

Joshua - A True Christian Soldier

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[0 : 00] The chapter that we read in the book of Joshua, chapters 1 and 3, I want us really just to give a kind of overview looking at this great man Joshua.

But if we home in in verse 7 of chapter 3, The Lord said to Joshua, Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

It's very difficult to become the successor of any person who has had a very distinguished career.

And we see that so often in various walks of life, whether it is in politics or in education or in sport or whatever, that if somebody has had a very distinguished career, has almost become a living legend in their own time.

It's a very daunting task for anybody to try and follow in the footsteps. And that's how it was for this man Joshua.

Because Moses was quite an extraordinary man. In fact, the Bible tells us that there was no prophet. No prophet had arisen like him since in Israel.

[1 : 23] So he was a unique and extraordinary leader. And when Moses died, Israel mourned, and rightly so. And Israel felt, well, what is going to happen to us?

Because Moses had been such an integral part. He had been with them all the way. He was the one who went to Pharaoh initially and asked that God's people would be let go.

And he had journeyed every step through the Red Sea, every step through the wilderness for these 40 years. He had been with them through thick and thin, through all the ups and downs.

He had been the man who had been at the front. And so his death shook them because they no doubt felt, well, things are never going to be the same again.

And quite often that happens with ourselves as well. Because sometimes, you and I know, it happens individually. It happens personally within our own homes and families. And it's true.

[2 : 21] When those who are integral to our lives are taken away, we say, life is never going to be the same again. And that is true. It will never be the same again. But with regard to the Lord's work, God is showing very clearly, it's my work.

Yes, Moses was a great leader. But at the end of the day, he was simply a servant. He was God's servant. And very simply, God says, after the death of Moses, a servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, Moses, my servant is dead.

Now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan. There's work to be done. The whole purpose, the plan of taking out of Egypt, that doesn't change because Moses has gone.

And we've got to remember that, that God's word, God's work will always progress. His servants will come and his servants will go.

But they're always just that. We've always got to remember that, just servants. And the Lord has us serving in different places. All his people are serving in different places. And so, the Lord is encouraging.

[3 : 34] Joshua chapter 1 is a great chapter of encouragement. And he's encouraging Joshua. And there's every reason to encourage Joshua. And I think, because although Joshua was a great soldier, I think because of the number of times that the Lord says, do not be safe.

For instance, in verse 9, have I not commanded you, be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened. Do not be dismayed. You see, the Lord keeps, verse 6, be strong and courageous. So that there's this continuing to encourage Joshua and tell him not to be dismayed, not to be afraid.

Because the Lord wouldn't be saying that to Joshua unless he was frightened and dismayed and afraid. Because, as we said, it's a mammoth task to go and stand in the footsteps of Moses and to lead Israel.

But anyway, that is what God is encouraging Joshua. And the words of these words, like in verse 5, must have been music in chapter 1 to Joshua's ear. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life.

[4 : 49] Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. And God is giving Joshua promises at the very beginning.

Of promises of his presence. And promises of his power. In verses 7 and 8. That's of the word.

Because we've always got to remember that the word is power.

And the Lord is saying to Joshua, I want to be with you. And if you adhere to my word, if you follow my word, then everything is going to go well. See what he says in verse 7 regarding the word.

Do not turn from it. That is from my word. To the right or to the left. That you may have good success wherever you go. The book of the law shall not depart from your mouth.

But you shall meditate on it day and night. So that you will do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous. And then you will have good success.

[5 : 51] So the Lord is saying to Joshua. Joshua. The key to this whole campaign is following me. My presence and my word which is the power.

And nothing has changed. That's exactly what God is saying to you and to me as well today.

Because if you're following the Lord Jesus Christ, you're on a journey. Just as the Israelites were on a journey.

You're on a journey and you're going through a wilderness. And you're on the way to the promised land. You're on the way to glory. You will have your ups and your downs just as Israel did.

But the Lord is promising you his presence wherever you go. And can you think of anything greater? The Lord says, you know, I'm going to be with you wherever you go.

Psalms 23. Goodness and mercy. All my life shall surely follow me. Can you honestly think of anything better in the whole wide world than to have God's goodness and mercy following you all the days of your life?

[6 : 59] Well, that's what the Lord is saying. My presence shall go with you. I will be with you. And he's saying, the other thing I want you to do is pay careful attention to my word.

I want your word to be the basis of your decisions, of your judgments, of whatever you do. My word is to be at the very center of it.

And if it is, then your way will be prosperous. In other words, the plans that I have for you will fulfill readily and easily if you adhere to what I am saying to you.

And for the main, that's exactly how Joshua led Israel. His campaign in taking the land of promise was really exemplary, although there were the blips.

And the blips tended to come for the simple reason that they didn't adhere to God's word. For instance, just the one that we'll highlight was after, remember when they took Jericho.

[8 : 08] And when they took the city of Jericho and they followed implicitly, remember in the walking round and round Jericho, when they followed implicitly everything God said, everything went to plan.

But then God had said, when they went to the next place, Ai, he had commanded in when they took Jericho, that they weren't to take any spoils of war.

Normally, in battle, they were allowed to take spoils of war. But in Jericho, they were not to because it was devoted to the Lord. And the Lord said, this is the first city.

This belongs to me. You must take nothing. Remember, there was a man there, Achan. And it tells us, Achan saw and Achan coveted.

He saw some of the stuff, beautiful stuff, in Jericho. And he took it and he hid it. And he hid it in his tent. And he thought nobody would know. But when Israel went out against Ai, and it was only a small place, Joshua said, and he didn't, this is where Joshua's mistake, he didn't consult with the Lord.

[9 : 20] He thought, this will be a piece of cake. No problem. We don't need to send up all the forces. A few thousand will do. The men of Ai came out, chased Israel. And some of the Israeli soldiers were killed.

And we find Joshua on his knees, on his face on the ground before the Lord, saying, Why? What has happened? And the Lord said to him very simply, Israel had disobeyed him.

Israel had sinned. They had taken the forbidden stuff, and they had kept it amongst their own stuff. And Joshua learned this has to be dealt with. The sin was dealt with.

And Joshua realized that unless God is with us, we cannot prevail. And that's a lesson you and I have to learn. We're learning it, but we're slow at learning it.

And it shows us that sin is a barrier to our progression. Because sometimes, like Achan, we take sin, and we put it in, and we have it in, and we live in it, and enjoy it, and fondle it.

[10:28] And it becomes a barrier between ourselves and God. The power, the blessing, is not what it could be or should be because of our sin. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

It's a block even to our prayers. So sin has to be dealt with, and it can only be dealt with in the God-given way. It's bringing it in repentance before God and asking for forgiveness.

And we're told if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So Israel dealt with the sin in the God-given way.

So Joshua wasn't just encouraged, of course, by what God said. He was also encouraged by what the people said. Because in verse 10, Joshua commanded the officers, and he's telling them what's going to happen.

But in verse 17, the officers said to them, just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you.

[11:38] And again, that must have been music to Joshua's ears. Because what we have here is a picture of togetherness and of unity and of one purpose.

And I don't think we can emphasize sufficiently the importance of that. In order for the church to really progress and to be God's shining light in a dark world, it's imperative that we are together, that we are as one, that we have unity.

It's something we've got to pray for. Let's continue to pray for peace, togetherness, for unity.

Because this is a place where God's blessing. Psalm 133. It's essential that brethren are together.

And when I say brethren, I mean all brothers and sisters in the Lord. That we are together. Yes, of course, there's time. We're not going to agree on every single point. But that's not the issue.

It still must be a sense of unity. We can look at things differently and still be in unity and still be in togetherness and still in harmony and still in love. And that is where the blessing will come.

[12:48] And that is where the influence for good will be experienced. The world doesn't want to know an angry church or a divided church. And that's why Satan put so much of his energy into dividing the church over the centuries.

And he's made an amazingly wonderful job of it. The old adage, united you stand, divided you fall. And it is so true.

God is a God of unity and order. Satan is the God of this world whose purpose is disunity and disorder. And so it's imperative that we have a togetherness.

And we must pray for it. And again, when you think of Psalm 122, where it's talking about God's peace and prosperity, the prosperity, the blessings, the spiritual prosperity come out way of the place where there is peace.

So we must always pray for it and seek to promote it. And so that's what we find here. And that gives great encouragement to Joshua. That God is with him and promising his presence.

[13:58] That people are with him and they are promising to support him. So Israel now are ready for the next move, which is to cross the Jordan. Now, chapter 2 is amazing.

And we looked at years back at Rahab. And I might as I'm going through different characters alphabetically, we may, I have no idea, might look at Rahab when we come to R.

But I don't know. But chapter 2 is amazing because as so often happens in the Bible, the story quickly moves from a big picture into a particular home and a particular individual.

And that's what it does in chapter 2 because the focus comes completely off Joshua and Israel.

Joshua sends out a couple of guys to spy out the land. And they go to this, go into Jericho and this woman, this prostitute.

And there's a few people in the Tieman. market, they go to this kayak and the letter Entertainer. So I'm going to use this, go to the podcast later. And here's the■■ Boot moy signal. And they have terrificnen net quienes that appear to walk, and they have terrificHmm ■■■■■■■■■ Niners are generally enters andften kindness Him and Israel. You know that it's everything that we find with our American culture is the source of. I'm just losing time to learn many of these caering things.

[15:29] So then however, why are we checking out using telescopes now? It's like to have■■■■■■■ to believe that it's connectivity. But it's a lot of guys on earth And says this is great

because as a trend that they that persistence will look.

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Thank you.

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Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[17:08] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. You aren't waiting in a numbness. You aren't waiting with a sense of forgetfulness. You are waiting for God.

Waiting for God to do, for God to work, for God to show, for God to lead. And that's what Israel had to do. And they came to the banks of the Jordan.

Now, we can imagine Israel moving forward to the banks of the Jordan. They're now, after 40 years, ready to cross.

You can imagine the euphoria, the excitement. Here we go. And you can almost hear them chanting as they move forward. And you know, when a movement has started and begun, there is this sense of just wanting to push on and keep going.

[18:08] Then it stops. Come to the Jordan, we stop. And after a day, or two days, or three days, and nothing is happening, that kind of sense of excitement and euphoria can begin to dwindle down.

And that's what the Lord is doing to Israel. He's focusing them, making them look and see the Jordan in full speed.

A rushing torrent of water. And the question is, how do we cross that? So the Lord left them gazing upon Jordan and overflowing banks for three days.

And the Lord is really saying to them two things. One, you wait for me, and you will only be able to cross as you depend upon me. And that's exactly what happened.

Now, in verse 5, Joshua said to the people, Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

[19:17] You know, before there's an open display of God's power, we have to always seek to... Well, I shouldn't say always before a display of God's power.

God is sovereign, and sometimes He displays and reveals His power, even when we're not seeking it. But by and large, it is essential for God's people to be seeking the Lord to come in power.

If we're seeking for the Lord to come in power, and to display His might, then it is imperative that we ourselves are seeking to devote ourselves to the Lord, to consecrate ourselves to the Lord.

There's no point in just living any old way and saying, Oh, Lord, come in power. And I don't care. I'm just living any way I want, but Lord, come in power. Lord's saying, You're not ready for me to come in power.

We need to... And that's what Joshua was saying to Israel. You've got to prepare yourself. Prepare yourself in your heart. You've got to be ready for God to work. And then the Lord gave instructions of what was to happen.

[20:24] In verse 4, we see this. He says, The command of the people, And as soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it.

Yet there shall be a distance between you and the ark. And here is the Levitical priests were carrying the ark, and the ark was central to all that was going to happen.

The ark, of course, is speaking to us of God's presence, of God's covenantal presence with his people, just as he's speaking to us of his covenantal presence to us in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the ark is to be the focus. The ark is at the center of everything. And Christ has to be at the center of everything with us as well.

And so the ark here, as we say, this is symbolizing. And we're told in verse 4, Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way that you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.

[21:29] Now, we mentioned this before. At two levels, you have not passed this way before.

Obviously, they're a new territory. But you have not passed this way before, because it's a new order.

Prior to this, it was a cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. That had changed. Now it was going to be the ark.

And you'll notice how Israel were to follow. They were to be 2,000 cubits behind. Now, a cubit, we're told here, is about 18 inches, one and a half feet.

So we can work that out. That was to be the distance. Yes, the ark is holy. Only the Levitical priests are allowed to carry it. But the important thing is this.

Everybody had to be able to see the ark. Israel weren't going to follow one another blindly. They weren't going to say, well, because the people in front of me are moving, then I'll follow, and I'll follow, and I'll follow, and all you could see is a person in front of you.

[22 : 34] The ark was so far ahead that everybody in Israel could see it. The ark was to be their focus. That's how they were to walk.

The ark was what they were to follow. And so it is with Jesus Christ. We're not to follow one another. It's very easy to say into a church and say, well, I'm going to take my Christianity from him or from her.

We take our Christianity from Christ, from the Word. He is the one. He is the one. And you see, we're all individuals. We're all unique. We all have our own different natures, our different personalities.

God works in us according to our own unique personality. And that's part of the beauty of the church is there's so many differences and yet a similarity running through.

That's the way God wants it. But we are to follow the Lord. He is to be our focus all the time, not one another. And again, one of the things you all must find quite extraordinary here.

[23 : 42] Here's a military campaign. And you would expect that the command would be, right, let's get all the best soldiers. Get your elite. They're going to lead.

They're the ones in front. And we'll follow. But no, unarmed Levitical priests. And God is showing them, look, this warfare is to be done my way.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They're spiritual. And it's a lesson that we have to learn over and over and over and over again. The only way we can fight a winning battle is by being clothed in the armor that God has provided and walking with Him.

There is no other way. And so, the ark didn't need protection. People are saying, how do we protect the ark? It was the ark that was protecting Israel.

It's the Lord that protects us. And so, we find that Joshua gives all the orders here. And then in verse 7, the Lord said to Joshua, today I will begin to exhort you in the sight of all Israel, that you may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

[24 : 59] And you know, one of the lovely things is, we don't find that Joshua goes off and tells the people, you know what God has said to me? He's going to start working wonders through me today.

No, he doesn't tell anybody that. And that's part of Joshua's greatness, was his humility. And something we've always got to remember, every one of us, we're just servants of the Lord.

We're not to get in the way of God's work. It's too easy to. Joshua had no agenda of his own. He had no ego of his own.

These had to be set aside, in order for God's work to be done, to be fulfilled. And so, they relied completely on what the Lord was saying.

And so, we find that Israel are going to cross the Jordan. And we've got to remember that crossing the Jordan, you've got old grannies and grandpas and little babies, and you've got all the cattle and all the baggage.

[26 : 01] There's a huge number of people. But remember the command, the Levitical priests were to go, they were to walk out into the water.

And when they walked out into the water, God was going to stop the waters, to allow them all to pass over. That is faith.

Human logic would say, right, here we are. How do we go about this? Well, we're going to have to divert the waters. You and I know that when you walk out into water, it doesn't just stop and separate.

Human logic, if the Israelites had applied human logic, and they had said to Joshua, Hi Joshua, I know God has said that, but that's ridiculous. You and I know that the only way is, we've got to dam this up, we've got to divert the water, that's the only way.

