

# So I will be with you

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[ 0 : 00 ] turning back to the chapter that we read, the book of Joshua, chapter 1. And we look this morning at the verses that we have, verses 5 and 6 of this chapter. Joshua, chapter 1, verses 5 and 6. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life, just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. And in looking at these verses, we can first look at the glory of past ages.

And secondly, we can look at presence and power, the presence and the power of the Lord. And thirdly, we can look at being strong in God's promises, strong in his promises.

And firstly, coming to the glory of past ages. And here we find both Joshua, we find both Joshua and Israel embarking on a new beginning, which would, of course, mean new responsibilities, taking on new responsibilities. The great servant leader Moses was now dead.

But as we find from this chapter, as we see from this chapter, the work of God still goes on. The work of God is not dependent upon one man or even upon a body of men and women. The work of God goes on.

And you, yourselves as a congregation, are now embarking upon a new beginning, having become united, one with another, and waiting upon a new minister to be set over you. And you might be feeling, as Israel aware at this time, facing the future with trepidation, not knowing what the future has in store for you.

[ 2 : 32 ] And the one, of course, who was instrumental in bringing you together in God's providence, has been removed. He's been taken away. And Israel would, at this particular moment, they would have been probably thinking along the lines, with Moses now having gone, that the age of blessing was no over. With Moses having departed, the age of blessing is no gone.

You might be feeling the same yourselves, that as you look upon the future, as Israel was looking upon the future, you might be thinking that the task that is before you is beyond you, is beyond you. With the one who was instrumental in bringing you together in God's providence, now having departed. You might be looking to the future with trepidation, thinking, well, that the age of blessing is now gone.

And as Israel were thinking along these lines, with Moses having now departed, they would be thinking, well, there's nothing left now but the commonalities of life.

Some of yourselves might have been blessed under the preaching that you were under, might have experienced the blessing of God under that preaching. And you might be thinking, well, now that that is gone, there is nothing left to me now but the commonalities of life. There is nothing but the common things of life.

[ 4 : 22 ] I will never experience that sort of blessing again. Well, probably, probably most of Israel were thinking along the lines that with Moses now gone, that the greatness and the glory had now departed from Israel.

Had now departed from Israel. The greatness and the glory was now gone. Well, the only antidote for such situations, the only antidote for such situations, servant leaders can come and go.

But what we've got to remember is that God remains. God remains. We find ourselves today in the midst of great changes, communally, nationally and spiritually.

And what we've got to lay hold of in the midst of these changes is this fact that God remains a constant, the only constant in the midst of all of these changes.

The only constant in the midst of all of these changes. God is unchangeable without variableness, without shadow of turning.

[ 5 : 59 ] God, in the midst of all the changes that encompass us, remains unchanged. And whatever or whosoever leaves us, God still abides with his people.

God still abides with us. We are all prone to look to past ages and think that they were better than the present, as if there is some glory lacking in the present.

And we are prone to think, we are prone to think along these lines, how on earth can we restore the spirit of past glories, the grandeur of thought, the saintliness, the spirituality, that will no longer come to dignify our age.

And we think, and we think that, we think that a special grace was bestowed upon the men and women who inhabited past ages, and that that grace has now evaporated, and it will return no more.

We envy the great reformers. We envy the times of the Puritans. We envy the days of revival.

[ 7 : 31 ] We envy all of that. And we think that the tender grace that belonged to a day that is now dead will never return.

But let us lay hold of this promise. And let you lay hold of it as a congregation. As you embark on this new beginning, lay hold of it and keep hold of it, as I was with Moses.

So I will be with you. So I will be with you. Let us reveal, let us reveal, let us reveal, the saintly past.

But let us never forget the God that is still present. The God that is still present. Let us remember, let us remember in the midst of all the changes that belong to this century, the 21st century.

Let us remember this, that none of these changes diminishes God's power one whit. God's power still remains the same.

[ 8 : 56 ] Fear not. Fear not. For God's church. Because God still dwells in the midst of his people.

Fear not for our nation. Fear not for mankind. For whosoever, or whatever leaves us, God still remains.

As he was with the Father, so he will be with us. So he will be with us. Which brings us to the second thing that we have here, presence and power.

And we have that in the promise in the promise that he gives. I will not leave you or forsake you. Or we could put it another way, I will not fail you or forsake you.

So you have the promise of his presence, I will not forsake you. You have the promise of his help and power, I will not fail you. I will not fail you.

[ 10 : 08 ] And, this is the mystery of God's covenant love. Here we are, Israel, at the brink of the Jordan, and Israel is full of faults and failings.

We are also full of faults and failings. And it's not that the sweetness of the gospel, that in spite of these faults and failings, God's help and presence will remain with his people.

will remain with his people. The fear of failure would have been haunting Israel at this particular time, as it might be haunting yourselves.

At the beginning, at this new beginning, that you are embarking on, what would have been haunting Israel, it might be haunting yourselves.

Fear that your courage will fail you. Fear that your faithfulness to God will be found lacking.

[ 11 : 35 ] Fear that your wisdom to perform the duties that God requires of you will be found at fault. Fear that your endurance will not last.

But in the midst of it all, you've got to remember this. God's promise, I will not fail you.

I will not fail you. He will withhold no needed help. He will disappoint no expectation. He will not fail us in our weakness.

Neither will he forsake us when we are at fault. That is the extent of his promise.

And with a duty comes power. With a duty comes power. With duty, power always comes because they walk hand in hand.

[ 12 : 53 ] You see, you see the moment Christ's command placed the responsibility upon the man with the withered arm to stretch it forth.

He was able to do so at that very moment. He was able to stretch forth his arm. And you see, when you and I accept, when you and I accept duty, the heart is open to God and what does God do?

He fills that heart with his grace. The disciples were commanded to go forth and cast out demons and to their surprise they were able to do so.

They were able to do so. You see, the Lord will never come short of this promise. This promise that he has given that has strengthened his people in the past ages and continues to strengthen them even in this present day.

I will not fail you or forsake you. I will not fail you or forsake you. You see, we never get power except as that power flows to us from him.

[ 14 : 16 ] And it is all for his glory. For his glory he will give to no one else. Neither will he give his praise to graven images. And he is there beside us and in us.

There beside us and in us. so that when we are feeling weak and unfit to bear the responsibilities that he places upon our shoulders we find that he supplies at that very moment the necessary grace.

The necessary grace. you go back anyone here who is a Christian who is a believer you go back to your own beginnings.

We go back to our own beginnings. And at the very beginning at the very beginning the Lord calls us to confess Christ.

which means forsaking the way of sin. And you certainly look at what the Lord has commanded you to do.

[ 15 : 37 ] And for some of us the way of sin might have been profitable. You might have been adored by many. your advice might have been sought by many.

Your counsel was looked upon as being precious to many and you're thinking to yourself well you're surrounded with adulation and you're thinking to yourself well what's the point?

I am better off where I am than following Christ. Or it might have been another way for you. You might have been looking at the Christians who had gone before you and you might be thinking well I'm not fit to fill these people's shoes.

Those believers that have now departed you are looking upon them as saints as great men and women of faith how are you going to fill their shoes?

And you might be afraid to follow God's command you might be thinking well what if I fall back? And you see for some of us the beginning of our Christian lives it might have been filled with what ifs.

[ 16 : 57 ] What if this happened? What if that happens? And you might find great difficulty in following the Lord's command. Get out and confess the Lord.

Stand out from the crowd. But once you did it once you ventured and it might have taken you a while some of us might have been obedient to the Lord's command right away but the thing is whatever however it worked out for us once we stepped out the necessary grace was applied. And you hear a believer may be having many years now behind you in this life of grace following the Lord and can you ever look back upon your life and say that the necessary grace was not supplied when you were in most need of it.

I will not fail you or forsake you. I will not fail you and that's the way it is.

When you and I accept the duty, the responsibilities that the Lord is placing upon us, it is then and only then that the necessary grace is supplied to us.

[ 18 : 44 ] You might have been at the beginning of your Christian life thinking that you have been asked to lay hold of a forlorn hope of goodness, that you are standing alone, being told to lay hold of this forlorn hope of goodness, and you are afraid that you have no strength or energy or appetite for the task.

How am I going to last? But yet now here you are with many years behind you, and the Lord has not let you down.

You can look back upon these many years and you can say that throughout them, the Lord has remained faithful. And will it not be the same for you as a congregation embarking on a new beginning, that you go out, step out, knowing that the one in whom you place your trust will remain faithful.

We find this comfort in this promise, that with the acceptance of duty, grace is supplied.

I will never fail you or forsake you. Which brings us to the final thing that we have, strong in whose promise. Be of good courage.

[ 20 : 17 ] Be strong and of good courage. This is what he said to Israel. here were Israel at the brink of the Jordan. The Jordan was in flood.

How were they going to cross over? And even if they managed to cross over, how were they going to conquer these fortified cities that were on the other side?

There were strong fortified cities and awaiting them on the other side of the Jordan were giants, the children of Anak. How were they going to prevail?

in the task that the Lord was setting? Be strong and of good courage. And no doubt that Israel at this particular moment would have been feeling the very opposite of that. Be strong and of good courage. And you might be feeling that with yourself embarking on this new beginning. The very opposite of this. Be strong and of good courage. Maybe this is exactly what you're not.

[ 21 : 23 ] strong and courageous as you embark on this new beginning. It's full of what-ifs. What if this happens? What if that happens? It's just the same as it might have been at the beginning of your Christian life.

Yet what we have to remember is this, that God has not deserted his creation. God is still at work within this world.

He's out working his purposes in the midst of what looks or seems to us like being nothing but chaos and confusion and turmoil. The Lord is out working his purposes and the building up of his church within the world is a testimony to that.

maybe we are seeing a decline in the West as far as the church of God is concerned but there's phenomenal growth in China, in parts of South America, in South Africa, even in Iran.

Even in Iran, a Muslim dominated country, the church is growing. the church is growing. It might be declining in the West and even in China under communist rule, the church is growing at a phenomenal rate.

[ 22 : 51 ] And the rulers in China thought that they could eradicate the church at first and when they found out that they could not eradicate it, they decided to bear with it.

But the growth recently has been so phenomenal that they are endeavouring to control it. They are trying to control it. When some churches have been burnt down, Christians have been severely persecuted, pastors and congregations, but they cannot stop the growth of the church.

God has not deserted his creation. It is difficult for us when we go through scripture to count the fear nots in scripture.

Fear not this, fear not that. And these words, these fear nots, they are not smooth words to ease a troubled mind, but they are quickening words calling me and you to conflict and to victory.

you see, slavish fear is the parent of every form of vice. Fear of conflict, fear of failure, fear of shame, fear that God will not reward my faithfulness, fear that my prayers will not receive an answer.

[ 24 : 22 ] There are even those who are under the blessing of the gospel. and they are afraid to confess Christ, afraid to stand out in the midst of the crowd because of their fear of failure.

I was afraid and I went and hid my talent. You might be here, might be here this morning, and that fear has kept you from confessing Christ.

and maybe it's kept you for many years from confessing him. I was afraid and I went and hid my talent, but the talent of course was a coin.

And fear leads us to make mountains out of mollets, shrinks from reproach, complaints against duties, and even leads to neglect of duty, and even leads to us complaining to God about that neglect of duty as if God was responsible for our neglect of duty.

Be of good courage, be strong and be of good courage. Well, if you are seeking God's face as a congregation and seeking his presence as you embark on this new beginning, then you should do so, hopefully, expecting to find him.

[ 25 : 55 ] For God is not far from you. God is not far from you. He is probably dwells in the hearts of most of you.

He is walking beside you in all that you undertake to do. And if his face is hidden for a time, it will only be for a time. Seek him hopefully expecting to find him.

You see, Israel, Israel weren't told by God to grit their teeth and go forward hoping for the best. And neither are you being told that as a congregation either.

But they were to be strong and courageous because the Lord was present with them. God was present with them.

And we should not make the mistake, and that is very important. We should never make the mistake that Israel made. Remember, remember in chapter 6 in John when Jesus said, I am the bread of life.

[ 27 : 09 ] life. And that was after he had fed the 5,000 in the wilderness with two loaves and some small fishes. And they were ready to make him king.

And he said to them, I am the bread of life. And they started arguing with him. Moses, they said, gave us manna in the wilderness.

how can you say that you are the bread of life? And you see the mistake they were making. Jesus corrected their mistake right away. He said to them, it wasn't he said, Moses who gave you that manna in the wilderness, but my father who is in heaven.

Let us never make the mistake that the blessings that we receive from the Lord, are restricted to certain men and women in our company.

Maybe they might be instrumental in the way they're used by the Lord to bring these blessings to us. But let us remember and always remember that when you or I experience a blessing, it has come from the Lord himself.

[ 28 : 37 ] Not because of certain men and women that I am keeping company with. And that's the mistake that Israel made.

They were thinking that Moses was the person who supplied them with the manna. But Jesus corrected their mistake. not that they hated him, but he corrected it.

It wasn't he said Moses who gave you that manna, but my father which art in heaven. He supplied you with the manna. And let us never ever make the mistake of thinking that if certain people remain in our midst, then God's blessing is assured to us.

God's blessing is not dependent upon me or you or anybody else or anybody else or whatever age we are in.

Let us always remember that. And this promise is repeated to us in Hebrews chapter 13 verses 5 and 6.

[ 29 : 56 ] I will not fail you nor forsake you. That's a solution to covetousness and discontentment. And as God says to me, I will not leave you nor forsake you, what is our answer to the Lord?

What is our answer to that promise? The answer is this, the Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man will do to me, what man will do to me.

So as you embark on this new beginning, take courage in this that the Lord has not turned its back upon this world.

He is still at work within this creation. And he is at work within it because he has a purpose for it. And what is that purpose that he has for it? That the day will come when he will fill this creation, the new heavens and the new earth, he will fill it with his glory, with his peace and with his righteousness.

[ 31 : 22 ] So take courage when you look at God's purpose for this creation. Take courage. courage. Do not be filled with trepidation.

Hold on to his promises so that you will be participants through faith in Jesus Christ in this great purpose that God has for this creation.

And God has brought you together as one congregation. salvation. And as Israel at this time, as it was for Israel at this time, they did not know, they weren't really aware of what purpose God had for them.

Neither might you be aware of what purpose God has for you and bring you together. but remember what Bruce, a great preacher in Edinburgh, once said.

And Bruce, of course, offended the king. He offended King James at that time. So King James decided to banish Bruce to the highlands. the highlands, of course, were looked upon as a place of darkness where you could banish people, too, who stepped out of line at that particular time.

[ 33 : 02 ] And as the soldiers came to escort Bruce to the highlands, the soldiers that were sent by the king, as they came to escort Bruce to the highlands, Bruce turned to them and he said, it is not you, he said, it is not you that is sending me to the highlands, but he said, God is sending me there, and God is sending me to plant a seed within the highlands that is going to last for centuries.

and you do not know that the seed that comes from your unification might be a seed that will bear fruit, maybe you will never see it to yourselves in your lifetime, maybe you will, but God always has a purpose when he moves and when he intervenes, and when he commands people to embark on a new beginning, he will be true to his promise, I will not fail you nor forsake you.

go forward in the strength of that promise and that other promise as well, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

May he bless to us these few thoughts. Let us pray.