

JOSHUA 3:1-6
PREPARATION?

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Joshua chapter 3 as we continue our study through this rich book on victorious Christian living!

As we have seen, the children of Israel are preparing to enter into the Promise Land, the land of Canaan. This is the land that God had promised to them and yet, forty years earlier, because of unbelief, they refused to enter in.

Now, forty years later they are once again preparing to enter into this land that God had given to them and, as we will see, this is a walk of faith on their part. We see that truly throughout the book of Joshua.

As I have said, the land of Canaan, the Promise Land, is a picture of the life of the Spirit, of walking in the Spirit of God, surrendered to Him. It is there we see the victories in the battles we face in this life.

It is not easy, nor is it just one battle we face. But over and over again we face these battles in life and the only victory we will have is when we surrender to the Lord and allow Him to give us the victories as we walk by faith!

But let's face it, we are impatient. I think what has happened in our society is happening to us as Christians. We want instant gratification. We want it and we want it now. And that goes for spiritual maturity.

We think this is something we can obtain overnight or at least in a month or so. I am here to tell you, that is not how it works. Not at all! It is a lifelong process of growing, of facing battles, of seeing victories, of learning from our defeats!

But it is tough and what our society has given to us, this instant gratification, we want to apply to our Christian lives. Just listen to what one report said regarding our impatience and keep in mind that this is from 2013. It is probably even worse today! We are told,

Melissa Francis has no patience for waiting - for anything. When the 26-year-old . . . talks about slow Internet connections, she can barely hide her disdain. Waiting a couple of extra seconds for a page to load feels like an eternity.

“I’m not proud of it, but I yell at my computer when it’s slow,” Francis said.

The demand for instant results is seeping into every corner of our lives, and not just virtually. Retailers are jumping into same-day delivery services. Smartphone apps eliminate the wait for a cab, a date, or a table at a hot restaurant. Movies and TV shows begin streaming in seconds. But experts caution that instant gratification comes at a price: It’s making us less patient.

The Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project sums up a recent study about people under the age of 35 and the dangers of their hyperconnected lives with what sounds like a prescription drug warning: “Negative effects include a need for instant gratification and loss of patience.”

It’s not just Gen Y, of course. Anyone who’s growled in frustration while a website loads or while on hold with a doctor’s office knows tolerance for delay is in short supply. But impatience may be most pronounced among the young, wired nearly from birth.

“Most of my generation has grown up not having to wait for anything,” said Zack Dillahunty, 23, who finds dates using the Grindr app on his iPhone.

Retailers, smelling profit in impatience, recently began a battle for same-day delivery supremacy, with Walmart and eBay challenging Amazon in the category. In Boston, one city where Amazon same-day delivery is available, shoppers can place an order by 11 a.m. and, for an \$8.99 fee plus 99 cents per item, have it that day. Walmart launched Walmart-To-Go last year, charging \$10 for same-day delivery . . .

We've come to expect things so quickly that researchers found people can't wait more than a few seconds for a video to load. Ramesh Sitaraman, a computer science professor at UMass Amherst, examined the viewing habits of 6.7 million internet users in a study released last fall. How long were subjects willing to be patient? *Two seconds.*

"After that they started abandoning," Sitaraman said. "After five seconds, the abandonment rate is 25 percent. When you get to 10 seconds, half are gone."

The results offer a glimpse into the future, he says. As Internet speeds increase, people will be even less willing to wait for that cute puppy video. Sitaraman, who spent years developing the study, worries someday people will be too impatient to conduct studies on patience.

"The need for instant gratification is not new, but our expectation of 'instant' has become faster, and as a result, our patience is thinner," said Narayan Janakiraman, an assistant marketing professor at the University of Texas, Arlington.

Janakiraman conducted a 2011 study called "The Psychology of Decisions to Abandon Waits for Service." Subjects were made to wait for downloads and kept on hold as they waited for help from a call center. As predicted, many test subjects who were forced to wait abandoned the process.

“It’s why you have people at Disney World paying for a pass so they don’t have to wait in line,” he added. “You have people who don’t mind paying for things like same-day delivery.”

Cambridge grad student Valla Fatemi has yet to try same-day delivery, but he relies on Amazon Prime, a \$79-a-year membership that offers shoppers benefits such as free two-day shipping. “The two-day shipping is huge,” Fatemi said. “It’s gotten me in the mode of expecting things at my door pretty quickly.”

Nor will he wait for movies.

“It used to be you had to wait to download a movie,” he said. “If I want to watch a movie now, and it’s not on Netflix or on-demand, then I’m not going to put any more effort into finding it.”

Others seem to feel the same. Netflix has 33 million members who stream videos, compared with only 8 million who get DVDs by mail. Meanwhile, Cambridge start-up the Happy Cloud is building its business by helping zealous video gamers download games in minutes rather than hours.

Darrell Worthy, an assistant professor of psychology at Texas A & M University who studies decision making and motivation, has found evidence of what some already feared: We’re becoming more focused on quick fun - such as a game of Angry Birds on the iPhone - than on reading books or magazines.

That echoes the Pew study. Researchers found the rapid pace of technology can lead to more nimble thinking, but that “trends are leading to a future in which most people are shallow consumers of information.”

“A lot of things that are really valuable take time,” Worthy said. “But immediate gratification is the default response. It’s difficult to overcome those urges and be patient and wait for things to come over time.” . . .

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What I want you to see out of this article, because I believe it has become part of mainstream living, is this idea of not taking the time to read and because of that, we have become **“ . . . *shallow consumers of information.*”**

And, as I have said, even we as Christians can become caught up in this. We pray and expect answers before we turn on the Television, or text someone. There is no patience, no waiting upon God and, because of that, there truly is no growth.

And the end result is that people will believe all kinds of foolish things that are not true. You see how the weather channel guy was being blown by the winds of that hurricane a few months back on the east coast. It looked so intense, those winds were blowing him backward.

And then, behind the weatherman were two guys walking and they had no problem. There was no gust of wind at that time that was blowing, but it was false news. And the television, the radio, the internet is filled with false information, and because we have become lazy, we buy into these lies!

And that goes, as well, for Christians, as I have said. You have all these claims of what new revelations God is speaking and yet, people don’t check it out, they don’t see what the Scriptures have to say because it takes too much time, and they buy into it.

Remember the number of books, radio programs, internet stories on the blood moons that were to usher in some cataclysmic event, even the Rapture of the church! And Christians were buying into this nonsense. Buying the books. Looking at the Internet information and-so-on.

What happened? Nothing. Let me say that again. ***NOTHING HAPPENED!*** And you know what, these false teachers with their false teaching were not held accountable and for those Christians who bought into it, they are just waiting for the next new revelation from God.

I hate to tell you this, no not really, but God has told us in His Word and He is not adding to it nor is He taking away from it, and neither should we!

In our study this morning, I have titled this message, “***PREPARATION?***” And I have put a question mark at the end of that word. The reason being is what do we need to do to prepare for this spirit-filled life! A life that is lived out and it is a process of growing and maturing in the faith!

I have broken these verses down as follows.

PREPARATION FOR A MIRACLE! – Joshua 3:1-2

FOCUS ON THE ARK – Joshua 3:3

SUBMISSION – Joshua 3:4

CONSECRATION – Joshua 3:5

OBEDIENCE – Joshua 3:6

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Joshua chapter 3, beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through the book of Joshua and we focus on the topic of ***PREPARATION!***

JOSHUA 3**VERSES 1-2**

First of all, just to fill in some of the details here. This is not an additional three days as some may think. Joshua is recapping for us the events leading up to their camping at the Jordan River that he spoke about in Joshua chapter 1.

You see, Acacia Grove or Shittim was located about 7 miles east of the Jordan River. Now the nation is on the banks of the Jordan River and the time of year was spring.

And this is important for us to understand. During the spring, with the spring rains and the melting of the snow from Mount Hermon, the Jordan River swells up and overflows its banks.

Normally the Jordan River spills some 6 million tons of water into the Dead Sea per day and normally it is only some 100 feet wide and not very deep. But at this time of year, with this increased water supply, it could be as wide as a mile now, obviously overflowing its banks!

Now imagine, moving from Acacia Grove those seven miles and now looking at the raging waters of the Jordan River, how in the world are they going to get 2 to 3 million people across this river and to the other side?

I have a little insight into this. You see, Joshua called an emergency meeting of the Army Corps of Engineers to come up with a solution!

No, he didn't do that because the answer to their problem was not going to come from the wisdom of man but by the power of God! Folks, as impossible as a situation may be to us, Jesus said, "**... 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'**" Matthew 19:26.

So they spent three days contemplating what they were going to do, trying to rectify in their minds how this was going to happen, how they would get across this river. And maybe they began to lose heart. Maybe they were discouraged.

Remember what I have called these first two verses – ***PREPARATION FOR A MIRACLE!***

In other words, they had to come to the end of themselves. They had to come to the conclusion that it was going to be impossible for them to move 2 to 3 million people, including children and infants, with all their livestock, across the raging waters of the Jordan River.

Maybe some had come to the conclusion that they should just wait until the water levels came down some, maybe a few months and then they could try again. Hey, they waited some forty years to get to this point, what's another few months?

But now, after these three days we see the officers come through the camp. You see, as they came to the end of themselves, now it was time for God to work. But before God was going to act, they had to come to the conclusion they couldn't accomplish this on their own.

You see, this again was not going to be done by the power of man, because of his intellect, but by God and thus, they were to wait three days by this river.

It is as the Lord said in Isaiah, **“But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”** Isaiah 40:31.

And Paul tells us regarding our strength and what God can do in those who are weak as he wrote in II Corinthians 12:10, **“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”**

The idea here is that we are not going to accomplish these miracles in our lives by the power of our own strength. We need to look to Him, to Jesus to be the strength of our life!

And the key here is one word – ***PREPARATION!***

Being Italian you would think I would love to paint, especially ceilings! Not so. In fact, the thing I hate most about painting is the preparation. I think you know what I mean!

You have to move furniture. You have to put drop cloths down or you are going to be in big trouble.

You have to do any patch up work before you paint.

Then there is the taping to protect the trim. Okay, lunch time, right!

Then you have to get your paint, paint brush, roller, rags for those mistakes. You have to stir and shake the paint to get it mixed up.

And then it is time to paint. For me, I was done a long time ago, but the preparation took so long to do.

But without the preparation you will make more work for yourself and it is not worth it.

That is true in the Christian life. God prepares us for work and sometimes it takes a short time and sometimes it takes a lot longer. But that preparation for the miracle He wants to do in you and through you is needed!

Think about Moses. He knew God had called him to be the deliverer, to bring the children of Israel out of the bondage they were in down in Egypt. So he stepped out on his own and it was a disaster. So much so that he spent the next forty years in a desert caring for animals.

That was, for Moses, sitting those three days by the Jordan River and wondering how in the world is this going to happen. And for Moses, it was so unbelievable that he just let it go and forgot about delivering the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt!

And then God called him, and, again, he was unsure. He knew he could not do it on his own and that was important. Moses had to come to the end of himself and then God was ready to use him! But it was forty years of waiting and yet, look at what God did in him and through him!

Those forty years of preparation were needed to prepare him for the work of leading these 2 to 3 million people those forty years in the wilderness! In a sense, he was their shepherd.

Then there is King David and we are told of this man that he was a man after God's own heart! That is an amazing statement because we are told of some of the failures of this man.

And think about this. When God anointed David King of Israel, through the prophet Samuel, did he instantaneously become King of Israel? No, he did not!

Conservatively speaking, the period between when he was anointed by Samuel and the time David actually began to officially rule was some fifteen years.

And much of that time he was on the run from King Saul because Saul wanted him dead. Saul knew that the kingdom was given to David, but he fought against it.

And for David, he waited for God to remove Saul and make him King. He did not try to rush what God was doing. And it was difficult. He hid from Saul in caves, in the enemy's territory, running here and there, putting other people's lives in danger. It was not easy but through that time of preparation, God was getting him ready for the throne!

In the New Testament we see Paul who was a man who tried to put an end to the followers of Jesus and in the end, became a follower of Jesus himself!

Paul spent some three years in Arabia and Damascus and a total of 14 years before he went back to Jerusalem. It was during that time that the Lord was teaching Paul.

Keep in mind that Paul was a master of the Old Testament Scriptures. He just needed to see how they pointed to Jesus and the Lord was showing Paul these things before he went on to be one of the greatest evangelists ever!

Not only that, but Paul has given to us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thirteen and probably fourteen New Testament books if you include Hebrews.

Paul's preparation is truly seen throughout his life. Schooled under Gamliel with the Law. A Pharisee. And then schooled under Jesus and sent forth to bring the Gospel message throughout the whole known world!

And we can look at others and see how God took the time to prepare them for the work. But what I would like to focus on now is this, "*How do we prepare?*"

And we will see that we are to, ***FOCUS ON THE ARK!*** I know, what in the world does that mean? Let's read on and we will see.

VERSE 3

Remember the question we ended the last section with, "How do we prepare?" And I gave you a clue, I said, ***FOCUS ON THE ARK!***

What does that mean. In fact, what does Joshua mean when he says that, "**you have not passed this way before**"?

During their wilderness wanderings they were led by the Shekinah glory or the presence of God.

In Exodus 13:21-22 we are told, **“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.”**

The visible presence of God was directing them.

When the pillar of fire moved, they moved, when it stopped they stopped!

But now they are going to learn to walk by faith and not by sight. How were they going to do that? The same way we do today – by the Word of God!

As you read through Joshua you will see that the Ark of the Covenant moves to a place of prominence in Israel’s history. In Joshua chapters 3 & 4 we see that the Ark is mentioned some 20 times!

The Ark of the Covenant was a rectangular wooden box measuring 3’⁹” long by 2’³” high by 2’³” wide. And it was covered with gold inside and out and topped with a lid made of pure gold called the Mercy Seat.

On top of the Mercy Seat there were two cherubim, one at each end kneeling and facing each other with their heads bowed and their wings outstretched upward and nearly touching tip to tip directly above the Mercy Seat.

It was on that Mercy Seat, between the cherubim that God was symbolically understood to dwell. It was His throne on the earth.

Now, inside the Ark there were three items. The two stone tablets that God gave to Moses upon which the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments; a pot containing some Manna; and Aaron’s staff that had budded.

What we see is that the Ark represented the presence of God and since the Ark went before them it teaches us that victory is something only God can lead us into.

But more specifically the Ark of the Covenant was also called the Ark of the Testimony. Why was it called that?

Because it contained the Law of God written on tablets of stone also called the “tablets of the testimony” which is another title for the Word of God.

You see, the Ark of the Covenant was to lead them. No longer would they have this visible sign to lead them, but the Word of God would be directing their steps!

Remember what the Lord told Joshua in chapter 1, **“Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”**

Joshua 1:6-9.

Tragically today people once again want to be led by a visible sign and they negate the Word of God. Let me give you a few examples to show you what I mean and there are many to say the least, I am sad to say!

The late John Wimber, who was the head of the Vineyard ministries says this,

“Calvaryites [those who attend Calvary Chapel] are sometimes a little too heavily orientated to the written word, I know that sounds a little dangerous, but frankly they’re very Pharisaical in their allegiance to the Bible. They have very little life, and growth and spontaneity in their innards. Sometimes they’re very rigid and can’t receive much things of the Lord.” (John Wimber, Church Planting Seminar).

Now you read that, and it does seem to make sense. We should be open to what the Holy Spirit is showing us.

Let me be clear on this. The Holy Spirit is not going to led us to do things that are contrary to the Word of God. We have the Word of God to guide us, to direct us.

What they want to do is to go outside the Word of God and then, how do you know if this is from God or the Devil? You don’t, and you can see the danger!

And with that kind of theology, experience that is placed over the Word of God, we now see what can happen. We see new revelations from God that are contrary to Scripture and is not of the Holy Spirit.

Some of you may remember Rodney Howard-Browne, he was the one and still is, who has headed this Holy laughter revival. Listen to what he says, and you will see how dangerous this is.

“But I’d rather be in a church where the devil and the flesh are manifesting than in a church where nothing is happening because people are too afraid to manifest anything . . . And if a devil manifests, don’t worry about that either. Rejoice, because at least something is happening!” (Rodney Howard- Browne, *The Coming Revival*, 1991, p.6).

Now you can see why the church is in such a mess. We have moved away from the truths of God found in the Word of God and we are happy with any experience, even if it comes from the Devil himself!

T. A. McMahon makes these remarks that accurately describe where the Church is at today. He wrote,

“The chief error today in the evangelical church is that experiences (feelings, emotions, passions, intuitions, etc.) have become the guide for entering into and attempting to establish true spirituality. Rather than subjective feelings and emotions being present as a result of one’s adherence to sound doctrine, they have become the judge of whether or not something is truly Christian. Instead of testing a teaching or practice or situation by the Word of God, the arbiter becomes “how one feels about it.” This puts the human imagination in the seat of judgment. That thought alone should provoke an emotion in the heart of every Bible-believing Christian: sheer horror! Doctrinally however, it’s even more frightening. (McMahon, T. A., *The Berean Call*, February 1, 2007).

And let me say this. For the children of Israel, the wilderness spoke of immaturity and carnality and it was in that place of carnality and immaturity that God needed to lead His people through constant displays of supernatural power.

But they are entering the land of Canaan and this represented spiritual maturity, a life of the Spirit. Thus, we don’t need to look for God to give to us signs and wonders all the time, but we should be led by the Spirit working through the Word of God!

I don’t want to offend anyone this morning but if you are someone who is constantly running after signs and wonders, you are constantly looking for supernatural experiences from the Spirit, you are probably immature and carnal in your walk with God.

You see, the Bible tells us that those that take in the Word of God and apply it to their lives are complete, ready for service! May we get back to God's Word to direct our lives!

When you look at Moses, David, Paul, they were men of the Word of God. They heard the voice of God and they followed accordingly!

You see, preparation for service is a time of being in the Word of God, meditating upon the Word of God, memorizing the Word of God and applying the Word of God to your life.

Listen to what Paul told Timothy, a young pastor in the church in Ephesus, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**" II Timothy 3:16-17.

Did you see that. As you take in the Word of God it is preparing you, equipping you for service!

Let me show you what I mean with this story about preparation. And as you will see, preparation is so important in our lives. We are told,

Several centuries ago, a Japanese emperor commissioned an artist to paint a bird. A number of months passed, then several years, and still no painting was brought to the palace.

Finally the emperor became so exasperated that he went to the artist's home to demand an explanation.

Instead of making excuses, the artist placed a blank canvas on the easel. In less than an hour, he completed a painting that was to become a brilliant masterpiece.

When the emperor asked the reason for the delay, the artist showed him armloads of drawings of feathers, wings, heads, and feet.

Then he explained that all of this research and study had been necessary before he could complete the painting.

- Our Daily Bread

And thus, may we ***FOCUS ON THE ARK!*** And please understand, if we are focused on the Ark, then we are focused upon Jesus. Remember what John told us, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”** John 1:1-4, 14.

Now, in saying that, what should be seen in our lives as we ***FOCUS ON THE ARK!*** That is what we will be looking at next, what will be seen in our lives!

VERSE 4

This is interesting to me. We are told that the children of Israel were to stay about 5/8 of a mile behind the Ark of the Covenant, why?

First of all, to show respect for the Ark, that it contained the Words of God.

Also, so it could be clearly seen by all. Folks, again we see God’s Word covered by so much garbage today that people cannot clearly see it. They put so much psychobabble, earthly philosophy that it is no wonder that people can’t walk today, they don’t know where they are going!

Make no mistake about it, the devil pulled off a major coup when he psychologized the Church.

Look at what has happened in churches across America today. Recovery replaced repentance. Therapy replaced theology. Sin was turned into sickness. And happiness has replaced holiness as our chief pursuit in life.

Thomas Szasz, considered to be one of the great masters of psychology in the world, in his book, "The Myth of Psychotherapy" said, "Through psychotherapy we have turned the salvation of sinful souls into the cure of sick minds."

Through his book Szasz, who is Jewish not a Christian, is basically saying, "You Christians have the answer, you ought to take this back into the Church. What's it doing out here, we've got nothing to offer."

And the church has shut their eyes, they have closed their ears to what God is saying and they are listening to what the world is saying, and the church has been defeated in this area. Many saints are all messed up because they listened to man instead of God!

And it is not just this psychobabble that I am talking about. The Devil has tickled the ears of many and gotten them away from the truths of God found in the Word of God and their submission is no longer to God and His Word but to man and his ideas.

You doubt that, then just look at what has come into the church! Many now accept the homosexual lifestyle as being normal and should be embraced by the church. Some churches even ordain gay pastors and lesbian pastors!

We have churches that teach that God is done with Israel and the church has replaced Israel. Foolishness and it goes against what the Word of God is saying. The church, those that feel that way, end up supporting terrorists, like the Palestinian terrorist groups.

We have the Protestant Church coming together with the Roman Catholic Church saying that we worship the same God and the way to get to that God is no different! Really, so that would mean that we must work our way into heaven, if we follow what the Roman Catholic Church is teaching, follow the sacraments, go to church, and in the end, we still won't make it because of our sins and thus, we must go to Purgatory to atone for our sins! Again, that goes against what the Word of God says and thus, if you follow down that path you are not following Jesus!

We have pastors who will hold the Bible up and say that they follow it and then, in their teaching, they never open it!

We have moved away from teaching against sin. We have moved away from teaching about needing a Savior. We have moved into a social Gospel that meets the needs of people here and now but for eternity, they will be in Hell. Do you see how dangerous this is? And I can spend a lot of time on this, but I think you truly understand what is happening.

So, the first point I want to bring out in regard to the idea of us focusing on the Ark is this, ***SUBMISSION!***

I am sure you know people who say they love Jesus, they are following Jesus, but the reality is, they are not. And the reason I can say that with such certainty is that all you have to do is look at their life and you will see how they are not in submission, they are not following what the Lord has said in His Word.

I am not talking about messing up, sinning and then repenting and getting right with God. This is a habitual disobedience to what the Lord has said in His Word and if you are not following God's Word, then you are not following the Lord!

You see, the Word of God needs to be held up, it needs to be put in a place of honor where people can clearly see it and they need to understand that it is the only source of truth that can lead a person into a life of blessing and victory!

Isn't that what the Lord told Joshua, **“Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”** Joshua 1:6-9.

They were there watching the waters of the Jordan River rush by with no hope of crossing over the Jordan River by their own efforts. But now they were to take their eyes off of the situation and focus back on the Word of God, trust in what God has said. That His promise would give them the faith to go forward. And that is true for us as well. Get your eyes off the situation and focus back on the Lord and His Word!

You see, if you are truly following the Lord then you will be ***SUBMISSIVE TO HIS WORD!***

VERSE 5

The next point that we are going to look at here in Joshua 3:5 in regard to following the Lord is that we are to ***CONSECRATE*** ourselves to the Lord. What does that mean?

What I am talking about is separating ourselves from the world and all of its defilements. Think of it like this. We are to be walking in personal and practical holiness.

Remember what Peter said in I Peter 1:13-16, **“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”**

For the children of Israel, the battles that they were facing were not going to be physical battles but spiritual battles that would manifest itself in physical ways. Thus, they needed to sanctify themselves, to set themselves apart unto God, for His use, that their entire lives would be placed in His hand for His use! In other words, get your eyes off the physical and focus on the Lord and see the salvation He will bring to the situation!

Listen to what we are told in Exodus 19, **“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. . . . So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, ‘Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives.’”** Exodus 19:10-11, 14-15.

And here in the Old Testament, when the Lord told His people to sanctify themselves, it meant that everybody bathed and changed their clothes. The married couples abstained from sexual contact for a time as a symbol of their consecration to God.

The idea was a new beginning, a new start with the Lord.

And what we see here in Joshua is that very thing. You see, the wilderness wanderings represented a time of carnality for the children of Israel. They complained about this, they complained about that. They compromised in their relationship with the Lord, in other words, they sinned!

But now things were going to be new. They were entering into the Promise Land, the new life in Canaan. It was a new beginning for them you might say. But first they needed to consecrate themselves before the Lord, they needed to put God before any of their fleshly appetites and they needed to wash themselves and change their clothes!

And a new beginning can never happen without a life committed to holy living!

When we got saved, we were washed in the blood of Christ that cleansed us from all our sin! He clothed us in His righteousness.

Now, as Christians, we can get dirty. Being in the world there is a lot of dirt out there and thus, we need to wash in the water of the Word of God to be cleansed from that dirt that we have put on in the world!

Remember what David said in Psalm 119:9-11, **“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”**

Being in the Word of God will keep us on the right track and it will cleanse us as Paul said in Ephesians 5:25-27, **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”**

I realize that this is a command to husbands and their responsibility to their wives. But make no mistake about it. There is that sanctification and cleansing as we wash ourselves in the water of God's Word. Never forget that!

And we must put off that old man, that old life and put on the new. It is what Paul said in Colossians chapter 3, **“But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him . . . Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”** Colossians 3:8-10, 12-17.

You see, we need to put off the old man, that old life and put on the new man, put on Jesus and walk in holiness!

I realize that some of you may be thinking, “That is impossible to do? How can I do something like that? How can I walk in holiness?”

Keep in mind that this is a life that is surrendered to the Spirit, it is supernatural life. We can't do this on our own, but if we come before the Lord, lay our lives on the altar of sacrifice for Him to use as He pleases, He will equip us to walk in holiness!

And let me share this with you. Patty shared this with me, I believe it was from Charles Stanley, and it goes like this,

God will never tell you to do anything that gratifies the flesh – to do just as you please without thought of the future. Yes, He wants you to enjoy life – but in a way that pleases Him and brings you wholesome fulfillment, not in a manner that will ultimately destroy you.

Friend, be cautious and wise. If what you hear urges you to feed your sinful nature, then it is not of God. His Holy Spirit within you always speaks in such a way that results in the “fruit of righteousness” (Philippians 1:11), not the indulgence of your flesh. In fact, your old sensual nature is constantly warring against the Spirit within you, and you must consciously work to bring it under His control (Romans 8:13).

Therefore, friend, set your mind to satisfy the yearning of the Spirit. His voice will build you up, edify you, and lead you on the path of God's will. Trust Him, obey His Spirit, and live.

- Charles Stanley, September 21, Clash with the Flesh

In other words, “**... but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’**”

You see, if you are truly following the Lord then you will ***CONSECRATE YOURSELF TO HIM!***

VERSE 6

The last point I want to look at in regard to us following the Lord is this, we are to be ***OBEDIENT TO HIM!***

We read this story and we may not think much of it. God told Joshua to have the priests bring the Ark of the covenant into the Jordan River. And Joshua told the priests and what do the priests do? “**... they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.**”

In other words, they obeyed the words of the Lord! And again, we might not think much about it, but think about this river and how fast those waters are moving. It was in flood stage at this time of year.

You see, most of the year, the Jordan River was about 100 feet wide and only three to ten feet deep. However, when the Israelites crossed, it was at flood stage, overflowing its banks.

So during this period of time, due to the spring rains and snowmelt from Mount Hermon, the river comprised a formidable barrier to the conquest of Jericho and the rest of the Promise Land. The Jordan River could have been up to a mile wide and as much as 12 feet deep. That means those waters were raging and to have one man cross safely would have been difficult.

But now, not only 2 to 3 million people needed to cross, besides all their cattle, animals, as well as children, it was impossible, from a human perspective.

And to have these priests enter carrying the Ark of the covenant, foolishness. They would be swept away along with the Ark of the covenant.

You see, nothing but the might of God could have made it possible for the Children of Israel to cross the Jordan River!

So this was a walk of faith by these priests, who were to lead the way, carrying the Ark of the covenant with them so all the people could follow the Lord and His Word!

Folk's, like it or not, unless we step out by faith and "*get our feet wet,*" we're not likely to experience much in the way of victory or much in the way of service for the Lord.

We can't live in our comfort zone because there is no growth there. In fact, we can become stagnant if we don't stretch and begin to walk.

And I realize that there are many obstacles out there that are trying to discourage us from taking those steps of faith, but if God has called you, why are you fearing?

And the idea here is that of obedience and that truly is what faith is all about. God has called us to do something and then we take those steps of faith in accordance to what He has told us or in accordance to His Word! It is not an issue of it being impossible, it is an issue of faith, do you trust what the Lord is telling you to do?

Let me share this with you and you will see the importance of obedience. We are told, Arabian horses go through rigorous training in the deserts of the Middle East. The trainers require absolute obedience from the horses, and test them to see if they are completely trained.

The final test is almost beyond the endurance of any living thing. The trainers force the horses to do without water for many days. Then he turns them loose and of course they start running toward the water, but just as they get to the edge, ready to plunge in and drink, the trainer blows his whistle.

The horses who have been completely trained and who have learned perfect obedience, stop. They turn around and come pacing back to the trainer. They stand there quivering, wanting water, but they wait in perfect obedience. When the trainer is sure that he has their obedience he gives them a signal to go back to drink.

Now this may be severe but when you are on the trackless desert of Arabia and your life is entrusted to a horse, you had better have a trained obedient horse. We must accept God's training and obey Him.

- Source Unknown

If we truly love the Lord, we will be obedient to what He is calling us to do. Think about it,

It is Abraham's high degree of obedience that God requires of his people and nothing less. When Saul, under God's direction, defeats the Amalekites, he allows the soldiers to return with some of the livestock as plunder to be sacrificed to God in spite of God's command that everything should be destroyed (1 Sam 15:3). Because Saul fails to obey fully, God rebukes him through Samuel: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1 Sam 15:22 NIV). The biblical motif of obedience conveys nothing short of total surrender to the will of God.

But God's demand for obedience is not purely arbitrary; rather, obedience is a means by which God brings blessing. When God confirms to Isaac the promise of land and innumerable descendants, he cites the obedience of Abraham as the immediate reason for such immense blessing (Gen 26:4,5). Likewise, when God speaks to *Moses from Mount Sinai, he declares that if they will obey fully, Israel will be his "treasured possession ... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:5,6). Here obedience is associated with blessing such that each comprises one half of the relationship between Israel and God: it is Israel's part to obey and God's part to bless.

But the biblical image of obedience is not merely a means for gaining blessing. Just as one stands in proper relation to God by being obedient to him, so also one becomes obedient to God out of love for him. This relationship between love and obedience appears in the Shema, the heart of Israel's law. Immediately following Moses' reiteration of the Ten Commandments, he admonishes the people to keep God's commands and to teach their children to do so as well. In the very center of this message is the command "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut 6:5 NIV). It is not just for blessing but out of love that Israel [and we are] to obey God.

- Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, "Obedience"

You see, if you are truly following the Lord then you will be ***OBEDIENT TO HIM!***

So as we prepare for miracles in our lives, as we prepare for the work that God is doing in us and through us, we need to ***FOCUS ON THE LORD!*** We need to be in His Word!

And the evidence for this kind of faith is that we are in ***SUBMISSION TO HIM***, we have ***CONSECRATED OUR LIVES TO HIM*** and we are in ***OBEDIENCE TO HIM!***

Let me close with these words. We are told,

They [the priests] do what Joshua tells them to do. There is a sanctity and deliberation about the whole process that is often lacking in our contemporary discipleship. We don't want to wait. Sometimes we don't want to set our lives apart to the Lord for his exclusive use. Often we don't want to allow any sort of distance because we imagine that we already know the way and don't need step-by-step guidance.

These verses may well challenge us to some profound reassessments of our daily discipleship, especially in our instant generation where we want everything sorted out and guaranteed before we start. Perhaps this is why wonderful manifestations of God's glory are comparatively rare among us.

This chapter reminds us that we are not writing the agenda. That is the Lord's prerogative. What he requires from us is submissive obedience that desires his glory rather than our own and is content to fulfill whatever role he is pleased to assign to us.

- David Jackman, Joshua – People of God's Purpose, p. 44

May we be men and women who are totally surrendered to God and are willing to take those steps of faith no matter how fast those waters are flowing before us because God has called us to walk!

You see, if you want that victorious Christian life, you need to walk accordingly. I am not saying it is easy, I am saying it is a **WALK OF FAITH!**