



# 11 | JOSHUA 10:1-15

## SUN STAND STILL

*Surrender to God gives Him freedom to do God-size things in your life*

### Outline

*The Need for Courageous Faith*

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### Call to Worship

“The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; <sup>3</sup>my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior— ... <sup>32</sup>For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God? <sup>47</sup>The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be my God, the Rock, my Savior! <sup>50</sup>Therefore I will praise you, LORD, among the nations; I will sing the praises of your name.” (2 Sam 22:2-3, 32, 47, 50)

### Songs

*King of Kings*  
*What a Beautiful Name It Is*  
*Trust and Obey*  
*Take My Life and Let it Be*  
*Surrender All / I Surrender All*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**WELCOME:** Welcome visitors

**GIVING:** You can still give over Zelle through your bank with no fees (use secretary@livinghope.net). We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center.

**MEN'S RETREAT:** October 2-3. Friday, Oct 2, 4pm Check-in. Saturday, Oct 3, 7pm dismissal. In Lake Geneva. Cost is \$83.50 per man or boy and includes lodging, two dinners, a breakfast, a lunch, and snacks throughout. Sign up at the Welcome Center. Pastor Mike will also send out an online sign up.

## Introduction

We continue in a series in the book of Joshua called "Footsteps of Faith." Our title this morning is: "Sun Stand Still".

Key thought: Surrender to God gives Him freedom to do God-size things in your life.

Sometimes God breaks through the normal happenings of history and science and does a miracle. Chapter 10 of the book of Joshua celebrates a divine intervention unparalleled in world history. There was "no day like it" (10:14).

### *The Need for Courageous Faith*

So many Christians are living out a crippled and paralyzed faith. Joshua 10 calls us to live out a courageous faith. This is the chapter where God gave Joshua the power to command the sun to stand still.

When God asks us to do something uncomfortable, it's usually because he wants to do something remarkable.

Are you uncomfortable in some area of your life? You've got to surrender or you will lose it all. You might be so worried about your health. Why would God want to heal you if you have made your health an idol? Same with our finances, our treasures. If the love of money is controlling you, why would God bless you so that you? He wants you to be generous, not a hoarder. Maybe you are uncomfortable in your marriage. You will not see real joy in marriage until you surrender. Maybe it's your time. You will always be exhausted and incredibly discouraged until you have just given up your rights to everything! The Christian life is one of cross bearing. You have to take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow Christ.

Our call today is to surrender in full obedience as followers of Christ and leave the consequences up to God. Joshua is brought to an impossible situation. He's to face the five remaining nations of the Canaanite Coalition.

Bad experiences or the disappointments from our past or present can turn our courageous faith into the dead weight of concrete. God doesn't just want you to survive another day. He wants you to believe God for what only he can do.

"What is impossible with man is possible with God" (Lk 18:17).

We can't let hurts or misunderstandings hold us back. God has no Plan B. The Bible throws down the gauntlet in Hebrews 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It doesn't get any plainer than that. Faith isn't just a Get Out of Hell Free card. It's the most vital

building block of your relationship with God. And it's the only real foundation worth establishing your life on.

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## 1. THE MESS (10:1-5)

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### THE MESS DESCRIBED

Here we have the Gibeonites being attacked by five Canaanite kings, led by Adoni-zedek (king of righteousness), king of Jerusalem. This is the first mention of Jerusalem in the Bible. These are not great empires, but city states. They are like kings of great cities, more like war lords. Now it seems like Joshua and Israel's army were in a bad spot because of an unwise decision to make a union with the Gibeonites. So now, the Canaanite kings feel like if Gibeon falls, they'll all fall. They need to get Gibeon back!

**Joshua 10:1-5** | As soon as Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had captured Ai and had devoted it to destruction, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, <sup>2</sup>he feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were warriors. <sup>3</sup>So Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish, and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, <sup>4</sup>"Come up to me and help me, and let us strike Gibeon. For it has made peace with Joshua and with the people of Israel." <sup>5</sup>Then the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered their forces and went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it.

If a great city like Gibeon capitulated to the Jews, then one more barrier was removed against the advancement of Israel in the land. It was important for the Canaanites to recover that key city, even if they had to take it by force. Four other Canaanite kings allied with Adoni-zedek (King of Jerusalem), and their combined armies encamped before Gibeon. The poor Gibeonites had made peace with the invaders and were now at war with their former allies!<sup>1</sup> What a mess!

God has a plan, but it sure doesn't look like anything more than a mess. But God has a plan for your mess. He wants to make your mess a masterpiece. God says,

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.  
—Isaiah 55:8-9

### MY MESS IS GOD'S MASTERPIECE

Have you ever seen a great artist turn a mess into a masterpiece? A big pile of sand becomes fantastic castle. A useless, discarded piece of wood with a few strokes of a chainsaw becomes a glorious eagle. That's how it is with God. He takes a mess and makes it a masterpiece.

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Strong*, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 112.

The mistakes we make embarrass us, especially those mistakes that are caused by our running ahead of the Lord and not seeking his will. But we need to remember that no mistake is final for the dedicated Christian. God can use even our blunders to accomplish his purposes. Warren Wiersbe said, “Somebody defined success as ‘the art of making your mistakes when nobody’s looking’; but a better definition would be ‘the art of seeing victory where other people see only defeat.’”<sup>2</sup> He was using these events to accomplish His own purposes. Instead of having to defeat these five city-states one by one, the LORD would help Joshua conquer them all at one time!<sup>3</sup>

### *Joshua’s Mess*

You have to remember, Joshua had seen this before. He had seen God turn a mess into a masterpiece. Joshua was born into Egyptian slavery as had everyone in his generation. Through God’s call he became Moses’ assistant. All was going according to plan at the border of the Promised Land when disaster struck.

The 12 spies were sent into the Promised land and brought back the produce: a single cluster of grapes took two men to carry on a pole between them. They enjoyed pomegranates and figs (Num 13:23). The unbelieving spies announced to all the people that there were armies of giants so that “we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers” (Num 13:33).

When the people heard that giants stood between them and taking possession of their destiny, they panicked. Everyone wanted to turn back and give up. Everyone, that is, except **Joshua** and his friend **Caleb**. You probably know the story. Unlike the other spies, Joshua and Caleb returned from scouting out the Promised Land with a message of faith, not fear. They had great faith in a big God. Listen to their words:

The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. <sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them (Num 14:7-9).

Sadly, fear won out that day. Ten spies were put to death by order of the Lord. The line had been crossed. The people had no faith. Forty wasted years followed. We have to feel for Joshua and Caleb. They have to bear the consequences of his nation’s faithlessness. What a mess!

### *Joshua’s Masterpiece*

When Moses died, Joshua became his successor, and eighty-year-old Joshua was ready with courageous faith. He launched a campaign of enthusiastic faith in God’s goodness and power. What a masterpiece! They were so weak, but God is so strong.

I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me... For when I am weak, then I am strong. –2 Corinthians 12:9-10

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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## 2. THE MISSION (10:6-11)

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### THE MISSION DESCRIBED

As the chapter opens, we read that five opposing Amorite armies were planning to attack. The Gibeonites plea for Joshua's help, and Joshua delivers. It's an impossible mission!

Having decided to strike first, Joshua led his entire army toward the Amorites on an all-night march. Sometime during that march, God spoke to Joshua. He told him: "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you" (10:8). Let's read it.

**Joshua 10:6-11** | And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, "Do not relax your hand from your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the hill country are gathered against us." <sup>7</sup> So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. <sup>8</sup> And the Lord said to Joshua, "**Do not fear them**, for I have given them into your hands. **Not a man of them shall stand before you.**" <sup>9</sup> So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. <sup>10</sup> And the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makedah. <sup>11</sup> And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword (10:6-11).

It's an impossible mission. The five remaining Canaanite Coalition are getting ready to attack, but God says: you give them a surprise attack!

Joshua stayed on mission. God said to Joshua, "Don't fear," and Joshua obeyed and trusted the Lord. That's the foundation of faith. Don't fear; have faith in the Lord. He marched all night long, about 15 miles from Gilgal to Beth-horon.

What happened? At dawn, the Israelites unleashed a surprise attack, and right from the beginning the battle went well. When the enemy lines broke, and the Amorites started to flee into the valley, Joshua's men chased them down. And God got personally involved. "As they fled before Israel," the account reads, "**the Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them... and they died**" (10:11). We'll find that more Canaanites died from the hail stones than from the fighting!

Principle: God can do far more than you can ever ask for.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. –Ephesians 3:20-21

## THE MISSION DEMONSTRATED

I want to emphasize that before God got involved, the soldiers of Israel were on task. They were doing what God asked them to do. They were fighting. They were battling. This teaches us a very important lesson. Faith is not an excuse for laziness. We need to be carrying out the responsibilities God has given us and then by faith know that God will step in and put his fingerprints on the details. We are called to stay on task, expecting God to work.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12-13).

Are you expecting God to work? We are to be faithful in seeking God, striving after him, walking in the Spirit. Revivals occur as we carry out the ordinary, “instituted means of grace—preaching, pastoring, worship, prayer.”<sup>4</sup> We must be diligent in living out the normal Christian life in the Spirit’s fullness. This is where God manifests himself. As we work out the Spirit-filled life, God works in and through us.

With Joshua, he was obeying God’s command and call on his life. In the midst of obedience there was a miracle. This is how God normally works.

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### 3. THE MIRACLE (10:12-15)

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#### JOSHUA’S MIRACLE DESCRIBED

God is going to grant a miracle to Joshua, but that miracle begins in verse 10, which says, “Joshua spoke to the Lord” (10:12a).

**Joshua 10:12-13a** | At that time Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, “Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.” <sup>13</sup> And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies...

#### *God’s Promise*

As the sun sank toward the horizon, Joshua faced a decision. The victory wasn’t complete, and once it got dark, the rest of the Amorites would slip away. But Joshua was determined to fight on. Perhaps he realized that if he didn’t destroy the enemy now, Israel’s conquest of Canaan would grind to a halt. Maybe he knew that anything less than total victory would conceal God’s presence and glory. Besides, he remembered God’s promise in the night: “**Not one of them will be able to withstand you**” (10:8b). Most of us—even really good Christian people—would have called it a day. I’ve done all I can do. I’ve exhausted every option. I’ve given it all I’ve got. But Joshua wasn’t most people. He refused to go out like that. That wasn’t the way it was supposed to end. This was where his audacious faith began.

Where your strength ends, is where God’s miraculous power begins.

#### *Joshua’s Prayer*

Joshua sized up the situation, summoned all his available courage, and delivered one of the most gloriously courageous prayers in the entire Bible:

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<sup>4</sup> William B. Sprague *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1832), 133.

**Joshua 10:12b** | "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."

I know this proposition seems impossible to us. But according to Scripture, God gave Joshua exactly what he ordered. Just when the Amorites were hanging on for the cover of darkness, darkness never came. Just when they thought the curtains were about to drop on their day from hell, God came out for an encore.

Sometimes, God crushes us through a trial or a failure, like when Israel compromised and made a covenant with the Gibeonites. They didn't say, I'm done. No the best was yet to come.

Think about Peter. He said, "I go a fishing" after his great failure of denying the Lord. But no, his best was yet to come. Where your strength ends, God's miraculous power begins.

**He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. –1 Peter 5:5**

### *God's Preservation*

God answered Joshua's prayer.

**Joshua 10:13-14** | And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.<sup>14</sup> There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.

Joshua sized up "The LORD fought for Israel" (10:14b). Did God actually stop the earth on its axis? Did he create some kind of substitute sun to extend daylight? In other words, **what really went down here?** I don't know the answers to those questions. There are other books written by much smarter people that address the practical implications of this event. But my faith is pretty simple. **I choose to believe that the same God who intervened to bring his Son back to life intervened on this day in history to help his people.** God chose to answer Joshua's courageous prayer.

This is the last miracle recorded in Joshua and certainly the greatest. Joshua prayed for God's help, and the Lord answered in a remarkable way. This event is questioned by those who deny the reality of miracles and look only to science for truth. "How could God stop the rotation of the earth and extend the length of a day," they ask, "without creating chaos all over the planet?" They seem to forget the fact that days are *normally* of different lengths in various parts of the world without the planet experiencing chaos. At 2 o'clock in the morning, you can read a book by sunlight at various times of the year in Alaska.

But how do you explain a miracle, *any* miracle? Of course, the simplest answer is the answer of faith: The Lord is God **and nothing is too hard for him (Jer 32:17, 27)**. Day and night belong to God (Psa 74:16), and everything he has made is his servant. If God can't perform the miracle described in Joshua 10, then he can't perform *any* miracle.<sup>5</sup>

**Never be content with a little victory, because God wants you to live in the fullness of his complete victory.**

So on the Israelites fought from sun up one day and into the next day with full daylight. Why did they need an extra day? This an especially interesting question since the Bible says,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.,114–115.

The Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword” (10:11).

If God killed most of the Canaanite soldiers himself, why did the soldiers of Israel need an extra day to destroy them? Likely it is because the Canaanite soldiers were hiding in caves to protect themselves from the hailstones. The army of Israel had to do a search and destroy mission until every last one of the Canaanites were killed. God preserved his earthly army on this amazing day. What a miracle. God turns messes into miracles!

### *Israel's Peace*

As a result, Joshua and all Israel returned home to Gilgal.

So Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal (10:15).

There is a peace that comes when we rest by courageous faith in a miracle working God. When God intervenes in your life, you have “peace that passes understanding” and “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

### **YOUR MIRACLE**

Jesus said we should pray this way. Our God is a big God, so go big or go home.

### *Big Messes*

Here are some of the most common things I've seen people pray courageous “Sun Stand Still” prayers about:

- broken relationships
- financial provision
- career aspirations
- spiritual breakthroughs at work, in the community, or elsewhere in the world
- physical and emotional healing
- loved ones who are far from God
- standing strong against temptation
- achieving important life goals
- finding and embracing purpose
- ministry resources and momentum

### *Big Miracles*

Jesus wants us to have a big faith in a big God. He says in **Mark 11:22-24**:

Have faith in God.<sup>23</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. <sup>24</sup> Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” —**Mark 11:22-24**

Jesus is likely on the Mount of Olives when he says this from which vantage point he can see Herod the Great's underground palace. Herod took one mountain, cut it down, and piled it upon the mountain where he had his palace, so he had a kind of James Bond 007 secret palace that is still there to this day. When I visited there, there were piles and piles of rocks from the work that Herod's workers did. They were actually restoring his palace under the ground when I visited there (January 2018). He had a sauna and shower area (bathhouse).



He had a place to entertain guests, a theater, a synagogue, and a gigantic freshwater swimming pool with water piped from Bethlehem. As exquisite as it was at the time, it all would come to nothing. The kingdom of this world will fail and will become the kingdom of our God and of his King, Jesus. It's so simple, as Jesus said, "Without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

Jesus says, essentially, pray to me, and Herod's kingdom will be cast into the sea. No matter how great the request, if it is according to God's will, God wants us to pray in faith believing, nothing wavering.

### *True Surrender*

Big messes give way to big miracles, when there is a true surrender. God's often got a completely different idea in answering your prayer. He's the God who answers "exceedingly, abundantly above all that we could ask or imagine" (Eph 3:20-21). God wants to do something so great that you can't even imagine it.

Consider these applications.<sup>6</sup>

1. Nothing is too hard for the Lord.
2. We should expect days of great personal victory in our walk with God.
3. Joshua prayed with full faith to God, but he was not slack in his own responsibility. He battled, and he believed!
4. Big messes often precede big miracles. Don't get down about any mess in your life. God is the God of redemption. He loves to turn messes into miracles.

#### CONCLUSION

Remember:

When God asks us to do something uncomfortable, it's usually because he wants to do something remarkable.

What's the lesson? The uncomfortable thing he wants you to do always requires surrender. What it takes to see God work is your surrender.

If you are worried about your **health**, why should God heal you. You've got to be ok with God controlling your life, including your health.

You want God to work in your **marriage**, stop demanding what you want your spouse to be and start serving God by serving your spouse. No expectations. Give up your rights. Be crucified. That's the Christian life.

Do you want to become a **generous giver**? You've got to surrender your **treasure** to God. It's not yours. It's his. Maybe you have no time for your family or for God. You'll never get the time you need till you surrender all your time to God.

If you surrender to God, he'll give you those "sun stand still" moments!

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<sup>6</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Joshua* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 83.