

Joshua's Commission

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 November 2016

Preacher: Rev. Calum Iain Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Let us start back together to God's word. Joshua is read in chapter 1. We can reread again. Verse 5.

Joshua 1 and verse 5. 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. Now in the Christian life, one of the great blessings among many is that we share the fellowship of the people of God.

It is, for that reason, something that is far from a lonely life or a lonely existence. And in having such a fellowship with the people of God, we find we've got so much in common.

We have a great basis for our fellowship. Something that we never found in the world. And the friendships, even the best of them that we had back then, had so much missing.

[1 : 0 9] But at the same time, it's also true that when God is dealing with us in certain ways, that while we are members of the church, I don't mean by members that we've made a public profession necessarily, but members of the body of Christ insofar as we belong to him, and are united to him by faith.

We can, although we belong to this fellowship, also find that there are times where we are very, very lonely. But God brings us to situations and places and times where we have to make decisions and have to make choices and have to do things that might leave us feeling we're all alone.

And that was true for Joshua for many reasons. He was among a vast army of Israelites. And he was one of many people who had witnessed and experienced great things from God's hand.

But in this situation, in the beginning of Joshua, the book of Joshua, we find him very much alone. He's a man who's got to stand on his own two feet, and a man who, given what God says to him, would very likely have been open, at least, to being very discouraged.

You might find yourself like that sometimes, maybe even tonight. That you're in a crowd of people here, or wherever it might be. People who you love, people you trust, fellow Christians.

[2 : 4 0] But you might find that for all that, you're still feeling all alone. You're in a place, in a position, or a situation where God is making you think for yourself, or making you have to do something you never thought you had to do before.

It can even happen at a time of communion, where you can be somewhat pushed. The pressure of being in the situation, or you've never professed faith, you can feel yourself pushed out of how other people are feeling, and maybe you feel the pressures on yourself.

And the question you might have is, well, should I take that kind of step, or should I not? And we can think of other people the same way, and should be sensitive of, and sympathetic towards them.

We can feel all alone. But sometimes that feeling of loneliness and isolation is a good thing. It's not a comfortable thing. None of us like to feel lonely or cut off.

But sometimes it's a good thing when God sends that into our lives, when it makes us more dependent on himself. And sometimes God has his ways, doesn't he, of taking from us, sometimes the most important people, or the most important of things that we used to trust in, or things that used to help us through our Christian lives, and through life, maybe even in general.

[3 : 59] God has his ways of taking from us things that we unintentionally trust in, and misplace our confidence. And by taking these things from us, he makes us trust completely in himself.

Sometimes because he leaves us with no one, and nothing to depend on, apart from himself. So we see Joshua in this situation tonight, and as God may help us, we want to look into chapter 1 as we've read, referring back to the last chapter of Deuteronomy as well.

And we want to think about his situation from three angles. The first is his prospect. The second was his priority. And faced with both of these, it was a massive future that lay on front of him.

But God has provided the great and the majestic presence. The prospect which brought before us here in verse 2, now he says, Moses, my servant, is dead.

Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all the people, into the land that I'm giving to them, to the people of Israel. It's a great prospect. And for all the facts associated with it, this prospect of inheriting the promised land, based as it is on God's clear promise, repeated promise, emphatic promise, Joshua still has to put his hand to the plough, as it were.

[5 : 17] He has to stand, he has to move, and he has to lead this people into the promised land. So God has his promise, you're going to get the land. But he's saying to Joshua, but you've got to lead the people in there.

It's a massive prospect. And it's an even greater prospect, given the fact that God introduces that command in verse 2, with these words, Moses, my servant, is dead.

God has taken, for his own reasons, and we'll see that in just a minute, he's taken Moses away from them, from Joshua. And Joshua now has to take the place of Moses. What a prospect.

How could anyone take the place of Moses? Well, God is going to do that. And Moses is going to have his replacement. And Joshua is going to lead Israel the next step. But in doing this, facing this prospect, the great priority that God is giving to him is that he has to make sure that, in verse 7 and 8, the word of God is central to all that he's doing.

The only way for us, as verse 8 concludes, to have our way prosperous, and to have good success, is to have God's word central in our lives. He's given us promises.

[6 : 26] Yes. He's given Joshua promises. But although he's given him promises that guarantee success, you might think in and of themselves, I am giving you the land that I have promised.

God qualifies that promise by saying, make sure that, we'll see in detail what that means, make sure that the word, the law of Moses, and all that I've commanded him, is central and governing your life.

Because when he says, then you will make your way prosperous, then you'll have good success, you can reverse the thing. And God is saying, if you don't make the word central, that all of these other promises, all of these glorious promises, but if you don't make the word central and something that governs your life, you will not prosper, and you will not have good success.

And don't we know that ourselves? If we've ever erred, and deviated, backslidden, and gone off the path, even for a short time, we learn, and we reap the consequences. We don't prosper, we don't succeed.

Psalms 1 is a vivid picture, isn't it? Of the man and the woman, who is very much in God's word. They prosper, and they succeed. So you think of these two things.

[7 : 34] This prospect, this priority, and God is loading Joshua, as it were, with a responsibility. And the pressure of that must have been massive. But God makes up for that by giving him the assurance of his own presence.

We read that in verse 5. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so he says, I will be with you.

And the end of verse 9, the Lord your God is with you, wherever you go. Isn't this what we need? Even if we had no one, and even if we had nothing, so long in whatever situation God has placed us in, we can say and believe, the Lord will never leave me, the Lord will never forsake me, as these words are somewhat repeated in Hebrews 13, that we do be content with that very promise, I will never leave you, or forsake you.

If we have the presence of God, we have everything we need. And there is a last thing we might refer to it as we conclude, where from verse 10 to the end of this chapter, the people give their pledge of allegiance, and it all comes when Joshua begins to obey God.

Verse 10, Joshua commanded all the people, and then from verse 16 and following, the people say, we're with you, we'll obey you just as we obeyed Moses. So the main thing that we find is that God has taken Moses away.

[8 : 57] And the promises God gives to Joshua is I'll be with you just as I was with Moses. And the Israelites say to him in verse 17, just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will be with you only may the Lord be with you as he was with Moses.

How massive a figure and presence Moses was to the Israelites. Maybe we've got someone we can think of as well who we can follow us being somewhat of a Moses-like figure.

And we trust and we depend and maybe we've lost that person in the providence of God. And we realize just how much of our loss it is, but God has made us look more to himself because of that.

So let's start with God's help as we look for his help. Looking into this, the prospect. He says in verse 3, every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you just as I promised Moses.

From the wilderness and it goes right through all the land, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Hittites, the great seed wards are going down to the sun. It shall be, he says, your territory.

[10 : 04] So God is very clearly predicting the future to him, reiterating to Joshua the promises that he had made to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.

What an inheritance it is. But how many battles there are that lie ahead. And God's providences, I'm not trying to spiritualize this in trying to say this, but I suppose there's a principle involved nevertheless, that when God does give us, as we have his word, all of these promises to face so many of our situations, sometimes, as we were singing in Psalm 66, it's only as we go through fire and only as we go through water, tests of our faith and difficulties, that we find we reach, as it were, that promised land of sorts.

And so it would be for Joshua. He wasn't just going to cross the Jordan and walk in and just allot the certain locations to each of the tribes.

You know yourself that they had to conquer these tribes, they had to dispossess them. So there was going to be a great conflict in front of them. So God is giving promises, reassurances that they're going to need to depend on.

And you and I are the same, whatever our situation in particular. We need these promises of God. We need in a world that is so riddled with unfaithfulness and people you can't trust, people you can't depend on.

[11 : 30] You look to people in authority, whether as you see on the news and all around you, whether it's people who are in politics, people who are in police, whatever it might be, people who you would think you could trust.

And so often we learn and we hear and we discover that we can't trust any of them. But we can, of course, trust our God. His promises are yes and they are amen in Jesus Christ.

It is vast, it is so problematic, but God is saying, I have promised it and I will give it to you.

But the main thing we want to notice in this prospect is the fact that God removes Moses from the equation. Moses being in the equation, you could remember them coming out of Egypt, remember them coming through the wilderness, crossing the Jordan into the promised land would be relatively easy.

If you knew Moses as Joshua and the people had known Moses, you would think and you would find that God having been so with Moses as he had been, that there would be nothing too hard, nothing too difficult.

[12 : 37] And so long as Moses was leading and you were following, then everything would seem to work out, you'd think and hope anyway, okay in the end. But Moses has been taken away and just to remind ourselves of why exactly it is, and it sounds, it sounds, while it isn't.

So almost unfair of God, almost, I mean that respectfully, to have led Moses into his service from the time of, well in fact, even before the time of the burning bush, as far back as when Moses was still serving in Pharaoh's household.

You remember when he killed the Egyptian and we're told in the New Testament that he had thought at that point that God was going to use him to deliver the Israelites. So God was moving Moses from way back in his life.

God had set him apart, you remember, and he had very clearly chosen him, used him, brought him through so many difficulties, so many blessings. Moses had been the very one who interceded for the Israelites time and again.

And when God had threatened to wipe them out and make a new nation out of Moses himself, Moses would have none of it. And all of these things that went along with it. But on that one occasion, you remember how it was at one occasion where the people were complaining about having no water and God had said to command the water to come out of the rock and Moses, in anger, in a flash of temper, he hit the rock, you remember.

[14 : 08] And for that very reason, God said that he wouldn't see the promised land. Well, we might think of it as being, we might not, and maybe wrong to even suggest it.

But in some ways, in relative terms, you think along the scale of sin and disobedience, you'd think it seems way out of proportion for God to have done that to Moses when all he did was, well, it was unwarranted, it was, you might even argue uncalled for, but he was frustrated with the people.

This wasn't the first time they'd done this and Moses just seemed to vent his anger on that occasion. But there are many reasons for why God would have so dealt with Moses.

And one of them, no doubt, would have been the fact that Moses was to be a far better example to them than he was on that occasion. And he was to be an example to the Israelites of obedience to God and keeping himself from letting his anger flash and vent and all of these things.

Whatever exactly we would think or however we would feel, it's certainly a reminder to us to be careful in our own lives. God took Moses, 34 of Deuteronomy, and he showed him, we're told, in verse 1, all the land.

[15 : 30] The Lord took him to a mountain, Mount Nebo, the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. The Lord showed him all the land. He said in verse 4, this is the land of which I swore to Abraham, the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

I will give it to your offspring. I've let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there. What a moment that must have been for Moses. In some ways, when you think about it, he knew he was about to die.

He was told very clearly by God that he wasn't going to cross over into the land, and for that reason, the only alternative was that he was going to die.

So he's facing this. And you know what it's like sometimes when you've come through so many things in your life, and you maybe look back on something, or maybe you've come through things and you look ahead or forward to something, and maybe even something you don't think you're going to see yourself.

And all the emotions and all the feelings and all that comes along with that. You wonder how Moses felt looking at the land and realizing it was his own sin that was going to keep him from seeing it.

[16 : 41] That act of disobedience, and at the time of quarreling, Moses himself rebelled against God. He disobeyed. God said, speak, and Moses hit the rock instead with his staff.

But we're told so amazingly in verse 5 that Moses, a servant of the Lord, died, and the Lord buried him. One thing to remember, though, is that when we look into the New Testament and the time of the Mount of Transfiguration where our Lord was transfigured in front of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, you know the three accounts, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and so many things in the life of our Lord as they each record various aspects.

Sometimes when they handle the same situation like the Mount of Transfiguration, they highlight some details. One will highlight some. Others will highlight others. An interesting one that we're told in Luke, you remember that Moses and Elijah appeared to our Lord on the Mount and they were speaking to him.

But Luke says something very interesting, and if you have a look at it yourself, you'll see that on that occasion on the Mount of Transfiguration, not only did Moses appear with Elijah in glory and speak to our Lord.

But Luke says that they were standing there. What's the point of that? Well, way back here, just before Moses died, he was told by God that you shall not go over there.

[18 : 10] But as years and years went past, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds years went past, God, you see, had something even better for Moses. That there was going to be a day that Moses would not only see the land again, but he would actually stand on the land.

And we take what Luke is saying literally as I think we should in the narrative and the way he presents it. So see how sometimes God will withhold one thing from us only to give us something far better.

And when he withholds what we want or denies what we would wish to have, he has so much wisdom and so much more grace to give and to bless than we would maybe ever even imagine possible.

So we bear that in mind in God's chastising Moses. He's withholding something he gives him a far greater blessing of later on. But how difficult for Joshua would it be and for the people to actually lose Moses.

And I think in verse 10, Jude Romney 34, it highlights just how much that there hasn't arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses. Especially this, whom the Lord, we're told, knew face to face.

[19 : 19] And back in Exodus, we're told that the Lord knew Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. And what that suggests is unlike you and I when we have the Bible as Paul speaks to the Corinthians that we with unveiled faces beholding as in the mirror of God's word the glory of the Lord.

And 1 Corinthians 13 highlights the fact that now we see in a glass darkly. Now we see in a mirror it's like an enigma and it's very hard to put the whole thing together of what's coming.

Then he says it will be face to face. Which gives us the idea of fellowship with God being immediate. That there's no longer going to be need for the Bible as we look into God's word.

What we understand about God with any infallibility in the sense that there's going to be no error about it. Experience can have errors in it as you know and as we learn.

But the Bible has no errors in it. So what we learn and know about God and when our experience of God corresponds with the Bible what we know is still although it's true and although it's real it is by faith it is through means.

[20 : 29] But there on the other side it will be face to face. There will be nothing in between us. There will be that visible there will be that immediate fellowship and communion with God.

And all that we do know of God in the present even our greatest moments of fellowship and our greatest senses and awarenesses of his presence and his majesty and his glory we know only though it's real and though it's true we know it only by faith.

And when these times can be so great it makes us wonder how great it will be ahead of us. We don't know does not yet appear what we shall be John tells the first century church and tells us but we know he says that when he appears we will be like him for we shall see him as he is.

Moses however we're told knew the Lord face to face. Moses was the man I think there's a saying who had the closest of relationships to God.

I don't think this is said of anyone else others are said to be God's friend but I don't think and of course you can point this out if there are I don't think there are any others who are spoken of as having had such a relationship with God face to face.

[21 : 55] Like that all of us it's through the word and through the means of the Bible but with Moses there is that immediacy. And Moses had the privilege of seeing actually seeing things.

What exactly he saw when he saw God? What he actually saw of God's glory? Well it's difficult for us to assess it's difficult for us to understand but what he saw the more he saw the more he wanted to see.

The closer he came to God the more God revealed of himself the more Moses was drawn into that a desiring and longing and aspiring after the fellowship of God and he was longing to be consumed completely consumed in the presence and with the presence and fellowship of God himself.

So what this is highlighting among other things is the presence of God that was with this man. No one else had ever known it. So knowing Moses and knowing the relationship with God and knowing the times when his face would shine reflecting the glory of God and for this man to be taken away from him you would feel although it was even wrong for them to feel this like the Israelites when Moses was on the mountain and he then got Aaron to make the golden calf.

They needed something this is how wrong they were they needed something to replace the someone who wasn't with them at that point. Someone who was such a well wrongly for them representation of some sort of God not a manifestation but God was so bound up with Moses and Moses so bound up with God that he so represented God to the Israelites that when he's out of the equation they needed something else to replace him.

[23 : 44] He was that important to them. Now of course that was wrong for them. They descended into idolatry and all of that but take Moses away it's going to be very difficult. Not only that the presence of God the shining face and these things but there in verse 11 there was none like him for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to do for all his mighty power and the great deeds of terror.

Could you heighten this anymore? Could you add any more adjectives? Could you make it any more descriptive and magnificent than it is there? There's no one like Moses.

God made him the greatest man we've ever known but God has taken him away from us. What a prospect. And here's Joshua and he's got these shoes to stand in.

Moses my servant is dead. Joshua 1 verse 2 Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise God says. It isn't all bound up with Moses.

Surely that's the point God is making. yes it's hard for you to break with this man. It's hard for you to move on from all that you were associated with me through this man.

[24 : 57] But you're going to take this man's place. See the priority the second thing. He says in verse 7 only be strong and very courageous being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you.

You'll turn from me to the right or to the left. You may have good success wherever you go. How is it that we're going to be careful to do according to all that God says? I think that's explained in verse 8.

The book of the law shall not depart from your mouth. What a strange maybe strange sounding but you're rather expected to say that this book of the law will not depart from your mind.

It's not going to depart from your mouth but you shall meditate day and night. Meditate here is as you probably be aware already is the word mutter.

So there is that speaking the word to oneself, that reciting, that speaking, that muttering the word. It's always on our lips. It's what Psalm 1 is saying as well that God's word is in our mouths.

[26 : 02] We're talking it, we're speaking it, we're reciting it. It's always in our mind, it's always in our thoughts, it's always in our hearts. Is that true of us though? God. You know sometimes we'd maybe, I don't know, we'd maybe want to have these great times and these great experiences of God and think that they can come in any other way than are being immersed in his word and his word penetrating so deep into us.

You know people can say this is a difficulty we've got these days, that's maybe a difficulty we've had, that's been there all the time and that's maybe why Joshua's warned about it, is that we think that because it's possible for us to know the Bible without knowing God, that we can at the same time avoid that problem by trying to know God without knowing the Bible.

You know people think, I've heard this said and it makes no sense, in fact it seems a great offence surely to God when people would think that it's possible for us to be so immersed in the Bible and so immersed in the worship of God that we can become spiritually fat.

Someone has used these words and I don't believe that's possible. I don't think that's possible. Some people would think that the way we're to exercise and manifest and grow and develop and be really godly and really experienced and really spiritual is to be more active than we are contemplative.

Now, I'm not saying it's either or, but there's a priority. And unless we are in the word and unless the word is in us, we can forget spirituality.

[27 : 47] We can forget godliness. It won't come any other way. The word of Christ, Paul tells Ephesians, is to dwell in us richly, singing to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

It's only as the word penetrates, filters into our consciousness that we find God, as he said through the prophet he would, writing his word in our minds, writing our hearts, becomes part of our consciousness, part of our thought processes, that the word is constantly there and it's with us, it's in us, it becomes part of us.

You know, we ask ourselves at a time like this maybe, how do I know if I'm a Christian? There are so many angles we could maybe approach that, but one, is what place does God's word have in your heart?

We saw last night in Romans 7 that Paul speaks, and it has to be the cry and expression of a renewed heart, that I delight in the law of God in my inner being.

An unbeliever can't say that they love God's word. Loving it with all his heart, because it's God's word, it's where God meets with him, God speaks to him, and God it communes and fellowships and changes him.

[29 : 07] You might be questioning, I don't know, questioning where am I spiritually because of this reason or that reason, but you remember that Peter was once given the opportunity when Jesus' popularity seemed to wane as far as people's ideas of who he is, what he should have been changed when he disappointed them, and they went away from him, and Jesus said, are you also going away?

Are you a Christian tonight? How would you answer that? How would I answer that? Will you also go away? What did Peter say? He said, Lord, to whom else can we go? You have the words of eternal life.

It's your words. It's what you say. We cannot forsake you, we cannot leave you, we cannot go back from you. Your words have got a hold of us.

What a place to be. Maybe you're saying, well, I can read the Bible and I forget it and I don't recall it and I can't find parts and I can't remember where I read it or where it was or who said it.

But that's not the same thing as because you can't remember parts of it that that means you don't love it. It's a gauge surely of where we're at, of how we're developing in our Christian life.

[30 : 20] And God is saying that to Moses. If you're going to succeed, if you're going to prosper, not meaning health and wealth and your life will turn out great, but if you're going to prosper in the way that I'm calling you to live and if you're going to prosper in the providence I've placed you in and if you want to know me in your life, Joshua, and my blessing and all that you're doing, he's saying make this word central, not just read it now and then, he said don't let it depart from your mouth and don't just don't let it depart from your mouth daytime, he said meditate on it day and night.

Your whole life, he's saying, you've got to be immersed in this book. What place has the Bible got in our lives? What place does it have in our hearts?

His priority was to be putting God's word first. Don't he says turn from it to the right hand or to the left? Are you trying to go as far as you can?

And maybe the difficulty that comes when other people can think in your life or even at home, whatever it might be, when you just should be, you know, what's wrong with this? What's wrong with that?

Why don't you do this? Why don't you do the next thing? Are you someone who's happier to say, I will err on the side of caution. I'll stay where it's safe. And I see God's word and he's saying, don't go this way, don't go that way, go off one degree and go a few miles on your way, of course.

[31 : 42] Maybe we found that out in our lives and we pay for it sometimes. We realise just one small degree of the path God is commanding us to go on and it can take us miles away before we know it.

We can be lost relative to where we should have been and maybe relative to where we wasn't. Not lost in the sense of losing our salvation. So tonight as we ask ourselves, where am I in relation to God?

Just ask yourself that simple question. What place does his word have in my life? Well, the third thing, and you may be facing that as well, yes, there are prospects.

You might be facing, I don't know, and this is part of the beauty of it, we don't know just exactly what's in your mind. You might not be a Christian, you might be a Christian, you might already have become a member of the congregation, you may be added a member of the congregation, you might be questioning, you may be thinking at this time, at communion time, about the Lord's table, because of everything and other things going on in your life.

Can I be in this situation? Should I be here? Not because there's sin in your life, that's another thing, but just when you're questioning yourself and you're maybe afraid, how can I go through with this?

[33 : 00] How can I survive situations that I'm about to face? What if I make a mistake, what if I dishonour God and so many doubts, so many fears, but see the way God is dealing with Joshua, it's quite like the way Paul, of course, not equating God and Paul, but in terms of counsel, the way God through Paul counsels Timothy.

If you read Paul's letters to Timothy, you get the gist and the impression at least that Timothy needs a lot of encouragement. He was one of Paul's converts, one of Paul's fellow labourers. But Paul was a man who was prone to be up and prone to be down, prone, he knew what it was to be at one extreme and the other, the sorrow, despairing, he tells the Corinthians second letter, he says, there were times we despaired of life.

We had the sentence of death in us. We rethought to ourselves, we're not going to survive this. We're going to die in the situation. The other side of it is not thinking we're going to die, but feeling, what's the point of carrying on?

Not in the sense of giving up our faith, but like Elijah, when he felt he wanted to die, not like Jonah who was in his own rebellion with God and his own disappointment with what God is doing, saying, yes, I'm angry to the point of wanting to die.

Elijah, who was genuinely worn out, mentally, physically and consequently spiritually, somewhat disillusioned with himself, what's going on? I'm the only one left, he said.

[34 : 32] No, you're not. God said. There are thousands and he needed to get sleep, he needed to have a good meal, he needed to recuperate and then he went on in the strength of the Lord.

Timothy needed encouragement. Elijah needed encouragement. Joshua needs encouragement. And you and I need encouragement as well. What encouragement do we really need?

Well, you see, God counsels us and reassures us, like he does to Joshua here, that so long as you make my word your priority, I'll take care of you.

See, it's not a blank check. I think that's quite clear from what he's saying. You won't prosper or succeed if you forsake my word. Go your own way, he's saying, and you'll realise it won't work out.

Make my word central and it will work out, but more than that, and we need more than that. And this is this element. We want to finish with this. This is what we really want and what we really need.

[35 : 35] Just exactly what Moses wanted and what Moses needed. Where God had said to Moses, you remember that? He will send his angel before him to go in and dispossess the peoples of the land of Canaan, and you will inherit the land, the land that flows with milk and honey, but he says, God says, but I will not go up in the midst of you.

And while many Israelites might have said, fantastic, we'll have the land, we'll have all the possessions, we'll have all the land flowing with milk and honey, all of the blessings, all of the promises fulfilled, but Moses was saying in effect, I will have none of that if I don't have you.

You see the way he's saying it. If your presence, he saves, does not go with me, don't carry his from you. If you're not coming with us, Lord, he's saying, don't take us from you, we're not going anywhere, we don't want the promised land, we don't want them, the promises can fail before that, he's saying, if you are not with us, and God says, my presence will go with you, and when, here in the Old Testament, the face, the presence, it's the face.

That's a rich, you'd even say it's a pregnant way, a typical Hebrew way of speaking of things, it's a personal, it's a relational, it's not just a thing, it's a person, not just my presence, something belonging to me, but he's saying, me, myself.

And not just me, myself, but my face. That which is the disclosure, like your face, my face, is the disclosure to one another of who we are, our eyes, and all these things.

[37 : 18] So God's face, God's presence is his revelation, the revelation of his living presence, the relational reality of God. He's saying, Moses, I will be with you.

And this is what he's saying to Joshua. Because you can imagine Joshua saying, Lord, this is too much for me. How can I obey you? I want to obey you. You're telling me this is my place, this is what I've got to do.

How can I do it? What if I fail? What if this? What if that? Even if I obey your word and keep your commandments? What if? What if not? And God says, as I was with Moses, I will be with you.

That's everything. Absolutely everything. God reiterating his words. And you know it's amazing, he did the same kind of thing to Elijah in his own depression when he took him to the mountain, the very mountain that he had appeared to Moses beforehand.

And he showed him his glory. He showed Elijah his glory. He hid him, revealed himself, showed him his glory in his still small voice. God has his way of doing that. As I was with Moses, I'll be with you, Joshua.

[38 : 26] As I was with Moses, I'll be with you, Elijah. I'm the same God. I will not leave you, he says. I will not forsake you. That's what we need to hold on to, isn't it?

And I'm sure if we've known anything in our lives of what the presence of God means, when God says, I will be with you, that is all we need to know.

That's all we need to know. And in case we think, well, that's fine for Joshua, that's fine for Elijah, just as it was fine, respectfully fine for these men. What about me?

Well, again, that's we find in Hebrews. It's chapter 13, where we're told the Lord is saying, slightly different language but the very same thing, I will never leave you or forsake you.

So what do you do as we finish? You might be saying, well, that's okay. That's all up here. And that's maybe the people, problems some people have. It doesn't go past your head. I know the promise says this, the Bible says that.

[39 : 35] How do I translate that into my life? How does that filter down? Well, that's the very question, isn't it? What we have to do is to take hold of these promises, these words of God, and make them the basis of our prayers.

Make them the basis of our obedience. I think that's the key. Because verse 10 and following, Joshua commanded the people, and basically in commanding the people, what Joshua was doing, he said yes to God.

So he didn't wait for God to kind of flood his heart with peace, flood his heart with assurance, or that may have come on that occasion. Like we maybe say, if I get this, or if I get that, or if he says this, or if I see that, then I'll go.

Then I'll profess, or then I'll obey, and then I'll do this thing he's calling me to do. It's often when we do it, that that blessing will come. It's when we obey that God will reward us.

It's obedience, it's our hearts he's calling for. How will we know that he will never leave nor forsake? Well, do what he's commanding you to do, because these promises are associated with his commands.

[40 : 50] We're to be content, and as he says, I will not be afraid what man will do to me, because he has promised, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. He's the same yesterday, he's the same today, he's the same forever.

You have a prospect, maybe you're facing one tonight. We've got the priority. The prospect of Joshua was leading these people, the priority was making the word of God central, but the presence of God was the answer to everything.

My presence, he says to Moses, will go with you. And as I was with Moses, he says to Joshua, so I will be with you. Don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged. Don't hesitate.

If God is calling you and you feel in your heart, God is leading you and guiding you, whatever it might be, communion weekend related or otherwise, go on the strength of his promises and the assurance that when you go in obedience, you will have his presence, his protection and his blessing.

When God granted to us, we'll pray together. We give thanks, Lord, that you have given us your word and we pray for the blessing of the Holy Spirit's power and grace to come through these words into our hearts.

[42 : 03] Watch over us as we part. Go before us. And your blessing to rest on this congregation of your people over these days and in all the days that come and all the congregations we belong to, all of our families, all of our homes.

Help us, Lord, as we face the dilemmas and the perplexities of life, all the prospects before it, whatever it is. And when the times come where we find our lives can even fall apart, we pray that we would know these promises and assurances that we read of here in our lives at these points.

Be with us. Hear us. Keep us. Accept us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.