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ARMED FOR BATTLE: FINISHING WELL

From Victory to Faithfulness

Primary Scripture: Joshua 11:1–23
Supporting Scriptures: Joshua 13:1; 14:6–14; 21:43–45; 23–24

Central theme: God has not called us merely to experience moments of victory, but to live lives of sustained faithfulness—trusting Him through opposition, remaining dependent on Him, persevering in obedience, pursuing holiness, and ultimately finishing well.

Introduction: the Journey so far

We began this series with a people standing on the edge of a promise.

For forty years, Israel had wandered in the wilderness.

An entire generation had died without entering the land God had promised them.

But now Joshua was leading a new generation into their inheritance.

God had given them a promise—but they would have to walk in faith and obedience to possess it.

And throughout this series, we have discovered that the battles Israel faced were not merely about defeating enemies.

God was teaching His people how to walk with Him.

- At the Jordan, they learned the importance of His **presence, consecration and obedience.**
- At Gilgal, God reminded them of their **identity and covenant relationship with Him.**
- At Jericho, they discovered that **God's strategies are not always conventional**, and that faith requires obedience even when we cannot see what God is doing.
- At Ai, they learned that **hidden compromise and self-reliance can undermine even the greatest victories.** When God restored them, they discovered that **failure does not have to be final**, but restoration requires repentance and a return to obedience.
- At Mount Ebal, they were reminded that **God's Word must remain central** to their lives.

- Through the Gibeonite deception, they learned the danger of **making decisions without seeking God.**
- And in Joshua 10, when five kings united against them, they discovered that **opposition can become an opportunity for God to demonstrate His power**, and that victory requires both divine intervention and persistent obedience.

Now we come to Joshua 11.

Once again, Israel faces opposition.

But this time the enemy is greater, the military challenge is more formidable, and the campaign brings the major conquest of Canaan toward its conclusion.

And as we come to the end of this series, I want us to consider something important.

The Christian life is not simply about experiencing breakthroughs. It is about learning to remain faithful through every season of life.

It is not enough to begin well.

It is not enough to experience a few victories.

We are called to finish well.

1. The Principle of Increasing Opposition

Joshua 11:4–5 (NIV)

> *They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots—a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom to fight against Israel.*

The narrative

Israel had defeated Jericho.

They had overcome Ai.

They had conquered the southern coalition of five kings.

Now the northern kings began to organise themselves.

Jabin, king of Hazor, gathered a coalition of kings and armies from across northern Canaan.

Hazor was a powerful and well-fortified city.

The coalition possessed large numbers of soldiers, horses and chariots.

These were resources Israel did not possess in comparable measure.

The enemy was not simply numerous. They were better equipped for conventional warfare.

And once again, Joshua found himself facing an overwhelming military threat.

What is interesting is that Israel's victories had not caused their enemies to retreat permanently.

Instead, the opposition had escalated.

The greater Israel's progress, the greater the resistance they encountered.

The principle

Progress does not always reduce opposition. Sometimes it intensifies it.

We have already encountered this in Joshua 9 and 10.

The surrounding nations became increasingly concerned as Israel advanced.

Their response was to unite against a common enemy.

And this is an important lesson for us.

Sometimes we assume that if we are walking in God's will, things should become easier.

We expect opposition to diminish as we mature spiritually.

We assume that if God has opened a door, the way forward should be relatively straightforward.

But Scripture does not teach that obedience eliminates opposition.

Sometimes the very fact that we are moving forward brings us into greater conflict.

This is not to suggest that every difficulty is spiritual warfare, or that opposition automatically proves we are in God's will.

But we must not interpret resistance as evidence that God has abandoned us.

1 Corinthians 16:9 (NIV)

> *Because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.*

Notice that Paul experienced both opportunity and opposition.

The open door and the opposition existed simultaneously.

Application

We need to develop spiritual resilience.

Not every challenge means we should retreat.

Not every difficulty means we have made a mistake.

Not every increase in resistance means we are moving in the wrong direction.

Sometimes we need to persevere through the very circumstances that are making us question whether we should continue.

The question is not simply, "Why am I facing opposition?"

It is, "Am I remaining faithful to what God has called me to do?"

Key thought: Don't measure God's faithfulness by the absence of opposition. Measure your response by your faithfulness to Him.

2. The Principle of Dependence

Joshua 11:6 (NIV)

> *The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them, slain, over to Israel. You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots."*

The narrative

God once again reassured Joshua.

He told him not to be afraid.

And He promised victory.

But there was an interesting instruction attached to the promise.

Joshua was to hamstring the enemy's horses and burn their chariots.

Why?

Horses and chariots represented significant military power.

They were among the most valuable military resources available in the ancient world.

Israel could have taken possession of them and used them to strengthen its own army.

From a human perspective, this would have seemed sensible.

They had defeated an enemy with superior equipment.

Why not take that equipment and use it in future battles?

But God instructed them to destroy it.

Israel was not to adopt the military methods of the Canaanites or begin depending on the very resources that had given their enemies confidence.

God was teaching Israel that their security was not ultimately found in military superiority.

Their confidence had to remain in Him.

The principle

The resources God gives us must never replace our dependence on the God who gives them.

This is particularly important because Israel was now becoming an experienced and successful fighting force.

They had accumulated victories.

They had learned military strategies.

Their soldiers had gained experience.

Their confidence was growing.

And yet God was still reminding them that their strength was not sufficient apart from Him.

This takes us back to Jericho.

At Jericho, God gave them an unconventional strategy that required complete dependence.

At Ai, they learned what could happen when confidence replaced dependence.

Now, at the northern battle, God was teaching them the same lesson again.

Because dependence on God is not something we learn once and then move beyond.

It must remain the foundation of our lives.

Psalm 20:7 (NIV)

> *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.*

John 15:5 (NIV)

> *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

Application

There is nothing wrong with resources, experience, knowledge, financial provision or strategic planning.

These things can be gifts from God.

But they become spiritually dangerous when we begin to trust in them more than we trust in Him.

We can begin to rely on our experience instead of seeking God's wisdom.

We can trust our abilities instead of depending on His strength.

We can become so comfortable with our resources that prayer becomes an afterthought.

And sometimes the very things that helped us succeed can become the things that weaken our dependence on God.

This is a particularly important principle for mature Christians.

The longer we have walked with the Lord, the more experience we accumulate.

But spiritual maturity should produce greater dependence on God, not greater independence from Him.

The question is not whether we have resources. It is where we place our confidence.

Key thought: Never allow what God has given you to become a substitute for the God who gave it.

3. The Principle of Perseverance

Joshua 11:18 (NIV)

> *Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time*.

The narrative

When we read Joshua 6–11, the events can appear to unfold in rapid succession.

Jericho falls.

Ai is conquered.

The southern kings are defeated.

The northern coalition is destroyed.

But the biblical account compresses what was actually a lengthy military campaign.

Joshua 11:18 specifically tells us that Joshua waged war against these kings for a long time.

The conquest may have extended over approximately seven years, drawing on the chronological information provided later in the book.

That is a very different picture from a series of quick, miraculous victories.

Israel had to continue fighting.

They had to keep advancing.

They had to remain faithful through a prolonged campaign.

Not every battle involved a dramatic supernatural intervention like the falling walls of Jericho or the extraordinary events of Joshua 10.

In Joshua 11, God still gave victory, but the narrative describes a military attack and pursuit.

God's power was no less present because the battle looked more ordinary.

The principle

Some victories come through extraordinary breakthroughs. Others come through sustained faithfulness.

We often celebrate the dramatic moments in Scripture.

The Jordan opening.

The walls of Jericho collapsing.

The sun standing still.

But between these extraordinary events were days, months and years of ordinary obedience.

The Israelites had to continue doing what God had instructed them to do.

This is important because we can become so focused on breakthrough moments that we underestimate the importance of perseverance.

We want immediate answers.

Quick victories.

Rapid transformation.

Visible progress.

But spiritual growth is often gradual.

God develops endurance, maturity and character as we continue faithfully over time.

Hebrews 10:36 (NIV)

> *You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.*

Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

> *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

Application

Some of us are faithful in the dramatic moments but struggle with the ordinary disciplines of Christian living.

We are enthusiastic when God moves powerfully.

But what about the days when nothing extraordinary happens?

When prayer feels difficult?

When obedience is costly?

When circumstances remain unchanged?

When we have been trusting God for something for months or even years?

The Christian life requires more than occasional moments of faith.

It requires a lifetime of faithfulness.

We must learn to continue obeying when progress is slow.

Continue praying when answers are delayed.

Continue doing what is right when it is inconvenient.

Continue serving when we are tired.

Continue trusting God when we cannot see the outcome.

And importantly, perseverance does not mean never resting or never changing our approach.

It means remaining faithful to God and His purposes through changing circumstances.

Key thought: Faith is not only demonstrated in the moment of breakthrough. It is demonstrated in the years of obedience that surround it.

4. The Principle of Holiness

Joshua 11:15 (NIV)

> *As the LORD commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.*

The narrative

There is a difficult aspect of Joshua 11 that we cannot ignore.

The chapter describes the destruction of the Canaanite armies and cities, including the destruction of Hazor.

The severity of God's judgment can be challenging for us to understand.

The conquest took place within the context of God's judgment upon the persistent wickedness and idolatry of the Canaanite nations.

God had warned Israel about the corrupting influence of the religious practices of the nations occupying the land.

Deuteronomy 20:18 (NIV)

> *Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.*

God was establishing Israel as a people set apart for Himself.

They were not to adopt the idolatry and practices of the surrounding nations.

It is also important to remember that God's judgment was not based on Israel's moral superiority. Israel itself would repeatedly experience judgment when it turned away from God.

And throughout Joshua, we have seen that God's mercy was available to those who turned to Him.

Rahab responded in faith and was spared.

The Gibeonites sought peace and were spared, although through deception.

These accounts remind us that the conquest must be understood within its particular historical and covenantal setting.

For Christians, the command to destroy the Canaanites is not a model for how we treat people who oppose us.

We are called to love our enemies, proclaim the gospel and overcome evil with good.

Our battle is not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12).

But there is a principle concerning the seriousness of sin and the necessity of holiness that carries through into the New Testament.

The principle

What we tolerate spiritually can eventually compromise us.

God knew that if Israel embraced the idolatry of the surrounding nations, it would undermine their covenant faithfulness.

And sadly, as we move beyond Joshua into Judges, we discover that this is precisely what happened.

The Israelites repeatedly turned toward the gods of the surrounding peoples.

What God had warned them about eventually became a recurring source of their downfall.

The application for us is not that we must remove people from our lives simply because they do not share our beliefs.

Jesus Himself associated with sinners and called His followers to be salt and light in the world.

Rather, the challenge is that we must not make peace with sin in our own hearts.

There is a difference between living in a fallen world and allowing the values of that world to govern our lives.

There is a difference between being tempted and deliberately nurturing temptation.

And there is a difference between struggling against sin and becoming comfortable with it.

We encountered this already in Joshua 7.

Achan's compromise began with something he saw, desired and eventually took.

What appeared to be a private matter had devastating consequences.

Now, in Joshua 11, we encounter the broader issue of protecting the covenant faithfulness of God's people.

The New Testament connection

Colossians 3:5 (NIV)

> *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)

> *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.*

Notice the language.

Put to death.

Throw off.

These are deliberate, decisive actions.

The New Testament does not encourage us to accommodate sin, excuse it or learn to live comfortably alongside it.

It calls us to repentance and holiness through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

Application

We need to be willing to examine the things we have allowed to become established in our lives.

Perhaps it is an attitude we have justified.

A habit we have stopped challenging.

A relationship in which we are repeatedly compromising our convictions.

Bitterness we continue to nurture.

Pride that has become so familiar we no longer recognise it.

Or patterns of behaviour that we know are inconsistent with God's Word.

Sometimes we are asking God for victory in one area while refusing to address compromise in another.

We want to experience His promises without allowing His Word to confront our choices.

But God is not simply concerned with what we accomplish.

He is concerned with who we are becoming.

And His grace does not merely forgive us. It also teaches and empowers us to live differently.

Titus 2:11–12 reminds us that the grace of God teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live upright, godly lives.

Holiness is not something we pursue to earn God's acceptance.

It is the appropriate response of people who have been redeemed by Christ and belong to Him.

Key thought: What we refuse to confront today may become what compromises us tomorrow.

5. The principle of finishing well

Joshua 11:23 (NIV)

> *So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war.*

The narrative

After the long campaign, Joshua 11 ends with a remarkable statement.

The land had rest from war.

Think about where this journey began.

Israel had spent forty years wandering in the wilderness.

They had crossed the Jordan.

They had faced Jericho, Ai, the southern kings and the northern coalition.

They had experienced extraordinary miracles, difficult setbacks, painful consequences and remarkable victories.

And now the major military campaigns were complete.

The land had rest from war.

But there is something important we need to recognise.

Joshua 11 tells us that Joshua took the entire land.

Yet Joshua 13:1 records God telling Joshua:

"You are now very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over." (NIV)

How do we reconcile these statements?

Joshua had defeated the major coalitions and established Israel's control over the land.

But the work of occupying and settling the inheritance was not yet complete.

The major conquest had been accomplished, but there was still territory to possess and responsibility to fulfil.

This introduces an important distinction.

Winning the battle was not the same as faithfully living in the inheritance.

The remainder of Joshua begins to develop this theme.

In chapters 13–21, the land is allocated among the tribes.

Caleb, now eighty-five years old, asks Joshua for the hill country God had promised him.

In Joshua 14:12, Caleb declares:

"Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day." *(NIV)*

Even after decades of waiting, Caleb remains committed to what God has promised.

Later, Joshua 21:44 records that the LORD gave Israel rest on every side.

And Joshua 21:45 makes the extraordinary declaration:

"Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled." *(NIV)*

The emphasis is unmistakable.

God had been faithful.

The promises He had made had not failed.

The principle

God's purpose is not simply to bring us through battles, but to establish us in the life He has called us to live.

For Israel, the Promised Land was not simply a battlefield.

It was to become their home.

A place where they would live as God's covenant people.

A place where families would be established, communities would grow, and future generations would learn to worship and obey the LORD.

The battles were part of the journey.

But the battles were not the ultimate purpose.

God had promised them an inheritance.

And He was faithful to His promise.

This is a particularly important principle for us as Christians.

Sometimes we become so focused on the battles we are facing that we lose sight of the greater purposes of God.

We become preoccupied with the next obstacle.

The next challenge.

The next breakthrough.

The next problem that needs to be overcome.

And we can begin to define our spiritual lives almost entirely in terms of what we are fighting against.

But God has called us to something greater.

He has called us into relationship with Himself.

To grow in Christlikeness.

To live in the freedom of His grace.

To bear spiritual fruit.

To serve His purposes.

And to experience the peace that comes from trusting Him.

The New Testament connection

The New Testament develops the theme of God's rest in a particularly significant way.

Hebrews 4:8–11 explains that the rest Israel experienced under Joshua was not the final fulfilment of God's promise.

A greater rest remains for God's people.

That rest is entered through faith and ultimately finds its fulfilment in Christ.

Jesus Himself extends the invitation:

Matthew 11:28–29 (NIV)

> *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

Notice that Jesus does not promise a life without responsibility or difficulty.

He invites us into a relationship in which we learn from Him and find rest for our souls.

We can experience His peace even while facing opposition.

We can remain secure in Him even when circumstances are uncertain.

And we can persevere without allowing the battles of life to become the defining reality of our existence.

The rest Christ gives is not simply the absence of conflict.

It is the security of belonging to Him.

And ultimately, it points forward to the eternal rest and complete restoration that await God's people.

Application

Some Christians have become so accustomed to living in survival mode that they struggle to recognise what it means to live in the freedom and peace Christ provides.

Everything feels like a battle.

Every challenge becomes a crisis.

Every setback threatens their confidence in God.

But spiritual maturity involves learning to live from a place of trust rather than constant fear.

This does not mean that the challenges disappear.

It means that our relationship with God becomes the foundation from which we face them.

We learn to rest in His faithfulness.

To trust His promises.

To recognise that we do not have to control every outcome.

And to remain faithful to the responsibilities He has given us.

At the same time, we must not confuse spiritual rest with complacency.

Israel had experienced rest from major warfare, but they still had an inheritance to occupy and a covenant to honour.

Similarly, the Christian life involves both resting in Christ's finished work and actively following Him in obedience.

We do not work to earn salvation.

But because we have been saved by grace, we are called to live lives that reflect our new identity in Christ.

Ephesians 2:8–10 brings these truths together beautifully: we are saved by grace through faith, and we are created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Key thought: The goal is not simply to survive the battle, but to live faithfully in everything God has called us into.

Conclusion – The greatest battle is faithfulness

As we come to the end of this series, I want us to look briefly at the final chapters of Joshua.

Because Joshua's final words reveal something important about the entire journey.

By Joshua 23, the major battles had been fought.

The land had been divided.

The people had received their inheritance.

God had fulfilled His promises.

And Joshua was now an old man.

He gathered the leaders of Israel and reminded them of everything God had done.

Joshua 23:3 (NIV)

> *You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the LORD your God who fought for you.*

Joshua wanted the people to remember something.

Their victories were not ultimately the result of their military strength.

They had not arrived in the Promised Land because they were stronger, wiser or more deserving than the nations around them.

They were there because God had been faithful to His promises.

But Joshua also understood that the greatest danger facing Israel had not disappeared.

They still had choices to make.

They still had to guard their hearts.

They still had to remain faithful to God.

And that is why Joshua's final instructions are so significant.

Joshua 23:11 (NIV)

> *So be very careful to love the LORD your God.*

After everything they had experienced, this was Joshua's charge.

Be careful to love the LORD your God.

Not simply to remember the battles.

Not simply to celebrate the victories.

Not simply to enjoy the inheritance.

But to remain faithful to the God who had brought them there.

And then, in Joshua 24, Joshua gathers the people and issues one of the most memorable challenges in Scripture.

Joshua 24:15 (NIV)

> *But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.*

What a remarkable conclusion to Joshua's life.

After all the battles he had fought, the miracles he had witnessed, the victories he had experienced and the territory he had conquered, his final challenge was about faithfulness.

Choose whom you will serve.

Because the greatest challenge facing Israel's future was not simply the enemies that remained around them.

It was whether they would remain faithful to God.

And that brings us to the heart of this entire series.

We have learned that God's presence matters.

That consecration matters.

That obedience matters.

That our identity in Him matters.

That faith matters.

That discernment matters.

That holiness matters.

That perseverance matters.

And that we must never allow success to replace our dependence on God.

But all these principles ultimately lead us to something greater.

God has not called us merely to win battles. He has called us to walk faithfully with Him.

The Christian life is not a series of disconnected victories.

It is a lifelong journey of following Jesus.

There will be seasons of extraordinary breakthrough.

There will be seasons of waiting.

There will be difficult battles.

There may be setbacks and failures.

There will be times when we need to repent, realign and begin again.

And there will be seasons in which God calls us to persevere when the journey seems long.

But through it all, our calling remains the same.

To love Him.

To trust Him.

To obey Him.

To remain in Him.

And to finish faithfully.

The Apostle Paul understood this.

Near the end of his life, he wrote:

2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)

> *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

Notice what Paul celebrates.

Not simply that he fought.

But that he finished.

And that he kept the faith.

That is the challenge I want to leave with us as we conclude *Armed for Battle*.

It is not enough to begin well.

It is not enough to experience a few victories.

It is not enough to have powerful encounters with God in one season of our lives.

We are called to remain faithful to Him throughout the journey.

The greatest victory is not simply overcoming what stands against us, but remaining faithful to the One who has called us.

And ultimately, our confidence is not in our ability to hold everything together.

It is in Jesus Christ, who has already secured the decisive victory over sin and death through His cross and resurrection.

We fight the good fight of faith, not to earn His victory, but because we belong to Him.

Final reflection questions

1. **Opposition:** Have I allowed difficulty or resistance to discourage me from something God has called me to do?

2. **Dependence:** Am I still relying on God, or have my experience, abilities and resources gradually replaced my dependence on Him?

3. **Perseverance:** Is there an area of my life where I have grown weary and need to renew my commitment to faithful obedience?

4. **Holiness:** Is there something I have allowed to remain in my life that I know God is calling me to confront?

5. **Finishing Well:** Am I simply focused on overcoming my present challenges, or am I intentionally living a life of sustained faithfulness to Christ?

Final closing declaration

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." — 2 Timothy 4:7

May this be our testimony—not simply that we experienced victories along the way, but that we remained faithful to Jesus Christ until the end.