



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Joshua 11:23-12:24

Winter 2020

"Rest from War"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Seth. And good morning. We're back in the Book of Joshua this morning, and you will remember, I hope, from two weeks ago, we covered chapter 10, which was very famous battle, the battle of the long day, when Joshua and Israel defeated this coalition of southern kings, five kings of Canaan, and triumphed in a great victory. Well that brings us to the kings of the north in chapter 11, and we're going to cover two chapters, 11 and 12. I will read all of chapter 11, and we'll just touch on chapter 12 because it's basically a list of the kings that were defeated,

¹ Then it came about, when Jabin king of Hazor heard *of it (heard of this great battle and defeat of his allies in the south)*, that he sent to Jobab, king of Madon and to the king of Shimron and to the king of Achshaph, ² and to the kings who were of the north in the hill country, and in the Arabah—south of Chinnerot (*Chinneroth is the Hebrew name for the Sea of Galilee. And the word actually means 'lyre' or 'harp', the kind of harp that David used. If you look at the shape of the Sea of Galilee you can get a sense of that*), south of Chinneroth and in the lowland and on the heights of Dor on the west—³ to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpeh. ⁴ They came out, they and all their armies with them, *as many people as the sand that is on the*

seashore, with very many horses and chariots. ⁵ So all of these kings having agreed to meet, came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.

⁶ Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, 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." ⁷ So Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and attacked them. ⁸ The LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, so that they defeated them, and pursued them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and the valley of Mizpeh to the east; and they struck them until no survivor was left to them. ⁹ Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him, he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

¹⁰ Then Joshua turned back at that time and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms. ¹¹ They struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying *them*; there was no one left who breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire. ¹² Joshua captured all the cities of these kings, and all their kings, and he struck them with the edge of the sword, *and* utterly destroyed them; just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. ¹³ However, Israel did not burn any cities that stood on their mounds, except Hazor alone, *which* Joshua burned. ¹⁴ All the spoil of these cities and the cattle, the sons of Israel took as their plunder; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They left no one who breathed. ¹⁵ Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁶ Thus Joshua took all that land: the hill country and the Negev, all that land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel and its lowland ¹⁷ from Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir, even as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon. And he captured all their kings and struck them down and put them to death. ¹⁸ Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings. ¹⁹ There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle. 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 commanded Moses.

²¹ Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. ²² There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod some remained. ²³ So Joshua took the whole land, according to all 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.

Joshua 11: 1-23

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and our time of studying it together. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we do thank You for this time together, and we thank You for this text of Scripture. It may have some troubling features to it. —It's a text on war. But it has spiritual lessons for us, and I pray, LORD, that we will learn them. And among those lessons are, You are absolutely sovereign and we praise You for that. You are in control, not only of the events of life in a general sense, but in a very specific sense. You are in control of the very enemies that we may face. And so we have reason to praise You and thank You. And as a result of that sense of Your greatness and Your goodness to us, Your justice and Your mercy, we may go out and be obedient. That too, Father, is one of the main lessons that we have in this text. Throughout, the emphasis is placed on Joshua being obedient to what he was instructed to do—and that's the path to victory and success. And we pray that You would bless us in that way. Give us a sense of Your greatness, of Your sovereignty, and the security we have in You. And give us the desire to live lives of faith and obedience.

Father, we pray Your blessings on us spiritually, but we are a people in need materially, as well. We live in difficult times, and we pray that You would bless Your

people and protect us. Father, we pray that You'd protect the jobs and the businesses of our members, and of our friends—of those outside of this church. We pray that You would, as this pandemic seems to be increasing a bit, we pray that You would protect people's employment. We pray that You'd bless the businesses that men and women own, and pray that You would even prosper them in the midst of this. But give us faith and trust in You, and may we rest in the fact that You're in control of all things. And we thank You for that. Our text reminds us of that, and I pray that You would encourage us with that great truth as we take up our study this morning. Bless us now as we continue to worship. Bless our special music. Encourage us with it. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Outside the House of Commons is a bronze statue of Oliver Cromwell holding a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other. He was a ruler of England, the Lord Protector as he became known, but also a Puritan and a soldier. His success in war may be attributed to the counsel that he gave before battle, "Put your trust in God my boys, and keep your powder dry." Be responsible. Be prepared. Most importantly, trust the LORD. It's like the counsel of Proverbs 21, verse 31. "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD." Be ready. Be courageous. Trust in God. He gives the victory. Or it may mean, regardless of the advantage an army has with horses, power, and preparation, it is still God who determines the outcome. Ultimately it rests with Him, not man. So, put your trust in God.

We see both in Joshua 11. —The readiness of the Israelites to fight a much larger and better prepared and equipped Canaanite army, and the victory God gave them because they trusted in Him. Chapter 11 is like chapter 10. Both show that God fought for Israel. In chapter 10 He fought with miracles—hailstones and a long day. In chapter 11 His power is seen in victory over superior numbers. The LORD has infinite ways and means to accomplish His will. —By natural means and supernatural means. But in both chapters the lesson is the same. Victory rests with the LORD. Trust in Him.

News of Israel's stunning victory over the five kings of the south quickly became known to the Canaanite cities in the north. And they joined a confederation, formed by Jabin, king of Hazor. Hazor is located about eight miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It's a large hill, and one of the best archaeological sites in Israel today, over 200 acres in size. Archaeological evidence indicates that it was a magnificent Canaanite city, with great temples and rich palaces. It divided between an upper acropolis and a lower city. It was an important city.

In verse 10 the historian states that it was the head of all the kingdoms—or the City-states in the north. And Jabin, its king, assumed leadership in the crisis. He gathered the tribes from all over the area of Galilee, and they combined to make an impressive force. Verse 4, "They came out, they and all their armies with them, *as many people as the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots.*" The impression given here is of the impossible odds that Israel faced. Not only in sheer numbers but in weapons; "very many horses and chariots". At that time, the chariot was very important for combat. This was, for its day, a very modern army—well equipped. They had the equivalent of tanks and combat vehicles. Israel had none of that. No horses or chariots. And that was for a reason, because the Law, Deuteronomy 17 verse 16, prohibited Israel from having a cavalry. The nation was not "to multiply horses". And they were to go against a Canaanite army with a huge infantry and cavalry, horses and chariots, and superior numbers—as many people "as the sand that is on the seashore". (vs4).

Verse 5 states that the Canaanites gathered at the waters of Merom, probably located northwest of the Sea of Galilee. They may have planned to move down the Jordan valley and attack Gilgal, the main location of the camp of Israel. But as they made plans to do that, the LORD encouraged Joshua, "Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid because of them, 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.' "

There's a pattern in this book that before each battle, the LORD repeats the promise of victory to Joshua. Maybe there's a lesson in that for us, because it's good to have the promises of the LORD in our mind and remind ourselves of them—remind

ourselves of the promise that God is always with us and never forsakes us—remind ourselves of that so that we don't forget that great truth—or any of the promises of the LORD. The LORD promised Joshua victory and it happened just as He said.

Few facts are given. Israel ambushed the Canaanites, made a preemptive strike on the Canaanites. In verse 8 says, "The LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel." The gory details aren't given and aren't important. What is important is the LORD kept His promise. The Canaanites were completely routed and divided. Israel pursued to the west as far as Great Sidon on the Mediterranean coast. And others east to the valley of Mizpeh. In every direction they pursued these fleeing Canaanites. And it's a fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28, verse 7. "The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways."

In obedience to the Lord's command Joshua killed all the enemy, burned their chariots, and hamstringed their horses. We wonder why it was necessary to destroy the chariots and lame the horses when they could have possessed them and improved their army. And having improved their army put them to use and made their army all the more 'modern', as it were. But again, in Deuteronomy 17, verse 16, Israel was commanded not "to multiply horses". The reason was, they were to depend upon the LORD, not on natural strength. They hadn't needed the latest weapons and military inventions that the Canaanites had because the LORD fought for them. And when God is for us, who can be against us?

So to protect Israel from the temptation of trusting in horses and chariots—leaning on the arm of the flesh instead of the LORD—the LORD told Joshua to destroy all of it. It could become a distraction. It could become an idol. The principle involved here was expressed late in Psalm 20, verse 7. "Some *boast* in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the LORD our God." As long as Israel did that, they were victorious. And the principle applies to the church, as well. As long as we look to the LORD, obey the Scriptures—we will prosper.

There are lots of lessons here for us along those lines, such as avoiding the temptation to do things the way the world does them—it's a temptation, and churches fall into that. They do that. —They follow business models today to build the church up rather than simply look to and trust in God's Word. Well, that may get results, but are they the best results—doing things the way the world does them?

At the end of Acts, chapter 2, Luke wrote, "...And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." (vs47). This is following the day of Pentecost and the birthday of the church. And God was adding to their numbers daily, because it's His work to do that. He does it. He builds the church. Now, that church, that early church, was a very poor church but it was a powerful church.

The next account given in the Book of Acts, in chapter 3 is Peter and John healing the lame man at the gate of the temple. He's sitting there, where the traffic was going and coming, and he was seeking gifts, alms. And he asked for alms, money, from John and Peter. And Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none. What I do have I give to you. *(and what he had was power)* In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk." He did.

There's a story that Thomas Aquinas, (the theologian of the Catholic church), called on Pope Innocent II when the pope was sitting at his desk counting out large sums of money. The pope said, "You see, Thomas, the church can no longer say, silver and gold have I none." Thomas replied, "True, holy father. Neither can she say, rise and walk." Now the moral of that story is, temporal prosperity can be a curse as well as a blessing. And if we think large numbers will make us a strong and viable church, we need to remember Jabin's confederacy.

God doesn't need numbers to do a great work. What He wants us to do is follow Him—follow His Word. That's what He'll judge us on. Faithfulness. And that involves diligence on our part. That involves wisdom on our part. That involves 'keeping our powder dry', as it were. But more importantly it involves trust in the LORD, obedience to Him. That's what Joshua gave, and God blessed.

Notice again, verses 6 through 8. God promised Joshua to deliver the enemy to Israel. 'Then Joshua and all the people came upon them suddenly.' They acted quickly. They acted diligently, deliberately, faithfully. And the LORD delivered the enemy to them. It's as we simply follow Scripture, our sole authority, that the church and the saint will prosper spiritually and do a lasting work for the LORD and in the power and wisdom of the LORD.

Well, with the Canaanites routed, Joshua moved on the cities. He first captured Hazor, the chief city. They slew Jabin, killing the inhabitants, and burned it to the ground. As I mentioned, a lot of excavation has been done there, and the evidence was found of the destruction of that city at about this age, about this time, (which is 1400 BC), when the conquest occurred. Other cities were captured. The kings and people were put to the sword, but the cities were not burned.

This major battle and the northern campaign completed the conquest of Canaan. In the rest of chapter 11 the conquered areas are given, and in chapter 12, the conquered kings are listed. Verse 16 states, "Thus Joshua took all the land...". It means that he gained control of Canaan. He didn't conquer every city. The last Canaanites would not be subjugated until the reign of David, 400 years later. So there's still Canaanites in the land. But Joshua conquered every area of the land. The regions are given in verses 16 and 17. "From Mount Halak that rises toward Seir..." (which is toward Edom, which is toward the south), "...to the foot of Mount Hermon.", which is the far north.

Verse 17 ends, "And he captured all their kings and struck them down and put them to death. Joshua waged war a long time with these kings." So this significant battle that takes place in chapter 11 is not the end of it. There were numerous battles that followed. It took "a long time" to achieve this goal that was given to Joshua. And that's the nature of things. That's the nature of the spiritual life. It's not quick and easy. It requires perseverance. It requires a steady pursuit of God's goal, and constant obedience to Him. Even though we fail, and we will continue to fail, we are to seek to be

obedient and faithful to the LORD. That's the key to victory for us, and it was the key to Joshua's life. He obeyed.

That's stated in verse 15, 'What the LORD commanded Moses, Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it', "...he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses." We see Joshua as a faithful man in this passage.

Now so far the account of this northern campaign has been an account of history. But in verse 20 the historian becomes more of the theologian when he gives the explanation for why all this happened. Verse 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."

It was God's act, orchestrated by Him, with a purpose. He hardened their heart to destroy them, in order that He might bring justice on an old and corrupt pagan culture, that He had patiently endured for centuries. Now that's important to understand. This was justice. He hardened guilty hearts just as in the Book of Exodus He hardened Pharaoh's heart who was an unbelieving persecutor of God's people.

The Canaanites had a long history of rebellion and sinning against the 'Light'. They had 'Light'—they had the witness of Abraham, and the patriarchs who built altars in Canaan, and called on the name of the LORD. There was the witness of Melchizedek, king of Salem, (old Jerusalem), the predecessor of Adonizedek who rejected his godly heritage. When the conquest occurred, their sin had reached its full measure and it was time for judgment. God's patience had been long, but it had come to its end. And so, just as the LORD promised in Genesis 15 verse 16, judgment came. And so He stiffened the resistance of their rebellious hearts so that they would foolishly fight and they would meet their just end.

The sole exception to that was Rahab and the Gibeonites. They were no less guilty—but each came to their senses and they made peace with Israel. They made peace with different motives, it's true—Rahab in faith and the Gibeonites through

deceit. Still, the reason they did that is found here in verse 20, at least it's found here by implication; the LORD didn't harden their hearts. That's certainly the implication we would draw. And in the case of Rahab, not only did He not harden her heart, He enlightened her heart and gave her faith.

The best interpreter of all of this is the apostle Paul and his commentary in Romans 9, where he concludes in verse 18, "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." "Whom He desires" —it's all dependent upon Him. And you may say, "Well, that's not fair. I don't like the sound of that." And lots of people don't. And Paul had interlocutors, people he discussed this with, who didn't like that either and he had an answer for them. And he gives that in Romans 9 with a rhetorical question. "...who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" (vs20).

People don't like that response, but the response is, 'God is God; God is sovereign; God is Holy and Wise, and He's always right. Who are we to question Him?' Worship and serve Him. —That's His point. And we can do that with confidence, and we can do that with joy—because He is sovereign. The universe is not governed by chance or competing deities. It's governed by one God, the Triune God, Who is holy and controls even the enemy. Proverbs 21, verse 1. "The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."

Now that's reassuring. That's the absolute sovereignty of God over all of the things of life, even the hearts of men. And it's reassuring because whatever enemy we may face, God controls him—controls every circumstance we find ourselves in.

Now that is as supernatural as the sun and moon standing still in chapter 10. God has all kinds of ways of accomplishing His will. We don't need miraculous events, great signs and wonders for that. He is as involved in our lives, in what we would call natural means, as He is in the supernatural. It's providence. He works in ways hardly noticeable to us to accomplish His will and overthrow our enemies.

Special mention is given to a particular enemy in verse 21 and 22, the Anakim. They were the giants in the land who had so intimidated Israel earlier, when the people refused to fight. You know the story; Joshua and Caleb were the only 2 of the 12 spies

that scouted the land, they were ready to fight and take the land. —But the 10 objected, they said, ‘they were like grasshoppers in their sight’. And their fear and their refusal to trust in the LORD was contagious. It influenced the people. It influenced the nation. They were terrified of the giants. And the result was, the nation came under the discipline of the LORD, and they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness.

But here we read in verses 21 and 22, "Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, and in Gath, and in Ashdod some remained." The most famous of those that remained was Goliath of Gath. He terrified and paralyzed Israel's army until David came to the valley of Elah, put his trust in the LORD, and killed the giant with a stone—cut his head off.

But here, the account of the conquest of Canaan ends on an especially triumphant note. Joshua cut off the Anakim. What had caused Israel to fail and to fear was overcome by faith in the LORD. There were still remnants of resistance along the coastal areas and scattered throughout Canaan, but the land as a whole was made Israel's possession.

Chapter ends, verse 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." That word that's translated ‘rest’ means ‘quiet’. The sounds of war—of chariots and horses, of swords clashing, and men crying, are no longer heard. It was all quiet on the western front, and the northern and southern fronts. The war was over. The land was at rest.

Now that's how the translators of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible interpreted this word that's normally used for ‘quiet’. The land ‘rested’ from war. It was undisturbed. It was at peace. And Joshua gave it to the nation as its inheritance. That's described in detail later in the book when the land is divided up

according to the tribes. But it happened because Joshua led the nation in obedience, "...according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses." (vs23).

That's the main lesson of this chapter, as it is in chapter 10, where verse 42 explains the reason for the nation's victories. "...because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel." And because He did, and the nation trusted in Him, and obeyed, it had sweeping victories over the kings of Canaan.

Chapter 12 lists all the defeated kings. We won't look at it in detail. It is divided into two sections. Verses 1 through 6 gives the conquest on the east side of the Jordan river under Moses' leadership, when they defeated the kings Sihon and Og. Verse 6 concludes, "Moses the servant of the LORD, and the sons of Israel defeated them."

The remainder of the chapter records the kings conquered west of the Jordan under Joshua's command. It gives a list of 31 kings in all. Dr. Don Campbell, former president of Dallas Theological Seminary and my professor, wrote a commentary on the Book of Joshua titled *No Time for Neutrality*. He wrote something interesting—made an interesting observation—he wrote, "It is surprising to find 31 kings in a land that is only 150 miles from north to south and 50 miles from east to west, an area roughly the size of the state of Vermont."

Well, it is surprising to find 31 kings in such a relatively small area. But it was really not unusual in the ancient world where they didn't have nations the way we think of them today. They had areas that were governed by 'City-states', numerous little states. It was that way in Greece. It was that way in Canaan. They might have a central place of worship, like Delphi in Greece. Other than that they were divided, and they would fight among themselves.

Now that may have contributed to the fall of Canaan. There was no central government to unite the tribes and the cities; and coordinate resistance. But that was the providence of God, that was His way of preparing for this conquest of the land. And even when they did unite and became like "the sand that is on the seashore", they still fell to Israel. Not because Israel had some astounding military prowess, certainly not

because they had a great mechanized army. No, they fell to Israel because the LORD fought for Israel. And the list of the 31 kings shows what great success the nation had against overwhelming odds, because it trusted in the LORD, because it obeyed and went out to battle, in spite of the odds, looking to the LORD. Looking to the LORD and His promise.

So this list of kings and conquests in chapter 12 is what one writer calls, "a song of praise to the LORD's honor." And rightly so, because it reminds us of the great lesson of these chapters, that the LORD God is all powerful. He fights for His people. So we're to put our trust in Him and obey. We're to follow His Word.

That's the lesson that the author of Hebrews drew from all of this, and other passages of the Old Testament. He wrote in Hebrews 11, which you know is the faith chapter; and in verses 33 and 34 we read, "...who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight". —By faith. Not by faith alone—but by faith alone in the LORD alone—which means in His word alone, keeping His instruction and reaping the blessing because He keeps His promises. We can trust Him. He's trustworthy.

But the author Hebrews saw another lesson in our passage from here in Joshua 11, and also later in Joshua 22 verse 4, when in Hebrews, chapter 4, he refers to the 'rest' that Joshua gave to the land and people. Throughout the book, the author of Hebrews explains that the institutions of Israel's religion were not the final revelation. They were incomplete. They were 'types' and 'shadows'. They were pictures of something greater to come...Christ is the Savior. He is greater than the angels. He's greater than Moses. He's greater than Aaron. His sacrifice is greater than the offerings of bulls and goats. They all had to be repeated. They were incomplete. But "Christ," he said in chapter 10, verse 12, "...having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." He's a seated Priest. He's seated because His work is done. It's finished. He's at rest because it's finished.

In chapters 3 and 4 of the Book of Hebrews, he mentions 'rest', and the Sabbath—the seventh day when God rested from all His works. The Sabbath is a picture of the 'greater rest' of eternal life—of heaven and the world to come. And then, in chapter 4, verse 8 he wrote, "If Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that." In other words, the 'rest' in the Book of Joshua—a conquered Canaan was not the ultimate or final inheritance and rest that God has promised His people. It's a 'type'. It's a 'shadow'. It's a picture of something far greater.

And that 'greater rest' is spiritual rest. It's the forgiveness of sins, and new life, eternal life that we have here and now. At the moment of faith, it's yours—you become a new creature—you have forgiveness that's complete. But this present rest is very temporal...then it's the rest in heaven and ultimately the rest of the greater Canaan to come, which is the kingdom to come.

Joshua was obedient. He and Israel put their trust in God. Conquered and obtained rest from war. That's the instruction of the author of Hebrews. That is the path to the greater rest of eternal life; 'Faith in the LORD'. So in Hebrews 4 verse 11, the writer to the Hebrews urges that his readers do this. "Therefore," he said, "let us be diligent to enter that rest...". Don't doubt, persevere in faith. It's the only way to enter the rest. It's what Jesus spoke of in Matthew 11, verses 28 and 29, when He invited "all who are weary and heavy-laden" to come to Him, and He would give them rest. Rest for their souls.

Are you weary from the struggle and weighed down with guilt? The Lord can remove it and give you real rest. He bore the sins of sinners at Calvary, and He will remove all those sins and has done that at the cross. But it will become your reality when you put your faith in Him. Believe in Him. Rest in Him. Then, by God's grace and in His power, fight the good fight of faith trusting in Him.

May God help us all to do that and recognize we have the sovereign God Who's always with us to enable us to do that. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You for this lesson, it's a great lesson, a great chapter. You are our sovereign God. This world is governed by You. We live in a moral universe. You reign and You rule. And while men may reject that, in fact, give no thought at all about You, You reign and You rule—and in Your providence, everything is moving according to Your plan. And Father, as we look to You, the sovereign God, and the merciful God, we will prevail personally—and we will prevail and flourish as a church. And so LORD, help us to do that, trust You completely.

We thank You for Your Son, for His death for us, the greatest victory of all, and the resurrection, His conquest over death. We thank You that we possess that new life, that resurrection life, through Your grace alone.

And we are about to remember that, Lord. We do pray that as we do, and we take this Supper, You would bless us, You would encourage us, and You would help us to reflect deeply upon what we're about do. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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