



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Ever-Present God

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Joshua 11:1-23

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***11** When Jabin, king of Hazor, heard of this, he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph, ² and to the kings who were in the northern hill country, and in the Arabah south of Chinneroth, and in the lowland, and in Naphoth-dor on the west, ³ to the Canaanites in the east and the west, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites in the hill country, and the Hivites under Hermon in the land of Mizpah. ⁴ And they came out with all their troops, a great horde, in number like the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. ⁵ And all these kings joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.*

⁶ And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire." ⁷ So Joshua and all his warriors came suddenly against them by the waters of Merom and fell upon them. ⁸ And the LORD gave them into the hand of Israel, who struck them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and eastward as far as the Valley of Mizpeh. And they struck them until he left none remaining. ⁹ And Joshua did to them just as the LORD said to him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

¹⁰ And Joshua turned back at that time and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword, for Hazor formerly was the head of all those kingdoms. ¹¹ And they struck with the sword all who were in it, devoting them to destruction; there was none left that breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire. ¹² And all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua captured, and struck them with the edge of the sword, devoting them to destruction, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. ¹³ But none of the cities that stood on mounds did Israel burn, except Hazor alone; that Joshua burned. ¹⁴ And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the people of Israel took for their plunder. But every person they struck with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they did not leave any who breathed. ¹⁵ Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁶ So Joshua took all that land, the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland and the Arabah and the hill country of Israel and its lowland ¹⁷ from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. And he captured all their kings and struck them and put them to death. ¹⁸ Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. ¹⁹ There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel

except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. They took them all in battle. ²⁰ For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

²¹ And Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua devoted them to destruction with their cities. ²² There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the people of Israel. Only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod did some remain. ²³ So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.

(Pastor prays)

The God of Joshua is the God of battles and war and victory and judgment. He is the God of miracles and mercy, the God who strengthens His people, judges His enemies and magnifies the glory of His own name. The God of Joshua is the God of the Bible. He is the God of covenant and He is our God. He is undomesticated, unencumbered and unstoppable. He is the God who saves sinners at the cross of Jesus and judges the unrepentant in the dungeons of Hell. And here in Joshua 11, we see Him in all His resplendent severity and His gracious mercy. Let's play a little catchup.

Let's start at the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River in Chapter 3. In Joshua Chapter 4 they set up the 12 stones to memorialize what God had done there. In Joshua Chapter 5, God renews the covenant and prepares the people as they go into the promised land. In Joshua 6, the Battle of Jericho is no battle at all. The walls fall down and it is a great victory except for one man's sin. Achan's sin happens, so in Joshua Chapter 7, Israel is defeated in Ai. They figure out the sin problem and then in Chapter 8 they have victory over Ai. In Chapter 9 we see the Gibeonite deception. The Gibeonites tricked the people of Israel. They said they were from a long way off but actually they were close by. Israel made a covenant and, although Israel was tricked, they held up their end of the bargain. Chapter 10 is the great passage of the sun standing still. God heard the voice of man and stopped the sun. Those kings in the Northern part of the promised land heard about it. So in Chapter 11, this is the conquest. It's going to be Israel's most difficult challenge yet as seemingly all the world comes against them. So as we walk through this story, we are going to learn something about our God and what it actually means to be His people.

It's so easy to feel like we are losing. It feels like we are drowning in a world that hates our God and all that we hold dear. And today, I want to use this chapter to encourage your heart and feed your soul on the rich bounty that is found in Christ. I hope you will see...

Our God Will Never Leave You or Forsake You

Let's begin with this first section.

Being overwhelmed is not the same as being overcome

Let me show you where I get that in verses 1-5 and let's just look at all the names and cities that are getting together to smack little Israel. **11** *When Jabin, king of Hazor, heard of this, he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph, Hazor was about 200 acres. Jericho was 6-7 acres. So a few kings get together and then they go get some more.* ² *and to the kings who were in the northern hill country, and in the Arabah south of Chinneroth, and in the lowland, and in Naphoth-dor on the west,* ³ *to the Canaanites in the east and the west, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites in the hill country, and the Hivites under Hermon in the land of Mizpah.* So there are 5 kings, several cities and 6 people groups. And then in verse 4 the writer slows down to make sure we get a feel of the overwhelming odds. ⁴ *And they came out with all their troops, a great horde, in number like the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots.* ⁵ *And all these kings joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.* These were all their troops, a great horde, in a number like the sand on the seashore and modern weapons of war – horses and chariots. So they coalesced, joined forces and they were all against the people of God. You can feel it in the text. You can feel the overwhelming odds start to multiply. It's intimidating when there are so many things going wrong at once. It can sometimes feel unstoppable when lots of things stack together to make you feel not only discouraged but overwhelmed. There are so many things in verse 4, so many people and they even have horses and chariots. That's when we remember what the Psalmist said. Do you know Psalm 20:7? *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.* Because our God is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and are saved. When you start to feel like Job, one messenger comes to tell you the children are dead and another comes to tell you that fire from God fell and burned up your sheep and yet another comes and says the Chaldeans took your servants and camels. And finally another one comes to tell you your

older children are killed in a collapsed house. Can we join Job and say, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Yes, by God's grace you can do that, because to live is Christ and to die is gain. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ in me. I'm asking you today to trust God. Crutches are taken away so that you can trust God. Our God will never leave you or forsake you. Being overwhelmed is not the same as being overcome.

The second lesson goes with the first.

The Sovereignty of God is a Safety Net for Me.

Now to see this, we need to read verses 6, 7, and 8 together. It makes what I'm going to call a sovereignty sandwich. Look at the structure. God, man, God. Read it like that. ⁶*And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire."* ⁷*So Joshua and all his warriors came suddenly against them by the waters of Merom and fell upon them.* ⁸*And the LORD gave them into the hand of Israel, who struck them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and eastward as far as the Valley of Mizpeh. And they struck them until he left none remaining.*

How kind of the Lord to say over and over in this book, "do not be afraid. I will give." God gives new mercy for new problems that we might have a new confidence. Because the truth is that our faith leaks, it needs new filling. Our faith starves and needs new nourishment. Confidence, joy, strength, and encouragement, they all leak. It's why it's such a wonderful truth that His mercies are new every morning.

Let's go back to the sovereignty sandwich. God's sovereignty in verses 6 and 8 gives us the energy to do something in verse 7. God's sovereignty doesn't stifle our decision-making or free will, it gives energy and purpose and meaning to the things we do. This making decisions, dealing with hardship, taking risk, we can take risks for the Lord that seem reckless to other people. We can do things that appear reckless because there is absolutely nothing reckless about God. In verse 7 you see Joshua and the army fought and won a great victory. But in verses 6 and 8, God gave them a great victory. God's sovereignty is a safety net. There is no pressure He won't use, no problem He doesn't employ, no heartbreak He doesn't control, no

fire you are placed in that He doesn't use to refine your heart and make you more like Christ. Nothing is wasted. Therefore we can trust and embrace and endure whatever comes our way clinging to Romans 8: 28. *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* You are not alone. You are not forgotten. You are not being wasted but being conformed into the image of Christ because our God will never leave you or forsake you. Being overwhelmed is not the same as being overcome. The sovereignty of God is a safety net for me.

Our business is to obey God and trust Him for results

The rest of the story from verse 8 all the way to verse 22 is battle narrative, and when you read it, it can sound pretty brutal. It's a reminder of the judgment of God and the sweetness of the Gospel. The Gospel solves the judgment problem.

Let me give it to you explicitly: God is the holy creator and created all of us in His image, including you. That image within you is disfigured by sin. That sin separates us from God. That sin is not only bad for you but it is an affront to God. God will punish sin. The Gospel is this, that God is not only just, He is loving. He gives us Jesus who is fully God and fully man, who lived perfectly and then goes to the cross. Why the cross? There at the cross the judgment of God is placed on Jesus. So then Jesus takes the punishment, the wrath of God, off of us. Every sin of every sinner who will ever be saved is judged there. Your sin, if you are in Jesus, is paid for at the cross. God then raises Him from the dead as a sign of victory. And the offer then is that any sinner who turns from their sin and puts their faith in Jesus will be saved.

But there is something else here. It's the repeated reframe of obedience. Here is the life of a child of God and the substance of our days: to obey God rather than men. This is the issue we all will be facing more and more, whether it's our views on marriage, sexuality, abortion, the transgender revolution or just matters of integrity. Obedience to God in His word is shown in verses 9, 12, and 15. Let's read those verses. .

⁹ *And Joshua did to them as the LORD said to him: he hamstringed their horses and burned their chariots with fire.*

¹² *And all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua captured, and struck them with the edge of the sword, devoting them to destruction, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded.*

¹⁵ *Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.*

The Israelites are immediately obedient, fully obedient and outwardly obedient. But there is something else, notice the little insertion in verse 18.

¹⁸ *Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.* It's a reminder that following Christ is not a one-time event, but a lifetime. It's a one-time decision that leads to a lifetime of obedience. The perseverance of the saints. It's why we need the Gospel at conversion and every day after. Grace is what saves you. Grace is what sustains you, and obedience tells the story of God's amazing grace, obeying God and trusting Him for the results. It's a good time to think of this, but let's consider this point found in verse 19 and 20.

It's good to remember that God is God and does what He wants

Few of us are comfortable with this but remember the people in the land had heard of the power of Israel's God. They heard and resisted and God gave them over. Here are the echoes of Romans 1. God doesn't have to do anything to harden people's hearts; they're already hard. Even still, verse 20 is as hopeful as it is scary. ²⁰ *For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.* This reminds us that God has the power and the prerogative to change people. It's why we pray for people. If God can harden hearts then surely He can soften them, surely He can open the eyes of our heart. Kyler preached last week on the prodigal son. What are you praying for your prodigal? God can overrule. It's good to remember that God is good. Ask Him to do the business of God. He is the potter and we are the clay. He is the molder and we are the molded. And the fact that He has this kind of power should cause us to worship and love Him more and praise the God that holds hearts in His hands.

I'd be remiss if I didn't close with this one last thought.

Christ is our ultimate rest

Joshua obeyed God and fulfilled the law of Moses and gave the people rest. It is a straight line to the New Testament. The true and greater Joshua, Jesus. Jesus obeyed God the Father because we are disobedient. He fulfilled the law of Moses because we break the commandments and He gives people rest. What did Jesus say in Matthew 11:28? *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Our God will never leave you or forsake you. What are you burdened by? What are you worried about? Are you overwhelmed? Do you lack trust? Are you a child of God or an enemy? Come to Christ and have peace.

(Pastor prays)