

## Living Offensively: Obey Fully

Joshua 5:1-15

### I. Living offensively requires getting right with God; 5:1-9.

*<sup>1</sup> Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites. <sup>2</sup> At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again." <sup>3</sup> So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth. <sup>4</sup> Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt--all the men of military age--died in the desert on the way after leaving Egypt. <sup>5</sup> All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the desert during the journey from Egypt had not. <sup>6</sup> The Israelites had moved about in the desert forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the LORD. For the LORD had sworn to them that they would not see the land that he had solemnly promised their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>7</sup> So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way. <sup>8</sup> And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed. <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the place has been called Gilgal to this day.*

The word quickly spread of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, just like the Red Sea earlier. The hearts of the inhabitants melted in fear so that no one organized an attack on the Israelites. The land that God was giving to Israel was a bountiful one: it was a land flowing with milk and honey. It was a fertile land ready to supply all the Israelites' needs.

Circumcision was a sign of the covenant with Abraham, and it was to be done for every male in every generation. However, it was not done during the wilderness wanderings. The reason for this is the older generation's rebelliousness, characterized by their refusal to enter the land and their complaining to Moses. As a result, God sentenced them to die in the wilderness during a wandering of forty years.

God tells Joshua that the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away. The Egyptians had observed that Israel was wandering aimlessly in the wilderness for forty years, and they concluded that Israel's God had abandoned them. This is what Moses predicted Egypt would do if God punished His people

because of their sins. Now that Israel was being so careful to obey God in every way possible, God put Israel's reproach behind them. Israel was making a new start, one in which neither Egypt nor any other nation could ridicule it.

Those things that we neglect like daily prayer, Bible study, weekly church attendance, tithing, and sharing the gospel hinder us from being who God expects us to be. They hinder us from making a difference in our home, family, friends, and work - to name a few.

Lost people will hold you in reproach when you claim to be a Christian and don't live as a biblical follower of Jesus Christ but live like everyone else. God can roll back the reproach of your lost family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers if you will begin to fully obey His Word. You can begin a new start today.

## **II. Living offensively requires a growing faith; 5:10-12.**

*<sup>10</sup> On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. <sup>11</sup> The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. <sup>12</sup> The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.*

The Passover celebration would now mark Israel's entrance into Canaan, just as it had earlier marked Israel's exodus from Egypt. It ended forty years of wilderness living, a daily symbol of which was manna. Manna stopped but God would still provide. Food will no longer fall out of the sky. They will need to work for it. Many get angry with God because blessings don't just fall into their lives without much effort. There are times of transition in our lives when our faith is pushed to grow. God changes how He is working in our lives.

## **III. Living offensively requires holiness; 5:13-15.**

*<sup>13</sup> Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" <sup>14</sup> "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" <sup>15</sup> The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*

Joshua is near Jericho, when he was surprised by seeing a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. The stranger did not answer Joshua's question directly. Instead, he emphasized something far more important: he was the commander of the army of the Lord. Joshua humbly asked, "What message does my lord have for his servant?" In this response, Joshua displayed a humble, expectant, obedient attitude, a recognition of the man's superior and God-sent position, and a recognition of his own inferior position with a readiness to serve.

Why did he not speak more directly with Joshua and tell him that he was on Israel's side? It appears to teach Joshua about priorities. God had already promised Joshua that He would be with him, so Joshua did not need to worry. The instructions to Joshua about removing his sandals because he was standing on holy ground recalled God's words to Moses at the burning bush. It was another way Joshua was being affirmed as Moses' successor and God's presence was being promised to him.

Humble, expectant, and obedient is still how we should approach God, recognizing our inferior position before an all-knowing and all-powerful God. God has promised to be with us and has affirmed it by sending His Holy Spirit to live in us.

The Israelites stand well-prepared for their first major encounter with the Canaanites. They were well prepared because God was with them, because He had given them a leader who was already in the process of becoming a worthy successor to Moses. The entire nation was taking care to obey God's commands from Joshua and the priests on down to the people, and because they were careful to sanctify themselves properly before engaging the Canaanites.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, you are also well-prepared to live an offensive life before a watching world. God is looking for your obedience in stepping forward and living a biblical life everywhere and not withdrawing your influence.