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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, December 30, 2007
"Never Give Up"
Joshua 11-12

Sir Winston Churchill toward the end of his illustrious career was invited to speak at the preparatory school he had attended as a young lad.

Before Churchill arrived at the school, the Headmaster told the student body several days before Churchill's arrival that he would be visiting the campus and speaking to them. The Headmaster urged the boys to listen closely as Churchill was one of the greatest orators of all time.

The day came when Churchill was given a descriptive welcome, and he stepped to the podium to deliver his address.

Churchill began, "Young gentlemen, never give up. Never give up. Never, never, never, never,"
And then Churchill sat down. That was his address.

I'm sure those young boys never forgot Churchill's address.

Perhaps you are facing some challenge in your life today that you need to hear those words, "Never Give Up! Never, never, never, never!" Perhaps they are words for all of us to hear as we come to the end of 2007 and begin 2008 on Tuesday of this week. My where has the time gone, as 2007 has slipped through our fingers like sand through the hour glass.

As we have been considering the Book of Joshua for the past few months, it has become obvious that Joshua exemplified this kind of spirit, this kind of attitude, of never giving up!

The question I ask is, "Why?" Why did not Joshua give up, throw in the towel, so to speak, as he led the nation of Israel, 2 _ million people, into the land that God had promised them. Why did Joshua keep going in spite of Achan's sin in the camp, the deception of the Gibeonites, and the constant encountering of the enemy to keep the nation from taking the land that God had already given them, it was only theirs for the taking. Why did not Joshua give up in this challenging venture God had given him?

Joshua didn't give up first of all because . . .

I. With God Joshua saw challenges not problems (Joshua 1-12).

He saw the positive not the negative. He saw the potential not the weakness. He saw the promised land not the enemy.

When the full information of Joshua comes on the pages of the historical writ, in Numbers 13-14, one of the first things that jumps out of the page about Joshua, as the report of the 12 spies is given, is that Joshua didn't see the gigantic giants as able to defeat Israel, but that powerful Israel would be able to take the giants like "petty prey."

Instead of siding with those who said that Israel was like a grasshopper in the sight of the giants, he was saying that the Israel was the giant and the enemy was the grasshopper. Why did Joshua have that kind of faith in spite of what the other 10 spies reported? He said that the Lord is with us, do not fear them (Numbers 14:9).

As we have studied from Joshua 1-10, we have seen, in spite of incredible odds, Joshua and the people taking on one city after another.

In fact, in our text for today, we see Joshua and the Israelites moving their military campaign from Southern Canaan into Northern Canaan, as they pursue the enemy that is trying to stop Israel's progress in the land.

Chapter 11 of Joshua gives us information about that Northern Campaign and then in Chapter 12 we have the listing of the different city/states/kings that were taken in the Southern Campaign (Joshua 12:9-16), and then those defeated in the Northern Campaign (Joshua 12:17-24).

According to Joshua 11:23, Joshua, with God's help, had captured the land of promise. The land could now be divided among the different tribes of Israel. There would still be challenges for the different tribes as their property was allotted to them, **but the key parts of the land had been subdued by Joshua as the Lord had directed.**

Joshua had captured the land of promise. He never gave up.

Did that mean that there wasn't defeat and failure as Joshua and Israel took the land of promise? Of course not, but there is a great lesson here as we experience defeat and failure in our challenges.

II. In spite of the challenges which brought defeat, with God's help, Joshua turned the failures into victories (Joshua 7-9).

1. The Negative

How did defeat and failure come to Joshua as he and the people came into the land of promise?

(1) Joshua started living by sight not by faith – which produces the negative, yes, sin (Joshua 7:7). That can happen when we start looking at the circumstances rather than to the Lord. When bad things happen we can start to blame God for what took place.

That's what happened at AI when Achan disobeyed, sinned against the LORD. Achan's sin brought defeat to the nation of Israel as they tried to defeat AI. That defeat caused Joshua to start blaming God which was sin.

For a moment, Joshua saw the enemy as able to defeat Israel. The enemy became the giant, and Israel the grasshopper, rather than Israel the giant and the enemy the grasshopper.

Joshua's words were (Joshua 7:7), "O LORD God why did you ever bring this people over Jordan to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan!"

As Joshua saw the defeat of Israel at AI, he was thinking that defeat meant the loss of the land inheritance. Joshua became negative, yes, he was sinning before God in his life because of looking at the circumstance rather than at God. For awhile Joshua was walking by sight not by faith. He was blaming God for what happened to Israel at AI.

That's very easy to do in our relationship with Jesus Christ today. Something happens to us spiritually, or something happens in a relationship, or someone's life is taken suddenly in an accident, and a person begins doubting God's goodness and sovereignty, and soon one loses one's fervency for the Lord. One starts to blame God. One stops fellowshiping with the saints, one's attitude toward God hardens and before one knows it, a person has quit fellowship with the Lord.

Certainly, those kinds of things are difficult. But Joshua did not turn from the Lord. In fact, God spoke to Joshua to tell him what was the matter. In other words, Joshua listened to God's Word, which all of us need to do when we get into difficult situations. We need to ask what did I do to get into this circumstance, or what did someone else do to get in a certain circumstance. Then ask, where is God in all of this and what would He have me or us do.

In that situation Joshua learned that he needed to come to God and find out what reason for the defeat of Israel was. God forgave Joshua and the nation, Achan and his family were destroyed and Israel proceeded on in fellowship with the Lord and victory was achieved over AI with the LORD's help and direction.

But then Joshua and leaders of Israel a bit later were deceived by the Gibeonites. What happened there?

(2) Again Joshua and the leaders walked by sight not by faith (Joshua 9:14).

They were deceived by the Gibeonites into thinking that they were from a far country, and made a covenant with them, finding out three days later that they were in the land about 15-20 miles away. Yes, they followed through on the covenant made with them, but they were made caretakers of the wood and water for the Tabernacle.

Again Joshua and the leaders were walking by sight and not by faith. They looked at the circumstances, and in Joshua 9:14 says that Joshua and Israel did not ask counsel of the LORD.

And again God intervened and salvaged the situation by His grace and love.

It's amazing what can happen to us when we start thinking on our own even as followers of Jesus Christ. We do something that's not right, and it's easy to blame God for what happens, or we have a decision to make, and we don't bring God into the picture by seeking out what He has to say to us in His Word, the Bible, and we get into situations that we could have avoided.

Leaving God out of our thinking, will lead to walking by sight, which leads to wrong words and actions. Before we know it, if we don't confess our sin of pride and arrogance to the LORD, we become cynical and negative. We start complaining or we get down on someone we love. We can even become bitter and resentful. We are miserable to live with.

Sometimes, physical problems can cause us to get down spiritually, and we may need to see a medical doctor.

2. The Positive.

(1) Joshua turned the negatives of his life into positives.

Even though Joshua walked by sight and not by faith at times, he did not let that take over his life. He did not let his failures consume his life. He dealt with those before the LORD, for there was victory at AI after the defeat. He and Israel went and fought and defeated those who were coming to attack the Gibeonites. Joshua and the Israelites turned their failures into victories, which means if God is looked to in the failures, failures can be the backdoor to success for the Lord. Of course that is what the cross is all about.

(2) After turning negatives into positives, Joshua kept living by faith – taking God at His Word and acting on it.

Then in Chapter 11 today, of our text, verses 6, 15, & 23, it is clear that Joshua kept going because he had faith in the LORD and He did what the LORD commanded.

Joshua 11:6 - "Do not be afraid because of them," that is the enemy, "For tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel: you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire." It has been suggested that northern armies may have had a 300,000 infantry, 10,000 Calvary, and 20,000 chariots. This could possibly be an exaggeration, but Israel faced a huge enemy.

Joshua 11:15 – Joshua left nothing undone that the LORD had commanded through Moses.

Joshua 11:23 – So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses.

What an exciting passage of God's Word!

And this is the challenge for each of us as we come to the end of 2007 and begin 2008.

We must keep focused on the Lord and His Word and not start looking at circumstances and others if we want to live victorious lives for Jesus Christ.

Letting circumstances determine our spiritual guidance can only lead to defeat and failure as it did to Joshua and Israel. And also becoming the fan of a man can bring real let downs as it has in the evangelical communities. People get all caught up in some man's charismatic personality, or his teaching of promising wealth and health, That's why the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians not to be part of the party syndrome – saying I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos,

That's why Paul told the Corinthians that there is no other foundation than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. If anyone is going to glory let him glory in the LORD. The one who plants and the one who water aren't anything, but God who causes the growth or increase.

That's why the writer of Hebrews tell us to keep looking to Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith (or keep your eyes fixed on Jesus) who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God.

Our Lord did not focus on the problems and suffering. He looked at the challenge before Him – He saw the inheritance He could win for you and me, not the negative of getting it. In fact, He was turning the negative of sin and death into forgiveness and life for you and me through His death, burial, and bodily resurrection.

How will we see our problems and difficulties in 2008?

Will we see them as challenges, and then when we sin and fail the Lord, will we quickly ask His forgiveness and let Him turn our failures into victories for Him??

Howard Hendricks tells of his 5th grade teaching who tied him to his seat, and his hands behind his back with a big rope. 'Then she wrapped paper around his head to cover his mouth. "Now, Howard," she said, "You will sit still and keep quiet."

Then Howard was graduated from her class to the 6th grade class. He says for obvious reasons.

As he walked in that 6th grade class that 6th grade teacher, who was 6 ft. 4 inches tall, said to Howard, " Oh you're that Howard Hendricks. I've heard about you," and then she added, "I don't believe a word of it."

That was the first year, Howard said, that he found a teacher who believed in him. He would not let her down. He did all the projects. His 5th grade teacher would walk by his room and peek in the window of the 6th grade classroom door to see how Howard was doing. But there he was sitting clothed in his right mind and working.

Obviously this 6th grade teacher saw in Howard a challenge in the problem. She saw that the problem could be turned into a victory. Really she saw great potential in Howard's seeming weakness. She captured that potential in Howard Hendricks and changed his life. She never gave up on him.

Joshua never gave up as he led the nation of Israel into the promised land. He saw challenges not problems. When there was defeat, he dealt with it with the Lord, and God helped him turn his defeat and failures into victories.

But thirdly, Joshua never gave up because . . .

III. Joshua let the LORD encourage Him always (Joshua 11:6, 9, 15,23; 11:20).

The reason that God could encourage Joshua was that God knew Joshua personally, and Joshua knew God personally. Joshua's positive approach was not found in his own goodness, or his own positive thinking that floats around in some Christian circles today, which is based more upon man's ability than a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ revealed in the Bible.

Joshua did not base His positive attitude upon himself, but upon the LORD he knew personally and his faith in the LORD that the was there standing behind him, was with him at all times encouraging him on to victory.

Note what was involved in Joshua's taking encouragement in the LORD.

1. He was obedient to what God said (to God's Word).

Joshua 11:6 – "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time, I will deliver all of them slain before Israel – Hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

Joshua 11:9 – "Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him."

Joshua 11:15 – "He (Joshua) left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses."

Joshua 11:23 – "So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses."

What did the LORD tell Joshua? Do not be afraid of the enemy, for tomorrow at this time, I will deliver the enemy to you.

How did Joshua respond?

Joshua did what the told him. Joshua did what the LORD had commanded Moses. Joshua did according to all that the LORD had spoken to him.

From where did Joshua's encouragement come?? Of course from the LORD.

How was that encouragement activated in Joshua's life?? Only as Joshua listened to God's word and acted upon it.

Let me say that again. God's encouragement to Joshua was only activated in his life as Joshua listened to God's Word and acted upon it.

The question for Joshua here was not what he could do, but what God could do. He believed if he took God at his word, victory would be achieved. He believed God was there encouraging and strengthening him on to achieve the victory.

Joshua served a big God, a God who not only promised victory over the enemy, but gave the encouragement and strength to make that victory happen.

Question to us is this: "How big is the God we serve?" The size of our God will not only determine our theology, but what we let God encourage us to do for Him to have victory over our old habits and attitudes, while also letting God shove us out of our comfort zones and do something for Him this year that we may have never done before. Like, who should we pray for? Who should we build a relationship with? What can God do in our midst to increase our outreach to the community? If we have around 100 attending on Sunday morning, and say we have contact with 10 people off and on this year, we can potentially touch 1000 people with Christ's love this year. If we would touch 10 different people each month, then the potential is unlimited as to what God can do through us.

The questions is not what will we do, but what we believe God can do, and do it through us.

And that happens by us yielding to the Holy Spirit who lives within us who is our Encourager today as the Paraclete, the One called along side to cheer us on to victory- to bring encouragement, exhortation, strengthening, comfort, wisdom and intercession (John 14:16-17; 16:7-15)He also lives in us today, so in obedience to Him we can have the power to say "no" to sin and "yes" to righteousness (Galatians 5:16ff).

But there was another reason Joshua let the LORD encourage Him always.

2. Joshua had an understanding of and willingness to follow God's ways (to become holy like the Lord) – (Joshua 11:20).

Note Joshua 11:20 – “ For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses”

This is not the easiest teaching to understand. In fact, if one is not careful using the natural mind, it is easy to say that this is not fair. The biblical God is barbaric. This is acting as a “Holy Terror.”

But we need to keep in mind that God is holy and sovereign, and gracious, yet man is sinful. When the hearts of people become so wicked that they have no desire to turn to Him, God's day of grace ends, and His judgment comes.

Israel was also given the command to take the Land and subdue its enemies (Deuteronomy 7:1ff).

But why did God issue this command to take the land of promise in this way?

I refer you to the book by R.C. Sproul, The Holiness Of God (revised edition - Pages 118-129). In these pages he writes that many say that Israel's taking of the land of Canaan was just a nice story, but it has no historical validity. In fact, if it were true it points out that the God of the Old Testament is barbaric. Sproul is quick to point out that those who reject the God of the Old Testament on this basis miss the holiness and justice of God, and that His day of grace has an end for those who reject Him. Israel in defeating the peoples in the land of Canaan was carrying out God's judgment on these people whose end had come for their rejection of God's grace. Those who miss this concept don't understand the justice of God and that there is a consequence for rejecting His grace. Israel was not better than the other nations. Rather God had given a promise to Abraham that his seed would have this piece of property for an inheritance. Israel had responded to God's grace and God was using the nation to take the land promised to them. What's involved here in the taking of the land of promise was the holiness of God. To miss God's holiness in Joshua is to miss what God is doing through Israel and what God's character is all about, for His holiness affects all of His attributes. The ultimate, of course, of God bringing together His justice, holiness, and love is the cross of Jesus Christ.

Joshua certainly had some idea about God's desire, His WAY, and that was to make him holy, and the people of Israel holy. God told Israel in Leviticus 11:44 & 19:2 to be holy as He was holy.

In the full revelation of the Bible through faith in Jesus Christ, God tells us the same thing as Peter pens that we are to be like the HOLY ONE who called us --be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “you shall be holy, for I am holy.” Peter is quoting from Leviticus 11 and 19.

The God of the Bible is a holy God and He wants His followers, those who accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior, to be holy as He is holy, that is to act like God in thought, attitude, word and deed, for holy means to be set apart to God as His possession.

To reject God's holiness as an unbeliever will eventually bring God's judgment. Even for the believer to miss out on understanding God's holiness can lead to a life of misery and unhappiness.

God disciplines us in love for our good; that we may share in His holiness - His purity – His kind of nature and life (Hebrews 13:10).

That is why Hebrews 13:14 challenges us to “Pursue peace with all men and holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

In that process, believers in the LORD should never fall into the attitude that God owes them something in all of their pursuit of holiness. Rather, our attitude should be, “Why did God redeem me?” In fact, that is what Paul wrote about in Romans 9-11. Paul concluded that it was only

because of God's mercy that Christ came to him and gave him His forgiveness and grace as He believed in the Lord. It was not based upon his merit. It was only based upon God's mercy and grace.

We all deserve God's judgment, but through faith in Christ, He give us His forgiveness and eternal life. We are declared justified, declared righteous before the Holy God. That is truly amazing grace!!

In fact, Peter's charge to us "to be holy as the Lord is holy," is set in the context of the grace of Jesus Christ. We are to prepare our minds for action, keep sober in spirit, and fix our hope completely on the grace that will be brought at the return of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:13).

One of the reasons we give up following our Lord with enthusiasm is that we forget that God's ultimate desire for us is to be holy like He is. We want to be free from any challenges in life, We love to be care free, but God's desire is for us to be like Him, to be holy.

Sometimes, we don't always understand what the Lord is up to, but if we continue to obey Him and look for what He is wanting to do in our lives even in the tough times, we will not give up on the Lord, but we will, like Joshua, see that God is in the midst refining us, and refocusing us to become more like Him.

Through obedience to the Lord and understanding and following God's way, Joshua was encouraged in the LORD. May that be the same for us as we face the different challenges in our lives.

But there is one more area that kept Joshua from never giving up in His faith walk with His LORD.

IV. Joshua kept God's goal before him of taking the promised land (Joshua 11:23).

Look again at Joshua 11:23. 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 divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.

God finally gave the promised land to Joshua and the nation of Israel. It was a promise that came from Moses that went back to Abraham the father of Israel, about 600 years before the time of Joshua.

Joshua did not take his mind off the goal that God set before Him, the taking of the land of promise.

Notice what Joshua understood about obtaining that goal.

1. It would take time to reach the goal of taking the land completely (Joshua 11:18).

Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings.

Joshua was about 80 years old when he took over the leadership of Israel. He died at the age of 110 (Joshua 24:29).

Some feel at this time in history that Joshua would be about 100 years old which means that it took about 20 years for the Israelites to reach the goal of taking the whole land for their inheritance.

That is quite a long period of time – 20 years. Even if it were 15 years, it was still a considerable length of time.

But Joshua kept going for the goal that God had promised. He never gave up. He knew it would take time. He knew that there would be conflict. He knew there would be challenges. But he never gave up. He kept banking on God's promise that the inheritance would be theirs, the goal would be theirs.

Perhaps this year you have had some goals in your life. Perhaps you have kept some of them. Others you may not have kept.

As we go into 2008, perhaps you are thinking about some goals you should have. Of course, some goals are short range and other goals are long range.

At the same time, we need to be reminded as Joshua understood, that God is in no hurry, but we need to keep step with Him.

For there is one ultimate goal that we all should have as followers of Jesus Christ. Paul put it this way in Philippians 3:13-14 – “Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

What should be our ultimate goal in life as we end 2007, start 2008, and each day of our lives? To become more like Christ. That’s why Paul wrote just prior to these verses that I might know Him, that is Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable to His death, in order that I may attain the resurrection of the dead, not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on

Someone has said that the important thing in life is not where you were, or where you are, but where you want to get.

Where each of us who knows the LORD should want to get – is to become more like Christ. That should be our goal as individuals, as husbands and wives, and dads and moms, as children and young people, as students at school, at our jobs, as leaders in the church, or whatever our classification in the church. It is goal that is God given and one which we can continually in the power of the Holy Spirit seek to go for each day of our lives.

And remember, as Joshua knew that it would take time to conquer the promised land. He did not give up because he kept his focus and mind on the goal that God gave Him – to conquer that land.

May it be the same for us as we seek to become like Jesus Christ. We will continually keep working on the goal of becoming more like Him each day in thought, attitude, word, and deed.

But as Joshua knew it would take time to get to the goal he also knew that

2. The goal reached provided an opportunity for reflection.

Chapter 12 is a summary of the victories on the east side of the Jordan, as well as the victories in southern and northern Canaan.

All the cities were captured because of Joshua 11:8 – “The Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, so that they defeated them.”

Praise for God’s intervention is not in our text but Psalm 105 written later has this to tell us – note verses 42-45.

“For He remembered His holy word with Abraham His servant; and He brought forth His people with joy, His chosen ones with a joyful shout. He gave them also the lands of the nations, that they might take possession of the fruit of the peoples’ labor. So that they might keep His statutes and observe His laws. Praise the LORD.”

Of course that did not happen as our text for today indicated without direct opposition and conflict.

But as we let God work in our lives, we need to thank Him for His patience with us, and for never giving up on us. Since God is for us who is against us. Since He continually cheers us on by His indwelling Spirit, He wants us to never give up in becoming more like His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must always keep in mind that God never gives us something to do that is impossible. He never gives us the goal of becoming like Christ knowing that it is impossible for us to do that.

Neil Anderson writes:

"Imagine God saying, "I've called you into existence, I've made you My child, and I have something for you to do. I know you won't be able to do it, but give it your best shot." That's ludicrous! It's like saying to your child, "I want you to mow the lawn. Unfortunately, the lawn is full of rocks, the mower doesn't work, and there's no gas. But give it your best shot." Even secular scholars say that issuing a command that cannot be obeyed will undermine authority.

God had a staggering goal for a little maiden named Mary. An angel told her that she would bear a son while still a virgin, and that her son would be the Savior of the world. When she inquired about this seemingly impossible feat, the angel simply said, "Nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

You wouldn't give your child a task he couldn't complete, and God doesn't assign to you goals you can't achieve. His goals for you are possible, certain and achievable. When God's will for us appears impossible, let's say with Mary: "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

Imagine the overwhelming assignment that confronted Mary. She was to have a baby without being with a man. She was to raise the child who would save the world. The entire course of history would be altered, and the eternal destiny of believers would be changed. The fact that we celebrated Christmas is proof that Mary's child Jesus was indeed the world-changing Son of God.

Despite the staggering nature of the task announced by the angel, Mary gave herself to accomplish God's will. God is still looking for a few bondslaves who will dare to believe that nothing is impossible with God.

Henry Ford give this advice one time.

"If you start a thing finish it. It's sounds familiar, a piece of old fashioned advice, but its part of an engineer's design for living- finish it."

The man who will not give up even if he fail his objective – is led to another objective, the man who hangs on as if he were paid to hang on can always start again at par or better – he has strengthened himself.

Quitting makes a dead end of any road, often just as it was ready to open. Transfer if you must, catch another wave length, change your level to a higher one, but don't quit, It is always too soon to quit.

This is from man's viewpoint.

Believers in Christ today should have God's viewpoint as Joshua did, for they serve the same biblical God!

With the biblical God's help, the believer never gives up because . . .

- The believer sees challenges not problems.
- The believer turns defeats into victories.
- The believer lets God encourage him at all times. and
- The believer keeps his focus on the goal of becoming like Christ.

Yes, Joshua never gave up because God never gave up on Him.

You and I who know the Lord today, serve the same God . We never give up because God never gives up on us. He is there cheering us on by the Holy Spirit to never give up living for HIM.

May our prayer be:

Lord, I yield to You as Your bonds slave. I choose to believe with Your help I can continually become like You, and do whatever You want me to do. Drawing on the Holy Spirit's indwelling power, I will never give up living for YOU! In Your Victorious Name, AMEN.