

Winning in the Super Bowl of Life

Text: Joshua 3-4

In February the 44th Super Bowl will be broadcast to a potential audience of one billion people in more than 230 countries. But on the Monday after we will all be involved in a greater game, **The Real Super Bowl of Life**. In 2008 Tom Brady was interviewed on Sixty Minutes. He mentioned his three super bowl rings and the fame and wealth that came with such success. Then he said, "There must be more to life than that." And he was right. So it is vital to know how to win in the big game of life.

One of my favorite books in the Bible is Joshua. **It celebrates winning on a grand scale.** It describes the Hebrews overthrow of the Canaanites so that they could possess the Promised land. At first glance you would designate Joshua as a history book, but actually the book of Joshua is one of the FORMER prophets. Joshua through II Kings is to be considered prophets according to Jewish tradition. It is completing a prophesy given at least 500 years before to Abraham in Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17, 24, 26, 28, 35, and 48. Look at 21:43-45 and 23:14 (In that last reference it claims that there was no **falling words, no failing words.**) The book records the **CONFLICTS** and the **CONQUESTS** that the follower of God will face if they are to be victorious people, winners in the faith life. Sometimes we hear of sister cities. Well Joshua has its counterpart in the New Testament in the letter to the **Ephesians**. At the close of the message I will show you a couple of the parallel ideas from those two books.

One of the main prophetic messages from Joshua is that God has chosen his people to **be winners**. Have you ever asked a person, "how are you doing?" Often the response is, "Well, pretty well **under the circumstances.**" The Triune God wants us to **live above the circumstances**. See **Romans 8:35** After listing all the heavy blows that can knock you to the canvas of life such as trouble, hardship, danger, famine, demon oppression, the the inferred question is "why don't you give up?" Paul defiantly answers, "**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**" **Romans 8:37 we choose to win.**

Have you chosen to be a winner? Let's see what a winner looks like. In Joshua 3-4 we can identify seven marks of a winner. The whole congregation of thousands march across the Jordan and established themselves as winners.

1. A WINNER EXPECTS OPPOSITION (3:3) Not just the Jordan, but the Jordan at flood stage, 3:15 *Shittim* was a resting place in that dry area where acassia trees provided an oasis. Now the easy time is over. What Jordan is not: ***It is not death as the song goes, on Jordan's stormy banks I stand, And cast a wistful eye to Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie, I am bound for the promised land. O who will come and go with me. I am bound for the promised land.*** Neither is it a picture in heaven. There be no waring in heaven or defeats or struggles.

THE JORDAN is A PICTURE OF one of conflicts, obstacles, hindrances we face in the walk of faith. Overwhelming circumstances. Winners see **obstacles as opportunities**. The apostle in I Cor. 16:9 tells the believers in Corinth about his plans to go to Ephesus ***a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries***. One of the marks of a winner when faced with such obstacles is to stay focused.

2. A WINNER MAINTAINS NEARNESS, 3:3-4 Describe the Ark of the Covenant's box overlaid with gold placed in the Holy of Holies. It is where the Shekinah glory of God appeared. It was the visible symbol of the presence of Jahweh. It is mentioned 17 times in chapters 3-4. It is the focal point. We are talking about two million people so they were stretched out along the banks of the Jordan. They were to stay far enough away (1/2 mile) to see the Ark. But close enough to know which way they were headed. Far enough to show due reverence but close enough to appreciate intimacy or the closeness of God. **Come near to God and he will come near to you.** James 4:8

When Peter wiped out and denied the Lord Jesus three times, there was an interesting statement about Peter, it said he followed afar off. Close to thee, close to thee, close to thee, All along my pilgrim journey, Savior let me walk with Thee.

3. A WINNER EMBRACES RISK, 3:4. *YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN THIS WAY BEFORE.*

This land presented new challenges, new languages, new food, new ways to produce crops. They would see strange ways of worship and social customs. When Joyce and I ministered in Dallas, there were few fences and there was no problem meeting people or knocking on the door to invite them to church. When I first came to SF the church was located on Mission Street. Sometimes two or three saloons in one block. Iron grills over the front doors, apartments which could not be entered without a code. How will we reach these people? The risks were there, but in three short years it became what Joyce and I called "our miracle church." So many came in such a short time. Our ministry together has taken us from Colorado to Texas to California, to Illinois, to India, to Scotland to Thailand and to the Philippines. In a number of enterprises we have faced risks of rejection, failure, and harm to our family. We all face such risks. Moving from high school to college, from singleness to marriage, from health to illness. You have never been this way before. Accept the risk and the challenge to be a winner.

4. A WINNER PRACTICES DISCIPLINE, 3:5

They were given cleanliness rules in Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Some involved the washing of the body, or the clothes. Others pertained to not eating foods deemed unclean or touching the dead. It is the same with us who would be winners. We see in the sister book. Eph. 4:25-31 II Tim. 2:20-21

5. A WINNER EXPECTS MIRACLES, 3:5B

"The Lord will do amazing things among you." The actual Jordan Valley between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea varies in breadth from 3 miles to 14 miles. Within this valley is the river's floodplain, which is 200 yards to 1 mile wide. The floodplain was packed with tangled bush and jungle growth. Hence it was not the river so much as the jungle that was difficult to cross. Then there was the river channel itself which if it is similar to the conditions now was when at times is 3 feet deep and in other places 12 feet deep. The current was strong at flood stage since the descent from the melting snow of Mt. Hermon to the Dead Sea averages 9 feet per mile (the last mile to the Dead Sea is a 40 ft. drop). So the Jordan was no placid stream but a raging torrent probably a mile wide. Mission Impossible. Why? See that God desires to be glorified in the overwhelming odds. Judges 7:2

6. A WINNER DEMONSTRATES FAITH, 3:15-16

I have met many Christians who think of faith as a passive idea. If God wants to do something, he will do it. He could, but the story of winners is that they are willing to take the imitative. It is active faith that pleases God. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

7. A WINNER PERPETUATES VICTORIES,

Future generations hearing the story of the Jordan been divided might look at their dads and moms and say, "sure!" And then wink at each other, but the boulders were rock solid evidence. The monument was there in the Gilgal National Park. That spoke the message. We were there. The rocks from the middle of Jordan. Because of our great capacity to forget. Then we also rejoice in the monument of the Lord's Supper. May it be a picture for our children as we seek to pass the torch of faith to the next generation. Christianity can become extinct in one generation.

Conclusion: Let us close by turning to the book of Ephesians and read one of the prayers for you to be a winner. Eph. 1: 18-23

- Be a winner over depression.
- Be a winner over worry and anxiety
- Be a winner over jealousy and covetousness lust, hate, prayerlessness, biblical illiteracy, anger, cheating, negativism and unbelief, gossip and unforgiveness.

I am here today as a recruiter for the Lord. There is a huge battle for the minds and souls of humankind. It is a life of adventure and victories over the evil one and his forces. You will not be alone and you will be outfitted for the conflict. Eph. 6::10-18

I John 5:4-5 Every one born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.