Joshua was learning that faith is the victory that overcomes; and what is faith? Is it simply saying: I can if I try? That is faith in yourself! Faith is resting in the energy of the Lord who is the Energiser. It is reposing faith in Him and stepping out. So Joshua learned in the first battle with Amalek the secret of spiritual conquest which is working in relation to something higher up. First things in the Bible are always full of significance. They are seed-plots, as a rule, and this first battle is a seed-plot, and Joshua got all his principles for subsequent conquest from that battle with Amalek.

Joshua represents other things too. They all make up one thing; that is, the man of conquest, the spirit of conquest.

Another thing which is so clear and fine about Joshua's life was the way in which he was abandoned to the Lord. Joshua is particularly marked by abandonment to the Lord. If you like, you can use the word "separation". It is a life which is wholly and utterly for God, and has no other interests, but God's interests and will not compromise with anything on any point where God's interests are not fully recognised. You will remember that when sin was in the camp, when Israel had gone away from the Lord in that rebellion, the statement is that a young man whose name was Joshua "departed not out of the tabernacle". That simply means that, the camp being defiled, Joshua would not touch it; he stays in the tabernacle, the place of holiness, the place of sanctification, the place of separation, the place where God is. That is a life picture of Joshua. See him again and again and the one thing which seems to form the epitaph upon Joshua's tomb, the inscription over his life, is that: "He wholly followed the Lord". This is the man who will stand for the spirit of conquest. It is that which will bring into the inheritance. This is that which will bring to God's intended place for His people; a heart which is utterly and wholly for the Lord.

The third thing which is found in Joshua 5 is the Passover. The Passover comes up again right at the beginning of the history of the taking possession of the land. In a word, the Passover means that which is the Lord's. The blood of the Passover was the instrument of the covenant, the blood of the Passover was that which made them the Lord's, so that when smiting Egypt He did not smite Israel. The eating of the Passover lamb - as we now know in New Testament life - meant the appropriation of Christ. It is called: Jehovah's Passover. That came up again and again as basic to the history in the land, and Joshua and the Passover seem to be so one in spirit; that which is wholly the Lord's. That is a law of conquest, a law of the inheritance, of the fulness of Christ; complete separation and abandonment to the Lord.

There is one other thing which comes up in Joshua, and that is that he so deeply and definitely speaks to us of the power of Christ's resurrection. The report of Joshua and Caleb, after going with the other ten to spy out the land, was one of complete assurance, faith and confidence. The report of the ten was one of despair and hopelessness. The two things represent, so completely, resurrection ground and the opposite. The result was that whole generation of six hundred thousand souls died in the wilderness, excepting Joshua and Caleb. That is a very wonderful thing. Here are two men who, for a generation - for forty years - are moving in the midst of people dying off. I suppose every day there were reports of deaths in the camp. The Word says that the Lord was against them, and they died; and that is a terrible thing. So day after day for forty years people were dying. The Lord had determined that they should die off in the wilderness, and that their carcasses should fall there. Joshua and Caleb are living in the midst of that, and while death is working, and six hundred thousand people are slowly being wiped out, here are two men who are showing no sign of death at all; it is not touching them, not coming near them. They bore no marks of death; in the midst of death they were in life. In their case it was truly a matter of: "A thousand shall fall at thy side... but it shall not come nigh thee". They emerged from that cemetery in full vigour. They came right out of rampant death, untouched.

And Joshua, being the instrument of God for leading into the inheritance through conflict and conquest, speaks to us so much of the power of His resurrection as the ground upon which we shall battle through and come out victorious, and possess the inheritance. There are many perplexities and problems, and things are sometimes so slow. Think of forty years in the wilderness like that! I am sure that faith must have been tested very sorely for Joshua and Caleb through those forty years. Looking back on forty years it does not seem so long, but going through it *under conditions like that*, with death around, is a fairly good test of faith. What is the seal of God? The seal of God is that,

while other things which are God's are dying off, passing away and that which is not going on to God's fulness slowly passes away, this thing bears the mark of a deathless life in a fuller measure. The Lord's seal is the power of His resurrection. That thought is worth storing up in our hearts.

The seal of God in the case of Joshua and Caleb did not take the form of a great movement forward for those forty years. The seal of God was simply that the life of God was in them when death was all around. It was their own inner testimony that represented the Lord's seal. At times they probably wondered if ever they would come into what God intended. The only answer that they could possibly have was that while everything was dead, they knew quite well that they were not dead and were not dying. The Lord was carrying them through in resurrection.

When you come into Joshua 5 again you find that the next thing that comes out is the Manna ceased and they ate the old corn of the land. What is the old corn of the land? It is Christ in resurrection. He is the sustenance of His people for a life in the heavenlies. And a life in the heavenlies is so often a life where you do not see a great deal that those people who do not live there *must* see to help their faith. They must see movements, developments, signs; they must have something seen to keep their faith going. But a walk with God in the heavenlies is very often a walk where you see very little outwardly, and you have got to have special spiritual sustenance for that. Our sustenance does not come along the line of the senses; our sustenance comes along the line of what Christ is to us. It is not: 'I am kept going by this great organisation, this great piece of work, this successful enterprise.' No! It is: 'I have nothing; it is the Lord Himself that keeps me going.' That is the old corn of the land. That is the nature of sustenance in the heavenlies.

The book of Joshua is very full and very rich in those illustrations of the features of a life in the heavenlies, spiritual conquest, coming into the inheritance - that is, the fulness of Christ - to the place of reigning in life according to the Divine appointment.

The Lord energise in us, and keep us full of fighting force of the right kind, which draws its resource from the unseen Victor, the One who is there in victory for us. He becomes our victory here through faith.