**SUN, STAND STILL**

Joshua 10:1-43 (K. V.: 10:12)

On the day the Lord gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel: “Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.”

We are at the peak of Joshua study where we could see God’s mighty work being unfolded in an extraordinary fashion. Last two weeks, through Sh. Rob and Msn. Gideon, we learned how Joshua and his people overcame a sense of failure and won a redeeming victory through their sincere repentance and a God-given strategy. We also learned how they kept their sworn oath on the treaty they made with the Gibeonites by not attacking them even though the treaty was the result of deception and their own failure to pray. Today’s passage is about a defining moment that literally shaped the map of Israel, namely, the southern campaign that occurred in the southern part of Canaan. What was the secret of their success in this campaign? How could Joshua say such an audacious prayer toward the sun? May God help us to have Joshua’s faith that God fights for us in any and every situation we are in. May God also grant us our heart-felt prayer for discipleship training to render glory to Him.

1. **So the Sun Stood Still (10:1-15)**

Look at verse 1. Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard about what happened to Jericho and Ai and how the Gibeonites made a treaty with Joshua and the Israelites. Note this is the first time we hear the name Jerusalem in the Bible, which means, the city of peace. And the name Adoni-Zedek, which means, the Lord of righteousness possibly foreshadowed the coming of a true king of righteousness, David, and Jesus, Prince of Peace, in the new Jerusalem. This Adoni-Zedek was so much alarmed at the news of Gibeon making a treaty with the Israelites that he appealed to other neighboring kings to form a formidable alliance against Gibeon and Israel. Remember Gibeon was no small a city but a sizable city, even larger than Ai, with many good fighters in it. Hence, there was no reason why the Gibeonites had to make such a treaty with them unless Joshua’s army had something special. The Gibeonites feared that something special, that is the God of Israel. But those five kings did not know about it, saw the things from a human point of view and thus formed an allied forces to increase their chance of surviving.

Look at verse 5. “Then the five kings of the Amorites—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon—joined forces. They moved up with all their troops and took up positions against Gibeon and attacked it.” In our Friday meeting, one of our members wisely pointed out that the Amorites were the most wicked tribe among all other tribes in Canaan as we heard what God had to say about them to Abraham, “the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure (Ge 15:16).” These wicked kings became even more wicked, mustering all their troops and preemptively attacking Gibeon with the intent of attacking Israel. What did the Gibeonites do? They sent word to Joshua and pleaded with him to quickly come and save them. It was based on the treaty they made with Joshua. What did Joshua do? He did not abandon them, citing its “too soon or probation policy.” Instead, he honored the treaty right away. He and his entire army marched up from Gilgal to fight against the allied forces of the Amorites. It was very similar to what happened to World War I. When Austria declared war on Serbia, Russia got involved to defend Serbia. Germany seeing Russia mobilizing, declared war on Russia. France was then drawn in against Germany. Even Italy, Britain, Japan and US had to enter on the war. But here one thing was very different. Look at verse 8. “The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.’” God assured Joshua of a victory even before the battle began. And God also gave Joshua wisdom to utilize a sudden attack after an all-night march.

Look at verses 10-11. Note how God Himself was helping Joshua by throwing the armies of the five kings into panic and confusion when they saw the Israelites. That is quite understandable! I remember when I was in the Korean army, during one night-time battle simulation training, there was such severe confusion that I started as a communication operator in Alpha company but ended up as a mortar carrier in Beta company. How much more with five different forces and God enhancing confusion! Chaos and miscommunication paralyzed the entire enemy forces’ order system. Hence, the Israelites defeated them completely at Gibeon. In addition, Israel pursued them along the road and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. Note in verse 11 that God sent hailstones to assail and kill the enemies so more of them died from the hail than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.

Look at verse 12. After such resounding victories over the enemies, there were still many more remaining to destroy. Although the Amorites were being pursued and were in chaos, there was a slight possibility that after the dust-up, those scattered might be able to regroup and counter-attack Israel because the enemies were still more in number. Hence, the only chance for Joshua to root out all the possibility of the enemy attack was to thoroughly annihilate them. Alas, however, the daylight was getting dimmer as the sun was going down on the hills of Gibeon. At such a crucial moment, what did Joshua do? Verse 12b reads again. “‘Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.’” This is Joshua’s combined prayer and command toward the sun. The question now is how in the world Joshua could even think about such an immeasurably astronomical entity being moved or changing its course. In current days, even if you are not a physicist, you know that the sun does not rotate but the earth does and that the heavenly bodies never move. Consequently, what Joshua wished or commanded did not make sense at all. That could be answered through one man of God in our Friday meeting when he pointed out that in those days, to the people the sun functioned as the clock and what Joshua really wanted was not to make the sun stop but to elongate the daylight time so as to accomplish his mission of completely destroying his enemies. Surely, even in our children’s group Bible study, John, Pauline, and Isaiah theorized that God put His hands on the earth, like a braking pad or an engine brake so that the earth might slow down its rotation and thus the daylight could be sustained. Another important point could be made here that Joshua perceived that God is greater than the sun itself. While many of the people at that time worshiped the sun god (like Ra in Egypt), to Joshua it was nothing more than a light fixture in the sky. It was great faith too!

It is amazing that God hears our heart-felt prayer and grants us our wishes. Sometimes, it feels like we are experiencing miracles. One such an example would be how God stopped the Russian aggression against everyone’s prediction. During the full-scale Russian invasion of early days, Ukraine was predicted to be defeated in just three days. As Msn. Anastasia pointed out, the Russian military strength was measured by the miles of their tank lines like 30 or 40 miles on the road. I was amazed that God somehow impeded their advances by traffic jams, communication malfunctions, swampy terrains, and even man-made floods. Those were pure miracles to us. As of now, God has heard our continued heart-felt prayers for Ukraine so that those three days has become a year.

Verse 14 reaffirms such a notion of God-hearing our prayers and teaches us the secret of Joshua’s success in the battle. It reads. “There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a human being. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!” This was like Joshua’s key-verse testimony after a hectic day of fighting. His “One Word” at the end of the testimony echoes in our heart as well and gives us a true hope. So, may God continue to fight for us in whatever we do and give us victories upon victories.

1. **This is What the Lord Will Do to All the Enemies (16-43)**

Look at verse 16. After the humiliating loss, the five kings fled and hid in the cave at Makkedah. It was a stark contrast to their earlier stance toward Israel. Previously, they were fighting as if they were the consuming fire. But now they were hiding in a tiny cave. In our Friday meeting, Msn. Mary Bahn pointed out that they were like Saddam Hussein hiding in the smallest possible hiding spot. What did Joshua do to them? He did not kill them right away. Instead, he momentarily spared them for the future lesson for his junior army leaders but continued his pursuit of the enemies. Note the strong words Joshua said to his people in verse 19b. “Attack them from the rear and don’t let them reach their cities, for the Lord your God has given them into your hand.” The junior leaders would be like lions, tigers, and bears to their enemies. What was the result of this pursuit? No one managed to reach their fortified cities except a few but all the Israelites safely returned home. After this feat, Joshua had a lesson to teach. Verses 22-27 detail what he did. He first brought the kings out of the cave and summoned all the men of Israel to witness the lesson. That was for the junior army commanders to put their feet on the necks of those kings. It was the custom in those days to show the strength and superiority toward their enemies. Verse 25 is the message for them to remember. That it would be what their God would do to all the enemies they would fight. So, they should not be afraid nor discouraged. Instead, they should be strong and courageous. This was the exact message Joshua first received from God and tried to convey to the next generation. In a sense, this is a crash course for the discipleship training. In this day and age, we are surrounded with all sorts of issues and problems to tackle. After solving one problem leads to another problem. It seems endless our struggles. However, during this struggle, when we are at least mindful of the discipleship training, then, even one encouraging word, a friendly chatting, listening to their problems and showing some examples would be added to the curriculum of the discipleship program. One way or another, the next generation would pick up things from us and learn themselves. I still remember in my undergraduate time when I hit the rock bottom of everything like school study and jobs, my Bible teacher told me that the position and title I got would carry out the tasks themselves and eventually lead me to the better place. In hindsight, that was not exactly true, but because of the promising words, I managed to reach the fortified city, Jesus. So, let us pray for the discipleship training to continue one way or another so as to raise many future spiritual leaders.

Verses 28-43 are the details of the southern campaign that literally shaped the map of Israel. Note the repeated pattern in this campaign. Joshua and his army totally destroyed one city after another for those initial five cities minus two, Jerusalem and Jarmuth and plus more. During this campaign, Horam king Gezer came to an aid to those five kings, but he too was defeated. In all, seven notable cities, Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, and Negev were totally destroyed. Joshua could subdue the people from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen and Gibeon. It was like the Louisiana Purchase that literally reshaped the western part of US. Note what verse 42 reiterates: All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.

In conclusion, we learned that God hears our heart-felt prayers and grants our wishes. When we receive God’s answers, we feel like we are experiencing miracles. The secret of our everyday-life-victories is believing that God fights for us. And one of the most heart-felt prayers for us is the discipleship training. May God continue to fight for us and raise many disciples among us to shape the map of His Kingdom again.