

New Beginnings, Joshua, 2026 – #5 – Gilgal

Joshua 5:1-9

Today, as we continue New Beginnings with Joshua and the Children of Israel, we stop to consider a passage that, frankly, is a little strange and that you may not have thought about before.

I was tempted to skip it and move on, but we can't move forward until we deal with what God says must be dealt with. Before Israel could fight battles on the outside, God dealt with something on the inside.

"Gilgal": That's is the name of the place. That is our stop today. And even as we begin, it whispers – **"God often requires obedience that feels costly before He grants victory that feels glorious."**

First, let's set the stage by explaining

I. The Event.

- **Momentum is building**
- **Faith is rising**
- **Memorial stones are standing**
- **And then God says... *"Stop."***

A. God's command: All males were to be circumcised before continuing.

B. Joshua's

- Instructions
- Preparations (A million plus males!)
- Action – Every single one of them was circumcised!

C. Israel's obedience.

Strangely, we don't even hear them complaining!
They seemed to understand that serving God would not always be easy, and would require something of them!

They did exactly what God asked.

- It slowed them down... took some time...
- **It was not just inconvenient, embarrassing- but painful!**

II. The Explanation.

Sometimes we are left to wonder, “Why?”

Not so in this passage. God explained to His people exactly **why this was essential.** (It is in His explanation to them that we will find our applications shortly.)

They knew exactly what to do, and God told them “Why?”.

His explanation: God required something of them **before they could continue. A prerequisite.**

- It was something **they had neglected.**
- It was **an oversight that was certainly understandable** in light of the years that had passed and circumstances that had transpired. But **it wasn’t acceptable.**
- **It wouldn’t be pleasant or easy, but God required it before they moved on.**

Do I completely understand it? **No. What we learn:**

- **It was a very personal outward sign of their faith.**

(Circumcision didn’t make them God’s people. It revealed that they trusted Him enough to obey.)

The sounds and cries... the blood... the pain and recovery...

- **Powerful testimonies** of a people who had learned the hard way that it pays to trust God, even when...
- **Body building, faith building** catalysts of a people on a journey of promise!
- **Fearful, impactful reminders to enemies to come that they were a people who trusted their God!**

As there was circumcision in the camp, there was quaking behind the walls of the enemy

We understand why it was important for them? What are we to learn?

III. The Exhortations (Application.)

A. Circumcision: An outward mark symbolizing separation and identifying the people outwardly as people of God. People of faith.

In the first century among New Testament believers, there were still some that insisted and taught that circumcision was essential for salvation.

It is kind of difficult to picture them explaining that at the pearly gates...

Jesus and New Testament writers made it clear: Circumcision never saved! It was always an outward sign of inward faith.

Further, Jesus nailed the law to the cross. It was fulfilled in Him. We were never under it to begin with. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus alone. Never works!

So, why are we talking about it?

B. Application:

While physical circumcision is never a New Testament command, the Old Testament mark of circumcision served as a symbol of New Testament truths:

1. When we trust Jesus as our Savior, our hearts are circumcised! We are cut off and dead to sin and alive unto Him!

Romans 3:30

Seeing it is one God, which shall *justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.*

Galatians 5

6. For in Jesus Christ *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

11. And I, brethren, *if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.*

15. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Philippians 3:3

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Colossians 2:11

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

2. While literal circumcision is not a part of New Testament experience, others symbols and signs are! The principle lives though the practice is over!

Inward faith determines relationship and even fellowship. However, there are outward signs affirming to believers, faith building in their experience, and evidence to the world of Jesus!

James boldly proclaimed, ***"Faith without works is dead"***.

If Jesus is real on the inside it will show.

There are specific ways that He has directed us to do just that!

Before we go on to greater victories and enjoying the depths of His promise, we must be obedient in these! There must be a Gilgal.

What has God asked of me that I've delayed because it's uncomfortable?

- Baptism?
- Church Membership – becoming a faithful part of His body?
- Giving?
- Daily dying to self as we live to, for and with Him.

When we hesitate, or refuse, we limit Him and the journey ahead!

Finally, there is application of the concept God revealed both in His explanation and the name He gave this place:

3. They were set apart for all to see: Themselves, their children, their brethren... The watching world!

From Egypt to God!

Gilgal meant "rolled away".

God didn't just mark them at Gilgal. He rolled something away: Pagan influences, mindsets and accompanying actions that had plagued them - Gone!

We find the principle emphasized by Jesus and throughout the New Testament: There should be an obvious difference outwardly identifying us as children of God before we will be effective in carrying out His commands/commission.

A few New Testament exhortations:

2 Corinthians 6:17

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Ephesians 4:22

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Colossians 3

8. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

Usually, when we speak of separation and holiness, we go immediately to the negative.

- Don't...
- Thou shalt not...

Not so fast!

Christianity is not what we don't do. It is Christ!

Holiness isn't subtraction. It's saturation.

The only person who can always "not do" anything wrong is a corpse! Only dead people manage perfect "don'ts."

Negative will never bring life. The law could not bring life – it condemned and brought death!

When we by faith trust Jesus, He becomes our life! He brings all that He is to us – Life. Love. Light. We are to be alive unto and with Christ, and then to crucify the flesh, sinfulness and selfishness.

New Testament Christians face a continual struggle.

- Paul described in painful detail his personal inner struggle in Romans 7. Then he rose to the heights of Romans 8 – all that we have in Jesus!
- Paul admonished believers in Chapter 12, to "***not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed...***"

When we are filled with Jesus, the unwanted and ungodly is pushed away. When we find our lives filled with the things He has condemned, it is almost always because we have allowed them to push Him to the background of our lives.

Put Jesus on full display! For the strengthening of our walk of faith, for the benefit of those around us, and for the impact He has told us to have in a broken, searching world.

That is our Gilgal, and we are constantly admonished to make sure it is our reality.

Go back to Gilgal.

1. If you've never trusted Jesus as your Saviour, today is your Gilgal!

2. If you have trusted Jesus, Gilgal was a place of memorial and remembrance, to be visited over and over, to remind God's people continually.

- **Revelation.** Perhaps you have been saved and not taught His instructions for a new life in Jesus and the difference it should make. Today is your day to go back to your Savior and start living the life He deserves and directed!
- **Rebuke.**
 - God tells that all Scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"
 - If perhaps, through neglect, or maybe even intention, you have drifted with the currents of our world from the distinctiveness in Christ which sets us apart, and you feel His loving conviction, His rebuke in your spirit, thank Him. Thank Him that He loves you so much that He would send the pain of conviction to keep you from regret and to open up His life of promise. Don't ignore. Respond!
- **Reminder.** We each need a regular reminder of who He is, what He's done, and who we are to be in Him. If you are genuinely striving to live in a way that would please, and reveal Him, Gilgal is His loving affirmation that it matters! To keep on as you move forward!

What would happen if, before we "go into all the world" and proclaim the good news of Jesus, live the abundant life He died to make real, we were so filled and marked by Him that world can't help but notice.

Before the walls of Jericho fell, something had to be rolled away at Gilgal.

And before God does His next great work through us, He may ask the same.