

07.10.11 / Joshua 10:42

God as Divine Warrior

Passage Insight

“And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.”

We often fail to think of God as a warrior, but that is one of the divine characteristics of God that we see in Scripture. For many this is hard to stomach. The idea that God would get bloody or seemingly fight against humanity seems way off if we are to believe that God is Love. But we must see that God is ultimately not against humanity. God is for humanity. He created us in love and in His own image, and His continued love despite our fall is shown in His remarkable patience toward humanity. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” This patience is the result of a deep love for us and a whole-hearted desire for our well being, a well being that for us is marked by repentance, a turning away from the worship of anything other than God. So the Lord must (He has, He is, and He will) work against that which would keep people blind to their need for Him. 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 reads:

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God desires to be known, and He makes Himself known continually through His creation (Romans 1) and very personally to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom the fullness of God dwells (Colossians 1:19). Jesus came to bring peace between God and humanity, but not between God and sin (Matthew 10:34, which speaks to the fact that no one may love anything or anyone more than God and still be with Him). The Lord has wrath for that which would separate humanity from Him. If He did not have wrath for sin, then He would have to be OK with sin and its fruit. We see in Scripture that He is not OK with sin, that He has nothing but wrath for sin, which stands against Him, is not in Him, and leads His precious humanity to death apart from Him (James 1).

Images of warriors often carry with them images of struggle, where warriors are fighting bravely but are unsure of the outcome. Today’s passage, and the others like it in the book of Joshua and paint an entirely different picture of our God as a warrior – God as *Authority Over All*, with right and capacity to call the shots and direct outcomes – not just a warrior, but Warrior With Authority:

Joshua 6:2 – “And the Lord said to Joshua, ‘See, I have given Jericho into your hand. . . .’”

Joshua 6:27 – “So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.”

Joshua 8:1 – “. . . See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land.”

Joshua 10:8 and 14 – “And the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands’ . . . the Lord fought for Israel.”

Finally, there is much hope in recognizing our God as a warrior on behalf of His people, because we already know the outcome of the grand war on sin itself. We are not left to wonder who will win. Revelation 17:14 makes this clear, when it reads, “They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.” Any hope we have in anything at all is based on the fact that God Himself fought as a warrior against sin on our behalf because He chose us, He loves us, and He makes us faithful as His friends and family.

As for our immediate response, when we are in Christ Jesus, we see in 1 Timothy 6:12, that we are called to "... fight the good fight of the faith." This fight is good because it leads to a pursuit of the very nature of God (1 Timothy 6:11). This can only happen when we are empowered by God's own Spirit, who reminds us of Jesus' commands and transforms and restores us away from the passions of our flesh and toward the passions and character of God. This is made possible by the work of Jesus on cross and by His resurrection, no doubt an act of all out war against sin on our behalf. And so perhaps God's most beautiful act of warfare is seen in the way He has poured out His wrath on His Son for our sake. His wrath was poured out fully on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as payment for the sins of humanity. In His death, we see in God a servant warrior who fights to the death that others may have life. And in His resurrection, we see a perfectly victorious warrior who wins because He alone is the one true God.

Application and Prayer

God as Conqueror of Sin

- 1) When we love our sin more than we love God, we are worshiping idols, and it leads to death, per James 1. What do you love more than you love God?
- 2) How have you tried to fight against sin yourself and failed?
- 3) Jesus has ultimately destroyed sin, and those who trust Him trust HIS victory, not our own efforts to defeat the effects of sin. We are powerless to defeat sin, but in our weakness, Jesus' power is made perfect (2 Corinthians 12:9). What does it look like to admit your weakness and to trust Him instead?
- 4) PRAY
 - a. For the ability to see what you love more than God
 - b. For acceptance of your weakness, that His power may be made perfect in this

Fighting the Good Fight

- 1) 1 Timothy 6:11 tells the people of God to flee evil desires. James 1 echoes this and tells us that these desires lead to sin and death. What are you desiring that is entirely of the flesh?
- 2) This verse also tells the people of God to pursue the things of God: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness... We can only pursue these things by pursuing God Himself, as He tells us in the great commandment, to love Him with heart, soul, mind, and strength. Where are you failing to do this?
- 3) We cannot make ourselves righteous or godly or faithful. God must do this by His Spirit in us. Thank Him for His sufficiency in our weakness.
- 4) PRAY
 - a. For the ability to see where you fail to adhere to the great commandment
 - b. For the fullness of God's Spirit in your life, that you may become more like Him

Sources

- Prayer