



December 8, 2013

Joshua 5

“When God Rolls Away the Shame”

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When reading Joshua chapter five in preparation for this message, Pastor Gary commented on the fact that he specifically noticed that the Lord said to Joshua, *“Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.”* The Hebrew root word meaning to roll is Gilgal, which is the place where God rolled away the reproach of Egypt. So, what was the reproach of Egypt and why was it necessary for God to roll it away? A reproach is something that causes shame or disgrace. Remember, the Israelites had suffered tremendous shame and disgrace at the hands of the Egyptians, who had enslaved and mistreated them for 400 years. They were subjected to hard labor and they were used to build store cities for Pharaoh.¹ They were forced to make bricks with their hands, and they were whipped and worked in a ruthless manner by their slave masters.² In addition, to control the growing Hebrew slave population, Pharaoh resorted to the despicable practice of infanticide; ordering the killing of all Hebrew baby boys the moment they were born.

It’s hard to imagine the depth of their physical suffering, as well as their emotional turmoil. Finally, God heard their cry and the Scripture says he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. [Exodus 2:25](#) says, *“So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.”* And it was his concern for them that led him to send Moses as a deliverer to lead them out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Now, 40 years later, here they were in the Promised Land. God didn’t want them to be defined by the stigma of their past, because he was doing a new thing, in a new land, in a new day!

In this study, we will learn that God doesn’t want our future to be hindered or defined by our past, nor does he want us to forget who we are and whose we are!

¹ [Exodus 1:11](#) - *“So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh.”*

² [Exodus 1:14](#) - *“They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.”*

God Doesn't Want Our Future To Be Hindered Or Defined By Our Past

1. The reproach of our past can be twofold: either the things we've done that bring shame and disgrace upon ourselves or the things done to us that bring shame and disgrace.
2. For the Israelites, their shame and disgrace was about what was done to them (the sin of others against them), in that they were enslaved, mistreated, humiliated, and abused.
3. For most of us, the reproach we bear is from our own sinful past.
 - a. The things we've done that leave us feeling ashamed and disgraced; the things we wish we could do over if we had the opportunity.
4. For Christians today, no matter the reason, God wants to roll away the reproach of the past.
5. Rolling away the past was fundamental to a new beginning for the Israelites, who were still carrying the shame and disgrace of their years in slavery.
6. It's important to note, that just because they were now in the Promised Land, that relocation by itself was not enough to remove the reproach of the past.
7. A new setting does not automatically remove an old problem.
 - a. Changing circumstances doesn't ensure things will be better.
 - b. Getting married or getting married again, isn't a guarantee things will be better.
 - c. Changing jobs or addresses or churches doesn't guarantee things will be better.
8. Until a person deals with their past, they can be sure their past will follow them wherever they go!
9. We need God to remove the reproach of our past.
 - a. **Joshua 5:2** - *"At that time the Lord said to Joshua, 'Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again.' "*
 - i. It's not that men needed to be circumcised again, it's that they needed to practice again what they had neglected for the last 40 years as they wandered the wilderness.
 - ii. God first commanded Abraham and all succeeding Jewish generations to practice circumcision as a part of the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

1. **Genesis 17:10-11** - *"This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you."*
- iii. Every covenant God made involved the shedding of blood.
- iv. God intentionally wanted the shedding of blood at the place of reproduction as a lasting sign of the covenant between God and the Israelites, so that it would be understood that he was their father and they were his children.
 1. This would be a lasting reminder that their heritage and identity was in the Lord.
 2. The Bible tells us that they had neglected this important sign that marked them as a people belonging to God during the 40 years of wilderness wandering.

Remember Who Your Are And Whose You Are!

10. God was saying to the Israelites:
 - a. "You don't belong to Pharaoh or slavery, you belong to me."
 - b. "The Promised Land is now your home, not Egypt or the wilderness."
 - c. "Your past will no longer define you, because you are my children, who are sealed with a covenant of blood."
11. We need to be reminded of this because many still carry the shame and disgrace of their past, either what they've done or what's been done to them.
12. **Romans 2:29a** - *"... [Real] circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit..."*
13. **Colossians 2:11** - *"In [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ."*
14. **Deuteronomy 10:16** - *"Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer."*
15. **Deuteronomy 30:6** - *"The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live."*
16. Put the past in the past, and embrace a new identity in Christ!

17. **2 Corinthians 5:17** - *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*
18. Gilgal was the place where...
- God’s grace met the Israelites disgrace.
 - God’s future met their past.
 - A new identity replaced an old mindset.
19. David experienced a Gilgal moment when the prophet Nathan confronted him about his sin with Bathsheba.
- 2 Samuel 12:13a** - *“Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘The Lord has taken away your sin.’ ”*
20. The woman caught in adultery experienced a Gilgal moment when the Pharisees brought her before Jesus advocating that she be stoned to death.
- John 8:2-11** - *“At dawn [Jesus] appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’ ”*
21. Peter had a Gilgal moment when he denied Jesus three times, weeping bitterly over his denial, but the resurrected Jesus appeared to him and gave him the chance to affirm his love for Christ.
- Matthew 26:74-75** - *“Then [Peter] began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, ‘I don’t know the man!’ Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: ‘Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly.”*
 - John 21:15-17** - *“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.’*

Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.' "

22. Unfortunately, we can't go back and undo what we've done or what has been done to us, but we can have a new beginning in Christ.
23. Every time our past raises its head, we can say as Paul did...
 - a. **Philippians 3:13-14** - *"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."*
 - b. **Galatians 2:20** - *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Joshua 5:1-12** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share examples of shame and disgrace related to things others have to do them, as well as examples of reproach that come from personal sin.
4. Do you agree with Pastor Gary, when he said that being in a new setting (new home, new relationship, new job, new town, new church) or changing circumstances does not guarantee things will be better?
5. How has the Lord helped you deal with your past?
 - a. Read and discuss the examples of David, the woman caught in adultery, and Peter. (See #19 - #20 - #21 above)
6. In what ways does your past follow you?
7. What do you do when your past rears its head?
8. How does the truth of **2 Corinthians 5:17** help you see that the Lord has rolled

away the shame, disgrace, and reproach of your past?

9. Allow the people in your group to share their testimony of the way(s) the Lord has brought them to a place of victory.
10. Read and discuss [Philippians 3:13-14](#) and [Galatians 2:20](#).
11. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: allow the him to roll away the reproach of their past, whether it was the sin of others committed against them or their own personal sin; know they are the Lord's and the Lord is theirs.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).