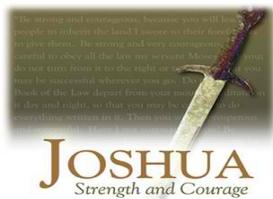


# American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 [www.americandecency.org](http://www.americandecency.org)  
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts June 2019

## The Victory Parade We Don't Deserve

by R.C. Sproul Jr.



Though I didn't think such was possible, my esteem for both my father and the Bible took a rather sudden spike. I was blessed to be sitting in a seminary class, while he stood, teaching. He mentioned, almost in passing, this notion that rocked my world. "Some scholars," he said (and by the way he said it I had a strong suspicion that he was one of those scholars), "believe that the 'man' Joshua met outside the wall of Jericho was a pre-incarnate manifestation of the second person of the Trinity, a christophany." I was blown away as he went on to make the case. He encouraged us to remember that Joshua bowed and worshiped. Had he been with an angel

from God, the angel would have forbidden such worship. That the being received the worship made the case.

That the Father sent the Son further sanctified an already holy moment, as Joshua prepared for the first battle for the Promised Land. Better still, however, was the conversation itself. Joshua, you will remember, had only recently replaced Moses as the leader of God's people. The wandering in the wilderness had come to an end. The Jordan had been crossed, and now between God's people and the land stood Jericho and its impenetrable walls. Wouldn't you have been frightened? Confused? Would you not have felt the weight of every brick in that wall on your back as you took up the mantle of leadership? In the midst of this turmoil, Joshua found himself facing a "man." Joshua neither rashly attacked, nor did he shrink back. Instead, he asked what seems to us an utterly fitting question: "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" (Josh. 5:13).

God the Son did not come, however, merely to honor the occasion. Neither was His goal merely to bring the victory. He came instead to sanctify His servant, to give Joshua the right perspective. To Joshua's either/or question, God the Son replied, "No." Just as Jesus would befuddle the Pharisees as they sought to trap Him with their questions, here He befuddles us. No? What does that mean? He then continued, "but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." He explained to Joshua this most fundamental truth: "The question, Joshua, is not whether or not I am on your side or theirs. The question is whether or not you are on My side."

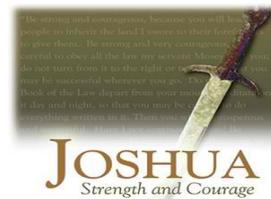
Whether at war or at peace, in want or in plenty, whatever our circumstances, this is the question we all face each day. Indeed, when Jesus spoke from the Mount, He made much the same point. He did so because we, like Joshua, need to learn the same point. Like Joshua, we look at our obstacles in fear and confusion.

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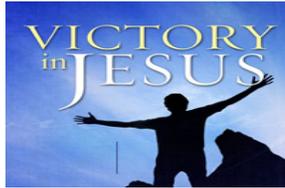
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Will we be able to win this struggle at work? Will we be able to tame this challenge in our homes? Will we be able to overcome this obstacle at our church? And in our prayer lives, as we meet with our Father, through God the Son, we ask — sometimes in hope, other times in despair — whether He is with us, whether He will come to our aid and win the battle for us. And in His grace and terrible sovereign power and authority, He tells us, “No.”

God is not a witness to history, choosing sides and cheering His favorites on. God is Lord of history, moving history forward as what it is — His story. God’s grace to us isn’t that He sides with us, but that He has put enmity in our hearts against the Serpent and his seed. God’s grace isn’t that He fights for us but that He, by the power of the Holy Spirit, gives us life so that we might fight for Him.

When Jesus tells us to stop

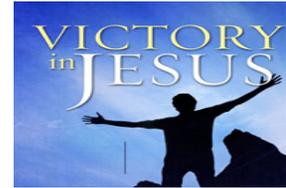
worrying about what we will eat and what we will wear, reminding us that the Gentiles worry about such things, He, naturally, reasons in the same manner. His message isn’t “Don’t sweat it — God is for you. He’ll come to your aid to make sure you get what you want. God is on your side.” Instead, the command is not to worry about these things — our own interests and agenda — because we are called to passionately pursue the interests and agenda of the kingdom of God. He tells us, “No, but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” The Truth, the Wisdom, the Word — He does not change and neither does His message to us. What He spoke to Joshua, He speaks to us. Christ speaks the same message in both the Old and New Testaments because He is speaking to the same people — those who by faith are His. That He is Captain of the army of the Lord is grace to Joshua and grace to us because by the same grace we are made soldiers in that army. The same grace in turn ensures the victory. He is our Captain. He, not Joshua, brings down the walls of Jericho. He, not Joshua, brings His people

into the Land of Promise. He, not Joshua, storms the very gates of hell. He, not Joshua, takes captivity captive. He, not Joshua, is Lord of lords and King of kings. And we, because He loves us, march in the victory parade with Him.

[Used with permission: Tabletalk, April 2011]

***“... it does cost something to be a real Christian, according to the standard of the Bible. There are enemies to be overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, and Egypt to be forsaken, a wilderness to be passed through, a cross to be carried, a race to be run. Conversion is not putting a man in an armchair and taking him easily to heaven. It is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory.”***

**–J. C. Ryle**



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