

# Joshua 1:5

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn back to the book of Joshua, chapter 1, and reading at verse 5. Joshua, chapter 1, reading at 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.

And particularly the last part of that verse, where the Lord is saying, I will not leave you or forsake you. Now, this book, the book of Joshua, I would have to say personally, is one of my favorite books in the Bible.

It's a book I return to so often at a personal level. Because it's a story of God's people moving forward. It's a story of faith.

Yes, there were troubles, there were difficulties, there were setbacks. But by and large, it's a story of progression, of moving forward. And the victories are victories of faith.

[ 1 : 08 ] The crossing of the Jordan was by faith. It was by faith that Rehob hid the spies. It was by faith that the walls of Jericho fell down.

It was by faith that the sun and moon stood still. A lot of great, thrilling examples of faith in this book. Now, this book, the book of Joshua, opens with, in very many ways, very sad words.

It talks about the death of Moses. Moses, the servant of the Lord. And we know that Moses was quite simply a unique person. The Bible's testimony of Moses is this.

There arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. No prophet like him.

So that's an amazing testimony. And I'm quite sure that Joshua, as he is the one who's taking over the mantle from Moses, must have been filled with trepidation and fear, because he knew what the Israelites were like.

[ 2 : 19 ] He had journeyed with them for 40 years in the wilderness. And he knew they were so unpredictable that they could turn in a moment, that they were fickle.

One day they were for you, the next day they were against you. He himself could remember a time when he, as one of the 12 spies, along with Caleb, came back and the Israelites were ready to stone him, because he said, along with Caleb, let's go forward into the land of, let's go into Canaan. Yes, there's giants. Yes, there's great world cities. But God will take us. Because remember, the other spies had given a bad report. And Israel believed the other spies. And they were ready to stone Joshua and Caleb.

So Joshua knew all about these people. And he knew that while on the one hand they were all going to be offering their support, he knew that in a moment they could turn and they could change. And he had also seen just the strength of Moses, this man of God, this man who was an incredibly humble man, an amic man, and yet he was a man who, as it says, who knew God face to face.

[ 3 : 34 ] And so as we come to the opening of the book here, it says, Moses, my servant, is dead. So on the one hand, you have a very, you'd almost say, a depressing beginning.

Because here is this giant of faith, this great man, and it's reminding everybody that he's died. But you'll also notice that it says straight away, Moses, my servant, is dead.

Now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan. And it tells us two things there that we must never, ever lose sight of. One is we mustn't forget the past.

But we mustn't allow the past to cripple us so that we don't move forward into the future. Because it would have been very, very easy for Israel to say, well, look, there's never going to be another Moses.

It's never going to be the same. And this sense of despondency and this sense of defeatism come in and say, well, the days will never be the same.

[ 4 : 43 ] These were the great days when we had Moses. He was a giant. Who says Joshua? Joshua has nothing compared to Moses. So on the one hand, it's very easy for people to become despondent and say, oh, the great days are gone.

But if we live like that, then we're going to miss out the blessings of the future, the blessings of the present and the future. Because remember, God doesn't live.

Yes, he's part of our past. But he doesn't live and remain completely in the past. The Lord is always moving us forward. Always.

We are not to forget the past. And we are where we are today because of our past. And it's a very foolish person, individual. It's a foolish church. It's a foolish nation who will ever forget the lessons of the past.

If we don't learn from history, we're in a bad way. History has to teach us an awful lot. Because so often history repeats itself. And I think we've heard that expression over and over and over again.

[ 5 : 53 ] And politicians have to learn from the past. And they're very foolish if they don't learn from the past. And it's the same in every walk of life. And it's the same within the church.

We mustn't ignore or forget the past. We are where we are because of the past. But we mustn't live in it. And I know that some people, when we come to the church situation, and maybe some of the older people here, it's very easy for you to lament to a certain extent of where we are today.

Because maybe some of you grew up in a revival. There might be some in here who have tasted what it is to be part of revival experiences. And you saw the influence of revival on the whole community.

It influenced even those who didn't come to faith. And you say to yourself, oh, today, there's such a low sense of spirituality.

And the church today, it's not like it was then. Well, be thankful that you tasted that. That that was part of your experience.

[ 7 : 02 ] And to a certain extent, what you're saying is true. But we mustn't live there. And that, I think, is one of the great lessons that the Lord is teaching us here. And he's teaching Israel.

He's teaching the church. One of the greatest leaders that I ever had in the church has died. But you, Israel, are to move forward.

And so we've always got to remember this. And I think it's a lesson that we must always learn. So this is why Joshua, no doubt, is filled with fear.

And there's no questioning but that Joshua is filled with fear. And we can understand that because the Lord keeps coming back to him. And he's saying, be strong and courageous. He says it in verse 6 and verse 7 and again in verse 9.

And he's calling Joshua to strength and to courage. And as he's giving Joshua these great promises, I think it's also worth us highlighting that in order for Joshua to enjoy these promises, the Lord was also preparing Joshua for this leadership and for the fulfillment of these promises.

[ 8 : 15 ] And we've always got to remember that God deals with us often in very different ways to the ways that we would expect. Because when God prepares somebody for something, it's very often in a totally different way to the way that you or I would expect to be prepared or that we would expect anybody to be prepared.

God had plans for Moses to become the leader of Israel. And part of that providence was having Moses brought up in the royal household in Egypt.

And he had all the training and all the privileges in Pharaoh's palace. And you'd say to yourself, my word, that's a great training. And it was. But it wasn't enough.

God then sent Moses, well that was the overruling providence, for 40 years into the back of beyonds. And Moses spent 40 years as a shepherd, away in obscurity.

And you'd say to yourself, what on earth kind of training was that? Well in these 40 years, God was breaking and molding and shaping Moses, so that when he came back out, ready to take over in Israel, he was 100% a different man to the one who had 40 years earlier killed the Egyptian and was full of angst and attitude and all these kind of things.

[ 9 : 56 ] And God broke him. So that 40 years later, Moses is saying when God said, I want you to lead Israel. No, he said, I can't. Not me. Send my brother.

Not me. I can't. That's what God does. The Lord is never in a hurry. He has his own timetable. He will work surely, but often he works slowly.

It was the same with the Apostle Paul. When Paul was converted, he was sent off into the wilderness. Joshua spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness as well. So did the children of Israel before they were ready to begin the taking over of the land.

They had to be broken. And the Lord often has to break us. And that's hard. It goes against everything that we are because we want our own way.

We have planned out life as it should be. That's what we do. And sometimes the Lord says, no, that's not the way it's going to be. And so sometimes we find that these things can be very, very difficult.

[11:07] But again, we've got to look at and say to ourselves, and the church can often be in danger of this. You know, sometimes people say in the church, ah, nothing's happening. How can we ever say that?

As we said, God is not in a hurry. God will often work very slowly. And you know, sometimes people say nothing is happening.

And God's at work at one person. And he's at work at another. And he's at work at another. And people are saying nothing's happening. How do they know? So, you look back over your own life. I look back over my life. How many sermons did you have to hear before you believed? How many opportunities did God give you before you actually came to faith?

How many times were you chanted? How many prayers were offered for you? You don't know. I don't know. Maybe thousands and thousands and thousands of prayers before coming to faith.

[12:19] So, we've got to remember that God often works slowly. And I want to say that by way of encouragement because sometimes we live in this age, the push-button age, where everything is instant.

That's part of what creates a pressure in the day that we're living in is everything has to be now. And God says it doesn't. And God will often work slowly to fulfill His purpose.

Always work surely. Always. And He will always fulfill what He has purposed and planned. Anyway, Joshua is given this great task of leading Israel into the land of promise.

And the Lord says, I will not leave you and I will not forsake you. Same kind of promise as God gave to Jacob many, many years before. It's the same promise that He gave the exiles when they were coming back from the land of captivity, coming back to their own land, to Jerusalem.

The Lord gave that promise. In many ways, it's a promise that Jesus Himself has given. At the very beginning of Matthew, we read about Emmanuel, God with us.

[13:29] And at the end, Jesus is saying, Lo, I am with you always, even to the very end of the age. And in Hebrews, we find that, quoting from this to the believers today, the Lord is saying, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Now, what it says, I will not leave. The AV says, I will not fail. And the actual word means to let alone. Literally, what it means is, I will not be weak to you.

I will not be weak to you. That's what it literally means. Now, you know that, and I suppose you can often think about it, for instance, with parents who get very old.

Parents who would do anything for their children. There comes a point in their life when they're too weak to be able to do any more. Or somebody who gets ill and gets sick, and they cannot, they say, I don't have the strength.

I am weak. I cannot do what I used to do. Well, the Lord is saying, I will not be weak to you, because God cannot be weak. Really, what this promise is saying, God is saying, all that I am, I will be to you.

[14:49] All my power and my strength, all my love, all that I am, I am to you.

I won't be weak to you. I will be who I am to you. And you know, I cannot think of anything greater in the whole wide world than for the living God to say, I will be all that I am to you.

I will not be weak to you. Isn't that an amazing thought? And could I say to anybody in here today who maybe is still a stranger to God's grace, may that be your prayer.

Lord, I am hearing about this. Please don't be weak to me. Come to me with all your strength and all your power and all your love so that I will know it, know it within my heart, that I will know what it is to have the living God to me and for me.

And so Joshua is aware of this, that the Lord is saying, I will not leave you, or I will not be weak to you. Or I won't abandon you. That's what it says. I won't leave you or forsake you.

[16:11] Now as we journey through this world with all its challenges, with all its difficulties, with all the providences that confuse us and throw us up and down, how wonderful to know that although the providence sometimes might be mysterious and sore and strange that the Lord is still saying through it all, I won't be weak to you.

I won't abandon you. And that is wonderful to know. There might be times you feel that the Lord has abandoned you. There might be times you feel that the Lord is weak to you. But he will never be. Because we mustn't ultimately go on our feelings. Feelings remembers, not faith. We like to have feelings within our faith. But at the end of the day, faith is not dependent upon our feelings.

Sometimes we are not as committed to the Lord as we should. But remember, he is always committed to us. And we are to serve the Lord wherever.

This promise here, remember, although we're looking at and saying, here's Joshua, he's a servant of God. It's all very well him getting a promise like that. My friend, it's for all.

[17:28] It's so clear when we come to read in Hebrews, it's the exact same promise. In fact, it's a greater promise. And the Lord is saying that to all his people.

Whether your life is lived in the public eye or whether it's lived in obscurity. Whether your work is so demanding and it might be full-time work that is involved in the Lord or it might not be full-time work that's involved in the Lord.

Your life at the end of the day. Whether it's as a mother with children, whether it is somebody who is at a very difficult job with all its demands and pressure, whatever, it doesn't matter in what sphere or where it is, you're still living in this way where you are dependent upon the Lord and where we serve him.

Now, again, we find that this promise, although the Lord says, I will not leave you or forsake you, doesn't mean that our life will be forevermore free from difficulties and problems.

Sometimes people have this idea and they're saying, well, if the Lord says I'll be with you, then everything is going to go well. Well, very shortly after this, we find that Israel collapsed at Ai after a great victory in Jericho.

[18:51] and of course, they collapsed because of sin and we may say to ourselves, oh, well, if we find that there is collapse in my life, if things go wrong, then it is very obvious that the Lord has a controversy with me.

Sometimes the Lord does have a controversy and he had a controversy with Israel because of Achan's sin. It was dealt with and then Israel were able to move forward again. But that's not always the case.

Was there a home that Jesus loved more than the home in Bethany and yet Lazarus died? Was there any saint in the Old Testament at that particular time that was so loved by the Lord as Job? and people knew that Job was a good man. God had put a hedge around him and all that he had. Satan got in and Job's life was ripped apart.

Everything that was precious to him was taken away. It's one of the most heart-rending books that you will read and there wasn't a more devout God-fearing man than Job.

[20:11] So we must never ever ever come to the conclusion that when things go wrong it's because God has a controversy with us. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that that is not.

We are never to think down these roads and Jesus condemned people who had that type of thinking and he was saying your thinking's all wrong. And as we follow through God's word we see it so often.

But even in all the hardships God is still working. And God is going to still bless you because it's not the end of the story even although the story may be hard and the story may be difficult and that story may bring pain into your life for the rest of your days.

God isn't finished with you and he's still working with you because he won't fail you or abandon you. You know the word that word that word to forsake to abandon you know it's a horrible word to forsake someone.

You cannot be forsaken by somebody without first having contact or a relationship with that person. If you don't have a relationship with somebody you can't be forsaken by them.

[21:42] It's only somebody you know somebody you have contact with somebody who is part of your life that can actually forsake you. You cannot be forsaken by somebody you've never met.

So to be forsaken by anybody is a really really sore thing. And there might be people here today who are nursing hearts that have been broken because of that very word forsaking. but the Lord says I he said I'll never forsake you. Isn't that wonderful? Even although we may forsake him even although there might be times like Peter when we walk far away we're not walking close to the Lord but walking far away even although we might be far away he will never ever forsake us never leave us nor forsake us.

And I find that just so so encouraging. And here we have this great great comfort though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed but the covenant of my love shall not depart from you.

We live in a very very uncertain day and how wonderful to know that among all the uncertainty of the day that there is one who is always going to be for us.

[ 23 : 11 ] That's what the Lord is saying I'm for you. And I would say to anybody in here who hasn't come to know that you're missing out on the most important passion in your whole life because to have the living God as your God having all that he is to you and for you where the Lord is saying I'm with you and I will never leave you or forsake you irrespective of the circumstances I'll never leave you or forsake you.

Even when you forget me I'll never leave you nor forsake you. Even when you get ill I'll never leave you forsake you. Even when you've reached a stage where you can no longer look after yourself I'll never leave you nor forsake you.

Even when you reach the point where all medical help fails and your eyes close in death I'll never leave you nor forsake you.

Always always with you. Could we ever ask for more than that? And that's what God promises. And he says please come to me.

Here's the great invitation and I hope that each and every one of us will know and experience the power and presence of God with us all our days. Let us pray. Oh Lord our God we pray that we might know thy power and presence within us.

[ 24 : 46 ] We are frail and we're weak. And there are times Lord that we sometimes say maybe one day my sin will finally separate me from God.

But the wonderful truth is the Lord says I will not be weak to you. So that his strength is made perfect in our weakness.

In all our weaknesses. And so we pray to be with us and bless us in everything. Take us all home safely we pray. Part us with thy blessing and forgive us our sin in Jesus name.

Amen.