

*"It's hard to remember that Jesus did not come to make us safe, but rather to make us disciples, citizens of God's new age, a kingdom of surprise."*

—Stanley Hauerwas, Duke University

When I think about this quote by Stanley Hauerwas... my mind turns to all my prayer requests... for God to make my turbulent circumstances... safe... and easier. ... It is as if I believe God's number one concern is for my ease and comfort... NOT that I would be a better disciple of His.

You know... one of the first things a believer realizes... when they start to take their Spiritual life seriously... is that it takes a great deal of **courage** to live it. Being a disciple of Jesus requires courage... and it should be no surprise that the result of so many of my frivolously misguided prayers for personal ease and comfort... has been a resounding "NO" answer from God. ... Because He is more interested in making me into a disciple... and challenge develops courage.

I read once that the Devil was having a yard sale, and all of his tools were marked with different prices. They were a fiendish lot. There was hatred, jealousy, deceit, lying, pride--all at expensive prices. But over to the side of the yard on display was a tool more obviously worn than any of the other tools. It was also the most costly. The tool was labeled, DISCOURAGEMENT.

When questioned, the Devil said, "It's more useful to me than any other tool. When I can't bring down my victims with any of the rest of these tools, I use discouragement, because so few people realize that it belongs to me."

I like what Amy Charmichael has written on this subject:

*Everywhere the perpetual endeavour of the enemy of souls is discouragement. If he can get the soul "under the weather," he wins. It is not really what we go through that matters, it is what we go under that breaks us. We can bear anything if only we are kept inwardly victorious. ... If God can make His birds to whistle in drenched and stormy darkness, if He can make His butterflies able to bear up under rain, what can He not do for the heart that trusts Him?*

- Amy Charmichael

Today we begin a new sermon series... and its opening verses deal with God building courage into His servant. ... We are going to see how God did that... and I believe that God still does it the same way today in His servants. ... But first... let me ask you:

What are the things God has prepared for you to do?

**Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

When did you last reassess God's call on your life? What are those things that God has prepared for you to walk in?

Today we begin a new sermon series in the Old Testament Book of... Joshua.

As the book of Joshua opens... the Israelites are camped along the east bank of the Jordan River at the very edge of the Promised Land... and they are completing the mourning period for Moses... who has just died. ... Thirty-nine years earlier (after spending a year at Mount Sinai receiving

God's law)... the Israelites had an opportunity to enter the Promised Land... but they failed to trust God to give them victory. ... As a result... God did not allow them to enter the land... but made them wander in the wilderness until the disobedient generation had all died.

Israel ended up wandering in circles for forty years on a journey that was normally eleven days. ... What a waste! ...But that is exactly what happens to so many believers... who think that God is only interested in their ease and safety... and not discipleship. ... They waste their life away!

This morning we begin our study in Joshua... with the first nine verses of chapter one. The challenge of Joshua 1:1-9 is: be strong and courageous. ...Now... here is a little “heads up”... You and I can have courage because of 1) God's *promise* (this will be made clear especially in verse 6)... 2) We can have courage because of God's *power* (this is especially seen in verses 7-8)... and 3) We can have courage because of God's *presence* (verse 9).

The nation of Israel... camped on the banks of the overflowing Jordan River... wrestled with feelings of fear and courage. ... It was their fear that had defeated them before... and their lack of faith and trust in the Lord still existed. ... Our lack of faith and trust in the Lord defeats us too.

- Why not witness for Christ? The answer is fear.
- Why not take a stand for Christ? The answer is fear.
- Why do you worry or fret? The answer is fear and lack of faith.

You and I face challenges in our families... in the workplace... in our neighborhoods... in the schools where we're involved... and even here in

the church. ... And God has given us our passage today... as a means of reaching out and grabbing us by the collar to exhort us.

God speaks directly to Joshua... His chosen leader for Israel... (but also to us) and so encourages us... in four ways. ... **First**... in verses 1 and 2...

God encourages Joshua in his personal calling or commissioning.

**Second**... in verses 3-6... He encourages Joshua in His promises for the future... which are absolute guarantees of how things will turn out....

**Third**... in verses 7 and 8... God encourages Joshua with His written word that He gave to Moses. ... And... then... lastly... **fourth**... in Joshua 1:9

God encourages Joshua through a direct command.

God's Calling... God's Commitment... and God's Commands... His Promise... His Power... and His Presence...

Watch how these are highlighted in our passage... to instill courage.

### **Joshua 1:1-9**

There was much sorrow in the camp when Joshua was given his commission for conquering Canaan. ... The attitude of many about Moses' death would have been nothing short of despair. Moses had led them for 40 years... and now they faced the most daunting task they ever faced – taking the land of Canaan from many well-established nations and Kings... who had fierce fighting machines as their armies. ... How could they possibly do it...? They were not the fighters that they would have to face. ... Just thinking about it on the banks of the Jordan... and now without Moses... their known leader... I'm sure many wondered how in the world they could go on. The mission that Moses had... now seemed dead.

Add to these circumstances the fact that the Jordan River they needed to cross was in it's flood stage. How could all of them possibly get across...? The despair of the loss of Moses... fear of the Canaanites (who Joshua had seen firsthand were giants)... and the flooding of the Jordan... these were all circumstances that God wanted to be in place. The conditions were just right for Him to do His work.

So... God reiterated to Joshua... the same thing He had told Moses to do. (LISTEN) ...God isn't needy of worthy men. He makes men and women worthy...

### **Joshua 1:2**

God commissioned Joshua to do three things: 1) to lead the people into the land... 2) to defeat the enemies they would face in all the fortified cities, all the Canaanite tribes in the land... and 3) to claim the inheritance of the land.

But here are three very important observations for us to stop and take notice of. #1. God could have chosen some supernatural means to accomplish these things, such as sending an angel. But He chose a person just like us... and He promised to give that person the power he would need to get the job done. #2. God didn't give Joshua explanations as to how He would accomplish these things... ... because God's people live on promises... and not on explanations. (LET ME SAY THAT AGAIN) ... God's people live on promises... and not on explanations! ... We... as God's people MUST learn to live on promises... and not on explanations... we need to walk by faith... instead of by sight. ... #3. Joshua himself is a type of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 2:10 calls Jesus the captain of our salvation.

He has already won the ultimate victory over sin and death and hell. And now Jesus leads us in triumph through our own battles to possess the land. He shares the spiritual resources of His inheritance with us. He gives us His spiritual blessings---everything we need to follow in obedience to God's call in our lives.

God has given Joshua a threefold responsibility to perform: lead the people into the land... defeat the enemies... and claim the inheritance. So now... to infuse courage in Joshua... God gives him 3 promises... and each one corresponds with those three responsibilities. First, God promises that they will enter the land; they will cross the Jordan. ... Second, God promises that they will defeat the enemies who confront them. ... And third... He promises that the land will be apportioned as their inheritance, and as part of that the people will trust Joshua's leadership.

### **Joshua 1:3-6**

God has already given them the land... but it is their responsibility now to put one foot in front of the other... and start taking the territory... to step out in faith and claim it. ... When Abraham first came into the land... the exact same dynamic was called for. ... Listen to God's word to Abram:

#### **Genesis 13:14-15, 17 (ESV)**

*The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.*

*Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."*

There is an important lesson for us today in all of this. God has given us all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus... and we must step out by faith to claim those blessings.

God gave Israel 300,000 square miles of land and the most they ever claimed was 30,000 square miles. They did not do very well, did they? They took possession of about one-tenth of what God had given them. That is about the same amount of spiritual possessions claimed by believers today.

Rabbinical scholars were the first to point out that they were not limited to 300,000 miles. Anywhere they treaded, they could possess. God gave them a blank check. ... .. Christians today have a similar offer.

**Matthew 7:7 (ESV)**

*“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*

**1 John 5:14-15 (ESV)**

*And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

God has also given you and I an inheritance by faith to *take*. There are spiritual battles to be fought and victories to be won. ... But sadly there will be a rude awakening for Christians... who are wasting their lives now.

But wait a minute... Pastor! God promised that the descendants of Abraham would have 300,000 miles... and this wasn't a promise like what we just read in 1 John. In 1<sup>st</sup> John we read: *“If we pray according to His will...”* ... But the promise to Abraham wasn't at all like that. There isn't

even a hint of conditions to be met... and yet... the most they ever got was 1/10<sup>th</sup> of that definite promise... What does that say of God's promises...? Does God revoke His promise to Abraham... and then what he repeats to Moses... and now Joshua...? ... Does He change the deal...? Add conditions... later... to their understanding...? Would He do that because of the disobedience of His people...? ... If so... then God's promise... is not really a promise...

NO! ... When God reiterated the promise of this extensive land inheritance to Moses... BEFORE He did so to Joshua... in Deuteronomy 29-30... God provided some prophetic detail. ... God declared that the people will be unfaithful... and that God in His wrath will scatter them all over the globe... the four corners of the earth. ... But then... sometime after that... there would be a massive ingathering from those four corners of the earth. This has not yet happened. When God scattered them around the Middle East under Babylonian captivity... He did not re-gather them from all over the world... Just the Middle East – Persia. In 70AD the Jews were scattered to the four corners of the Earth... But the completeness of the re-gathering is still future. Moses wrote about it in Deuteronomy 29-30. Isaiah wrote about it in chapter 11... and many of the other prophets did so as well... giving us further details... such as there will be a returning of the Jews to the Lord.

What I am saying is this: God will indeed fulfill this promise perfectly – even in spite of His people's unfaithfulness. During the Millennium... after the Rapture... and after the Tribulation... God is going to re-gather His people... and completely fulfill this promise. (This is one of the main reasons why I do not believe the popular non-sense that God is finished



dealing with the Jews... and that WE – the church – are the New Israel. No... God has so much to say about His still yet future plans for them... in Israel with these boarders... and for His church... as two distinct groups.)

When Joshua brought Israel into the Promised Land... at that time... I believe they could have possessed ALL that was promised to them. We are going to see how the people of God were disobedient... they worshipped the pagan gods of the land... and adopted their evil practices... and God did not allow them to take full possession – yet! (But they will.) God will stand by His promise... even in light of their unfaithfulness.

But with the promise to Joshua of victory... God also infused Joshua with courage by promising His presence.

**Joshua 1:5b (ESV)**

*Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.*

What a promise!!! ... God had given a similar promise to Jacob (in Gen. 28:15)... and Moses had repeated God's promise to Joshua (Deut. 31:1-8). God would one day give this same promise to Gideon (Judg. 6:16)... and to the Jewish exiles returning from Babylon to their land (Isa. 41:10; 43:5)... and David would give it to his son Solomon (1 Chron. 28:20). ... But best of all... *God has given this promise to His people today!* The Gospel of Matthew opens with "*Emmanuel...God with us*" (1:23) and closes with Jesus saying, "*Behold, I am with you always*" (28:20). ... The writer of Hebrews 13:5 quotes Joshua 1:5 and applies it to Christians today: "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*"

This means that God's people can move forward... in God's will... and be assured of God's presence.

**Romans 8:31b (ESV)**

*If God is for us, who can be against us?*

Before Joshua began his conquest of Jericho... the Lord appeared to him and assured him of His presence. ... That was all Joshua needed to be guaranteed of victory.

As Joshua faced the tremendous task of conquering Canaan... he needed a fresh word of encouragement. ... From personal observation Joshua knew that the Canaanites and others were vigorous people... who lived in strongly fortified cities. ... Unlike the Israelites... frequent battles kept **their** warriors in trim fighting condition. ... And for the most part... the land was mountainous... a fact that would make war maneuvers most difficult... for those who knew what they were doing.

But when God gives a command... He often accompanies it with a promise... so He assured Joshua a lifetime of continuous victory over his enemies... based on His unfailing presence and help. The words **I will never leave you** (cf. Josh. 1:9) may be rendered, "*I will not drop or abandon you.*" ... God never walks out on His promises.

What about the plain Christian like me? Is this promise for ordinary Christians? Look at the use of this promise in Hebrews 13:5-6:

**Hebrews 13:5-6 (ESV)**

*Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we*

*can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

Here the promise of Joshua 1:5 is applied to a Christian congregation. The promise of God's abiding presence in Joshua 1 is also for you (note the 'for' in Hebrews 13:5b) and is the solution to the sin of covetousness and discontent, which in turn (note the 'hence' of Hebrews 13:6) leads to the great freedom of life without fear! There is nothing more essential for the people of God than to hear their God repeating to them amid all their changing circumstances, 'I will be with you' or 'I will not forsake you.'

Do you think God would leave Joshua high and dry? ... If God has called you, He is with you. ... God is saying to you and me through these verses... "*I won't drop you in the middle of a project that I've given to you.*" God is not in the business of deserting His people when we get in trouble... if we're honestly endeavoring to do His will. ... God does close doors... and this promise of His power and presence doesn't preclude disaster... persecution... struggle... or difficulty. ... Our faith will be tested... we may suffer... our lives will be very hard at times... ... the work is tough! ... But God's power will be with us through the good and bad times... and His presence will continually sustain us.

Life would NOT be easy for Joshua... but we're going to see him claim God's power and presence through both bad and good times.

As part of God's fulfilling His promises... Joshua was called to exercise faith through strong and courageous leadership. ... Divine sovereignty always expresses itself through human response. ... God first speaks the word of promise... the indicative statement about Who He is... and what

He will do... This encourages us as His servants to believe... step out... trust... and obey.

Joshua wasn't to use these guaranteed certainties as a reason to kick back and wait to see what God would do. ... No... the promise of effectiveness was powerfully motivational for Joshua... encouraging him to purposeful activity... to step out into action.

If you act courageously, you'll get more courage. God is with you, but he'll only strengthen you when you raise your leg and put it forward. He can't steer a parked car. The wind will only blow when you put up the sail.

Divine sovereignty is not a substitute for human responsibility. God's sovereign Word is an encouragement to God's servants to believe God and obey His commands. As Charles Spurgeon put it, Joshua "*was not to use the promise as a couch upon which his indolence might luxuriate, but as a girdle wherewith to gird up his loins for future activity*". In short, God's promises are prods, not pillows.

(LISTEN) ... Courage doesn't mean that you are not afraid. It means that you fear God more than you fear your environment... or circumstances. ... It means that you trust in divine resources more than the resources of man.

It's one thing to say to a leader, "*Be strong! Be very courageous!*" and quite something else to enable him to do it. ... Joshua's strength and courage would come from meditating on the Book of the Law... believing its promises... and obeying its precepts.

### **Joshua 1:7-8**

What is "all the law," mentioned in verse 7, and "the book of the law," mentioned in verse 8? ... . During the years of his leadership... Moses compiled a written... historical record of God's activity among the people from creation history... through the history of the patriarchs... to Moses' contemporary setting with the people. ... Throughout the forty years in the wilderness Moses kept adding material to this record... until finally it included everything that God wanted in it. ... Those writings became the entire five books of Moses - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy - the Pentateuch. ... It was the greatest legacy that Moses could have left to his successor.

*"You shall meditate on it day and night..."* Constant, careful absorbing of the word of God leads to obedience to it. Lack of study results in lack of obedience.

Now... this command is given specifically to **Joshua** as the leader of God's people. ... Can **we** legitimately assume that it also obligates you and I...?

Yes. ... If we don't like Joshua 1:7-8... we still have Psalm 1:2... which almost uses the exact same wording... to describe what should be true of every godly believer (i.e. *'but his delight is in Law... and in Law he meditates day and night'*).

There is no escape! Indeed, the Law... or the written Word of God... should be our delight. ... Life in the kingdom of God must be lived out of the Word of God. ... Joshua 1 and Psalm 1 alike tell us that a life pleasing to God does not arise from mystical experiences... or warm feelings... or from a new gimmick advocated in a current release of Band-Wagon Christianity.

No... it comes from the word God has already spoken and from obedience to that word. ... . Make it the background noise of your life. Then when trials come... just turn up the volume.

“For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

In the life of the Christian believer... *prosperity* and *success* aren't to be measured by the standards of the world. ... These blessings are the by-products... of a life devoted to God and His Word. ... If you set out on your own to become prosperous and successful... you may achieve your goal and *live to regret it*. ... . "In whatever man does without God," wrote Scottish novelist George MacDonald, "*he must fail miserably, or succeed more miserably.*"

Meditating on the Scriptures will help us evaluate our motives in decision-making with regard to success and prosperity. We will learn to ask ourselves the right questions out of the word of God. *Am I totally committed to the will of God in this action... this choice, this endeavor? ... Am I relying completely on the Spirit of God to empower me... or am I trusting my own resources? ... Am I serving the glory of God ultimately? ...* If I can answer those questions with a yes... then my activities and my relationships will be successful in God's eyes... no matter what people think and no matter what the physical... material outcome is.

### **Joshua 1:9**

Joshua probably had times when he felt weak, inadequate, and frightened. Perhaps he considered resigning before the Conquest even began. But

God knew all about his feelings of personal weakness and fear and told Joshua three times, **Be strong and courageous** (verses 6, 7, and now here in verse 9). ... These charges came with 3 accompanying encouragements... (God's promise... God's power... and God's presence.) The message from God's Word this morning... is that these are sufficient to last a lifetime... for you and I... as well. ... Believers in all ages can be uplifted by the same three assurances.

What are you being called of God to arise... step forward... and accomplish today? ... What obedience to truth is required of you? ... How has God personally commissioned you to serve him and his people? ... Is there someone in whose giant shadow you will be serving... a very capable leader you're being asked to follow... perhaps as a Bible Study Leader... KIDS Church worker... or whatever?

If none of these questions connects with you... then you have a different issue to deal with. ... It might mean that you're idling in neutral... gradually sliding backward... losing ground. ... Perhaps the call to you... is to stand up and step out. ... Maybe it means saying... *"Okay, Lord, what do you want me to do?... What do you want me to possess?... What do you want me to move into?"*

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