

PLEASANT SPRINGS CHURCH • SERMON • EXODUS, PART SIX

Holy Surrender

Cleansing before conquering — “Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you”

Holy Surrender

A Sermon on Joshua 3:5 — Cleansing Before Conquering

By A Disciple of Jesus Christ • Pleasant Springs Church • July 12, 2026

Key Texts: Joshua 3:5 • Joshua 5:2–15 • Leviticus 20:26 • Ephesians 2:8–9 • Romans 12:1–2

Israel has been redeemed from Egypt, sustained in the wilderness, and carried across the Jordan. Before they draw a single sword to take the Promised Land, God gives one command: *sanctify yourselves*. This sermon walks through that call to holiness and surrender — the cleansing that comes before the conquering — and the moment Joshua falls on his face before the Captain of the Lord’s host on holy ground.

THE BIG IDEA

God did not bring Israel to the edge of the Promised Land to admire their strength — He brought them there to sanctify their hearts. The difference between the generation that fell in the wilderness and the generation that entered was not military might. It was a heart surrendered to the Lord. **Cleansing comes before conquering.**

RECAP — STANDING AT THE RIVER

A few things to keep before us as we open the text:

Israel had been redeemed from Egypt.

God sustained them in the wilderness.

Israel has now crossed the Jordan.

The people built a memorial of remembrance for future generations where they crossed.

THE SERMON TEXT — JOSHUA 3:5

Joshua 3:5 (KJV)

“And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”

GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO HOLINESS

God tells the people to sanctify themselves — to **make holy**, to **set apart**. This also took place before God gave the Law to Moses on Sinai (Exodus 19:10–11): the people were to consecrate themselves before the Lord came down.

Leviticus 20:26 (KJV)

“And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.”

Notice this carefully: Israel was **not becoming** God’s people — they **already were** God’s people. Holiness is not how we earn our place in His family; it is how the family He has already claimed learns to live.

CIRCUMCISION — THE NEGLECTED SIGN RENEWED

In Joshua 5:2–12, God renews the covenant with the people who were born in the wilderness journey — through circumcision, setting them apart and rolling away the reproach of Egypt from the people.

God renews the covenant sign among the new generation, not because the Abrahamic covenant itself expired, but because the covenant sign had simply been **neglected** during the wilderness years. Before the conquest begins, the mark of belonging is restored.

GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO SURRENDER

Holiness and surrender are two sides of one heart. Having renewed the covenant sign, God calls His people not only to be *set apart*, but to *yield* — to lay down their own strength and plans before the Lord who goes before them. What follows is the ground of that surrender (grace) and its posture (falling on our faces before the Captain of the host).

GRACE — THE ORDER NEVER REVERSES

We never earn God's grace by living holy; we live holy *in response* to God's grace and goodness.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (KJV)

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

When Joshua meets the Captain of the Lord’s Army in Joshua 5:13, he asks a profound question — “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” Notice the response:

Joshua 5:14–15 (KJV)

“Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.”

The question turned around.

The question is not *if God is for us*, but *are we for Him?* Before Israel ever draws a sword in conquering the Promised Land, Joshua is reminded that the battle belongs to the Lord, and His heavenly host stands under His sovereign command.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Is there anything in my life I'm holding on to?

Am I fully surrendered to God?

Is there any divided loyalty or areas of compromise?

Is there unconfessed sin in our lives we haven't dealt with?

What is God asking us to put away, or leave behind?

Joshua's response: he fell on his face and worshiped, and said to Him, "What do you have to say to your servant?"

Consecration and sanctification begin when we stop asking God to bless *our* plans and begin surrendering to *His*.

We see obedience displayed in the life of our Savior Jesus Christ as He prayed, “Father, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done!” Jesus presented Himself as a living sacrifice and beckons us to do the same by taking up our cross and following Him.

Matthew 16:24 (KJV)

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

Ephesians 5:25–27 (KJV)

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Romans 12:1–2 (KJV)

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Remember, all our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), and there is none righteous, no, not one (Romans 3:10) — but we are made whole in and through Christ: “being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

Oftentimes our greatest enemy is not the culture, the governments, or even other people — but our own desires.

CLOSING — A HEART SURRENDERED TO THE LORD

The previous generation stood at the border of the Promised Land and rebelled in unbelief. This generation stands at the same border — but the difference is, they humble themselves before God.

SO WHAT?

The difference we will see isn't their military strength. The difference is a heart surrendered to the Lord. Before we ever pick up a sword against anything the Lord sets before us, He calls us first to the harder, holier work: to sanctify ourselves, loose the shoe from our foot on holy ground, and fall on our faces before the Captain of the host — asking not “are You for us?” but “What do You have to say to Your servant?”

AFTER THE SERMON — AUTHOR & AUDIENCE

To read the book of Joshua well, it helps to know who first received it and the moment it describes. The following background is offered for deeper study — the same Author-and-Audience approach we use across the Discipleship School, with the Septuagint (LXX) and ESV set beside the preached text.

The book takes its name from **Joshua son of Nun**, the Ephraimite who served as Moses' assistant from the days of the Exodus and was commissioned as his successor (Numbers 27:18–23; Deuteronomy 34:9). Jewish tradition (the Talmud, *Bava Batra* 14b–15a) credits Joshua with writing the book, and the narrative itself notes that “Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God” (Joshua 24:26).

His Hebrew name **Yehoshua** — shortened to **Yeshua** — means “Yahweh saves,” and it is the very name rendered *Iesous* in Greek, from which we get **Jesus**. The man who calls Israel to sanctify themselves and then falls on his face before the Captain of the Lord's host bears, by name, the Savior he points toward.

The first hearers were the **second generation of Israel** — the children of the Exodus, born and raised in the wilderness, whose parents had perished there because of unbelief (Numbers 14:26–35). Around **1406 B.C.** they stand on the banks of a flooded Jordan at harvest season (Joshua 3:15), about to receive their own crossing. Before the conquest, before a single wall falls, the word to them is not *fight* but *be holy*.

Joshua 3:5 (LXX & ESV) — Consecrate Yourselfs

καὶ εἶπεν Ἰησοῦς τῷ λαῷ Ἀγνίσασθε εἰς αὔριον, ὅτι αὔριον ποιήσει ἐν ὑμῖν
Κύριος θαυμαστά.

“Then Joshua said to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.’”

LXX word worth keeping: hagnisasthe (Ἀγνίσασθε) — “purify / consecrate yourselves,” the same root behind hagnos, “pure, holy.” The preached text above follows the KJV as delivered (“Sanctify yourselves”); the Greek and ESV are set alongside for study. The command is reflexive: the people are to do the setting-apart, in response to the God who has already claimed them.

The threads in this sermon — sanctification before conquest, surrender to the Captain of the host, the battle that belongs to the Lord, and the heart made holy — each open into a fuller study. Keep growing:

SAME SERIES

The Stones of Remembrance

The crossing itself — Joshua 3, the Ark going before Israel into the Jordan, and the memorials God builds for the next generation.

THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S

Paul & the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview

The Captain of the host and His armies — the unseen-realm backdrop to Israel's conquest and the powers behind it.

THE HEART MADE HOLY

Third World Souls

The renovation of the heart — how a soul is actually formed and set apart, from the inside out.

LIVING SACRIFICE

Rooted in Christ

The Seed, the Blood, and the Fruit — presenting our bodies a living sacrifice and being transformed by the renewing of the mind.

“Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”

Joshua 3:5 (KJV)