

Intro. You don’t have to be a baseball fan to appreciate the courage & perseverance of Jackie Robinson, the first African-American to play MLB in 1947. He faced persecution & opposition, even being forbid to play at Memorial Stadium in Sanford during Spring training. Throughout the season, his Brooklyn Dodger teammates began accepting him more & during one game in Cincinnati, when the crowd was being particularly harsh to Robinson, one of the game’s greats, Pee Wee Reese decided to embrace him during warmups (show clip of “42”). MLB and every other sport became better with the acceptance of African-Americans (and then other ethnic groups) as more players overcame the odds. Similarly, the people of God face antagonists & in order to be “Moving Forward,” you have to “Deal with Opposition.” Let’s look at Joshua 10-12.

Theme: Ownership/Fulfilling the Promise

Background: As Israel had made their way into the Promised Land, the Lord acted on their behalf to bring them victory against the pagan Canaanites.

- Joshua picks up the pace & begins to describe briefly how Joshua led Israel in battle to conquer the South & North, using a “Divide & Conquer” technique—the Conquest portrayed Yahweh’s promise to give Israel the land (1:3) was being fulfilled
- It seems it took about 7 years to conquer the land—Caleb was 40 years old when Israel failed to trust Yahweh at Kadesh-Barnea (Joshua 14:7), followed by 38 years before crossing the Jordan River (age 78) & Caleb was 85 years old when the Conquest was over (14:10)
- A few things stand out in this text: Joshua’s obedience to what Yahweh commanded through Moses & how the Lord fought for Israel as they trusted in & waited on Him—I’m calling them 3 ways to “Deal with Opposition” to keep “Moving Forward.”

I. In dealing with opposition, do what the Lord says (10:35, 37, 39-40; 11:8, 11-12, 14, 20-21, 23)

- All throughout this passage, we see Joshua obeying what Yahweh commanded through Moses—he left none remaining & devoted every person in it to destruction, just as Yahweh commanded

Illus: It’s no secret America is becoming less friendly to Christianity. This week a chaplain in the prison system in Kentucky has been dismissed after 13 years of faithful service because he refused to sign a document claiming he would not counsel homosexuals by calling their lifestyle a sin. I believe every prison chaplain in America & throughout our military will have to sign a similar document or be dismissed. Some liberal chaplains will sign it, but in so doing, they are no longer doing what the Lord says, because He always calls it sinful & those who practice it cannot inherit the kingdom of God (see Genesis 19:4-29 [cf. 2 Peter 2:6-10; Jude 7]; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10)—if the Lord says something is sinful, we do well to take His side on the matter! We should love the sinner, but that means loving them enough to tell them when they are doing something which is destroying them (much like we’d counsel an alcoholic to give up drinking or a drug addict to give up drugs, because they are ruining their lives)

Illus: In a similar vein, “Amnesty International now joins the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, the World Health Organization and other global groups that argue the best way to protect the safety of people who sell sex is to legalize the industry. ‘I’m over the moon about that news,’ said Josh Brandon, a London-based escort. ‘I think it’s brilliant. It’s going to bring a lot of people out of the shadows and help them to not feel guilt and shame.’” (“World’s biggest human rights group wants to legalize prostitution,” *USA Today*, 8-13-15)—the world wants Christianity to quit harping on sin so they don’t feel guilty—there are 2 kinds of guilt—forced guilt, which the Devil is quite good at in the life of the believer’s forgiven past & valid guilt, a work of the Holy Spirit to cause us to see the shameful of our sin & repent, trusting in Jesus as we do what the Lord says for us to do (which leads to another way to deal with opposition)

II. In dealing with opposition, do not fear them, but trust the Lord (11:6, 8-9, 20)

- 11:4—references a vast army with horses & chariots, much greater than Israel, whom God had told not to trust in horses (Deuteronomy 17:16)—Israel didn't need to fear them though because the Lord would fight for Israel as they relied on Him

Illus: I have a conversation every few weeks with Christians who are fearful of what is happening here in America in terms of opposition to the Christian faith. I try to calm their fears & remind them the Lord is in control & what is happening here was the same world Israel encountered in Canaan (immorality, idolatry, people sacrificing their children to Molech—abortion, etc.) & the same world in which the church was birthed (polytheistic, pleasure-centered, etc.). So our rapidly-changing culture may be new to us, but it isn't new to God. We are called to trust the Lord

- Notice how the Lord was in control of Israel's conquest of the Promised Land—Yahweh hardened the hearts of the various Canaanites so they would attack Israel & be destroyed (11:20; cf. Genesis 15:16)—Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh before he ever hardened it (Exodus 4:21; 7:3) & the hearts of the Egyptian army to pursue Israel in the parted Red Sea & be drowned (14:17)—why did Yahweh do these hardenings? To display His glory & might over the false Egyptian gods (12:12) & over the false Canaanite gods & to cause Israel to hope in Him
- Could the Lord be hardening the hearts of certain leaders today throughout the world in preparation for Jesus' return so He can display His might & glory? That's certainly possible, but whatever the case, we are called to trust Him
- Yahweh even caused Joshua to defeat the Anakim (11:21-22), a race of giants, of whom the 10 unbelieving spies spoke "we are like grasshoppers in the land of giants!" (Numbers 13:22, 28, 33)—God's people need not fear our enemies but trust in the Lord, who conquers giants & sin & Satan!

III. In dealing with opposition, wait on the Lord (11:23; chapter 12)

- This notion is similar to the previous concept, but trusting the Lord has more to do with finding strength in Him during difficult times whereas waiting on the Lord has to do with perseverance & patience in the midst of difficult times.
- Notice the stress on "inheritance" & the land having "rest" from war (11:23)—it was 45 years after exiting Egypt & 7 years after crossing the Jordan, but God fulfilled His promise
- Chapter 12 reiterates Yahweh's faithfulness in using Moses & Joshua to overthrow the kings of the land

Illus: Many of you are aware we were approached over 3 years ago about constructing a cell phone tower on our property & we are open to it as stewards of what God has given us & to help our community. But there have been a couple of vocal opponents keep it from happening thus far. What are we to do? Do what the Lord says (the Golden Rule with them), trust the Lord & wait on Him. That doesn't mean we don't make some calls & try to move things forward, because even Israel had to fight the battles (though the Lord fought through them).

Conc. Can I tell you the greatest opposition you will ever face in life? It isn't a couple of people in the community or a co-worker or a mean neighbor or a marriage turned sour, although all of those can bring you opposition. The greatest opposition you will ever face is the person staring at you in the mirror—you & your sin nature. In order for you to be "Moving Forward," you have to "Deal with Opposition." Deal with your sin problem by turning to Jesus, who willingly took your sin upon Himself on the cross. He proved victorious over sin by rising from the dead, so trusting Him will be the only way you can really "Move Forward" for life here & hereafter.